

Newsletter

"Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home."

G.K. Chesterton

Week 11 2022-23

THE FESTIVE SEASON BEGINS





HOUSE NEWS



Tigers House Director, Sarah Morgan



Tiger House had another busy week, we started by reviewing all the topics that we have studied in RSE, Health and wellbeing module 1. Students were very creative producing “Kahoots” (an online quiz generator), word scrambles and poster sheets. This gave students the time to reflect on what topics they have been studying about to consolidate learning.

We are getting into the Christmas spirit at CATS Cambridge, the Christmas tree was delivered, and all students collaborated to produce sustainable Christmas decorations made from recycled paper, the tree looks great, and students are getting excited for the holidays.



HOUSE NEWS



Panthers House Director, Hayley Pienaar



Panther House deputy House Captain, Demir, planned a 'Celebration of Turkey' evening which was enjoyed by all students in the HUB.

Prior to the event, he met with CATS College Chef Arkadiusz to plan the menu. It certainly was an excellent spread of Turkish treats and much enjoyed by the students.

In our personal development session on Thursday, students created beautiful Christmas decorations to adorn the real fir tree in the HUB.



Panther House deputy House Captain Demir, with CATS Cambridge Head Chef Arkadiusz



Leopards House Director, Ruby Bell-Williamson



The largest number of deaths until recently were from starvation. Now, due to technological progress, we have an oversupply of food. However, this leads to a global problem such as obesity.

The enjoyment of food and life are closely related. Feeling the taste of food, we feel the taste of life. And if we don't enjoy food, or stuff tons of food into ourselves, or if we're eating unconsciously, then we feel as if life is passing us by. What can we do to make our lives more colourful?

One should try to eat food with gratitude. You need to eat, but you need to try and focus on the taste, as you're eating. You don't have to eat a lot, but it's important to feel grateful that you got the food. Eating mindfully.

A habit is formed within 21 days. People acquire both bad habits, such as smoking, and good ones, such as morning exercises. So why not try to get into the habit of mindful eating, the habit of enjoying food (read: life)?

By Viktoriya
A-Level Student

VOLLEYBALL FINAL

Leopards: Natalia, Efe, Kerem, Ale, Leticia, Leand
Lions: Mikel, Yunus, Prince, Arber, Elifsu, Ensar (help)

The much-anticipated final of the Volleyball competition took place on Wednesday evening at the North Cambridge Academy between the Lions and Leopards. The first game started with both teams focused and determined. It was clear from the outset it was going to be a close fight with the drama rising; a well-positioned kick from Elifsu pushed the Lions into a comfortable lead of 11-8. Soon the serve was back with Ale for Leopards who took several winning points bringing it back to 12-12, then Leopards gained the lead with some nail-biting action back and forth between Efe, Prince and Leand. Yunus's well-placed gentle tap took Lions back into the lead. Excellent passing pushed the Lions to a win of 25-17.

George, the coach, urged the players to communicate with each other. After a 2-minute huddle discussing strategy, the teams changed ends and reconvened for their second game. With Ensar and Elifsu setting up the ball for a Mikel spike, Lions took a rapid lead with Arber demonstrating expert heading skills. Mikel's consistently well-placed arm-crooking and straight-armed smashes gained points, but Leopards held their lead showing good communication and teamwork with Leticia strategically placed in the middle setting up point after point so that Leopards took the second game 25-18.

At one game all, the teams had everything to play for. House Captain Natalia served to gain several points in the beginning of the third game. Arber organised the Lions, placing them on the court to their best advantage. The 3rd game went from 6-6 to 11-11 neck and neck until it stood at 15-11 to Leopards. Tensions were rising. Lions fought back to 20-20. Then, in the last minutes of what had been a tremendous game, the Lions took over and some superb shots, particularly from Mikel, gave Lions a definitive Victory of 25-20.

Many congratulations to the Lions for an astounding win. Indeed, well-done to all involved for a tournament demonstrating sportsmanship, teamwork and a generous spirit from the players and supporters. A huge thank you to George for his refereeing.

Kerem says: *"I enjoyed the game a lot."*

Alejandra Garcia says: *"I really enjoyed the match. We had so much fun and both teams played really well."*

Alanur (spectator) says: *"It was a very close match. They were both ambitious teams. The Lions were better prepared in the first game, but then the Leopards got into their game and pulled it back. Obviously, the Lions won overall, but it was exciting and I was on the edge of my seat."*



ESL STUDENTS HEAD TO THE LIBRARY

Encouraging our students to read more extensively, whether to improve their English skills, expand their perspectives or for pure pleasure, is an important mission of the ESL department.

With this in mind, we recently took three ESL classes to Cambridge Central Library in an effort to encourage reading outside the classroom, and foster a long-term love of books.

The trips were short but successful; with all students registering for a membership at the county libraries (which can be used for digital reading resources as well as hard copy loans) and several students borrowing books straight away.

The students enjoyed these trips, and several have since gone back to the library to borrow more books or use the reference section for research. More trips to the library are planned with other classes in the new year.



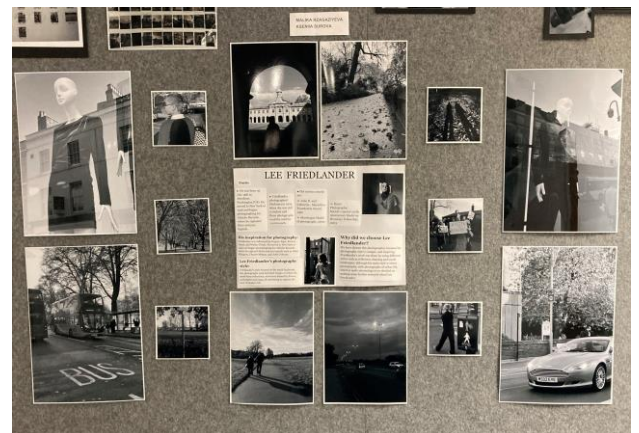
PHOTOGRAPHY

Year 10 students have been learning about different street photographers and choosing their own photographers to respond to through research and taking their own photographs to show connection to the photographer's work and finally building their own display of work.

Ksenia and Malika worked in a pair, they chose to respond to Lee Friedlander looking at reflections and shadows, Shawn chose Lee Friedlander too. Arsenii learnt about Eric Kim's street work and responded with strong contrasts shooting just in black and white. Melissa chose Saul Leiter and responded to his strong use of colour work.

Malika wrote:

"Lately, we have been covering different street photographers, and we had a range of them to choose from; one of them being Lee Friedlander. Friedlander's photography style is idiosyncratic, breath taking, and exhilarating, therefore we decided to make some further research about him. Kseniia and I have really enjoyed shooting those photographs, and have put a lot of effort into it; searching for the best locations and inspirations to represent Lee Friedlander's photography style."



ALUMNI NEWS

A Criminologist by specialisation, Inqilab Shahbazov is an alumnus of London School of Economics (2015-2016). He studied at CATS between 2010-12, after which he was admitted to the University of Sheffield. His A Level subjects were History, Sociology and Geography.

He is the author of the book on Social Research Methods (in Azerbaijani). He was currently employed as a chief consultant on data collection and analysis at a Social Research Centre between 2019-2022, where he was responsible for the design and implementation of various research projects on socio-economic themes. Inqilab Shahbazov has authored 7 articles in peer-reviewed journals. Inqilab's book on Social Research Methods has been included into the curricula of 5 local universities in his home country as a core textbook. He has also established an online platform in Azerbaijani language where people can find all basic information on research methods.

Inqilab currently studies MPhil in Criminology at the University of Cambridge





The Backpage

**Dominic Tomalin,
Principal**



Finding our way to fabulous feedback

At CATS Cambridge we are always looking for ways to improve learning. We want our students to have the best opportunities to learn faster, better and deeper. Our commitment to this is manifest in our school research community. One of our current areas of research has focused upon 'feedback'.

I don't think there is anyone who doubts that feedback is probably essential to improvement; feedback should offer a guide to how to improve. However, in a crowded curriculum there is a risk that feedback is not given the consideration it deserves.

Several research projects have demonstrated that the way in which feedback is provided and received needs to be very carefully thought out and establishing a common language between provider and receiver is a critical success factor.

The key findings from our research is as follows:

- Effective feedback is a dialogue
- Effective feedback requires active listening by providers and receivers
- Effective feedback relies on developing the teacher's and the student's appreciation of what is needed to improve

Effective feedback is a dialogue

The risk of unidirectional feedback is that it might be missed, misunderstood, or misapplied. Time needs to be taken to ensure that the student has understood the feedback. Time needs to be taken so that the student can demonstrate that they have understood the feedback and that they understand how to apply it in their work. Effective feedback is a discursive cycle in which provider and receiver work together towards a common understanding of what the issues are and how they should be assessed. The cycle only really ends when it is clear the student is able to make generalised use of the advice, i.e. when they are able to apply the advice with confident and competent pragmatism.

Effective feedback requires active listening by providers and receivers

A fundamental aspect of any dialogue is active listening. Deliberate effort is needed to check what has been understood. Receivers should be encouraged to articulate what they have actually understood. The process must not stop there, providers of feedback must also articulate what they have actually heard. This is particularly important in an international setting where cultural differences often add an additional filter through which understanding is established.

The way something is said and the choice of words often have implications for what is actually heard. There is a need to be sensitive to verbal cues, specifically what linguistics experts refer to as, 'upgraders', and 'downgraders'. Paying attention to downgraders and upgraders allows you to pick up on a person's communication style (direct or indirect), and also enables you to adapt your feedback to fit the situation. Downgraders are used by more indirect cultures, when giving negative feedback, as these words soften the criticism. Upgraders are used by more direct cultures, to strengthen the critics.

Continued...

A case in point comes from two cultures that we may think of as being relatively close to one another. Interestingly, whilst the UK and the US are both low context when it comes to communicating, they seem divided by a common language. The Economist Style Guide provides a list of words where there is a risk of misinterpretation between the two vernaculars. Understanding the cultural context is key to the interpretations of messages as intended. One of my favourites is the usage of 'quite'. When an English person uses the word, 'quite', as in 'quite' good, it typically means that whatever is 'quite good' is a close approximation to being the superlative version. In contrast, the American usage aligns closely with the dictionary meaning, 'quite good', means that which is 'quite good' has stumbled, gasping over the line to being acceptable. Issues with interpretation are not restricted to those who don't share the same native tongue.

Effective feedback relies on developing the teacher's and the student's appreciation of what is needed to improve

Armed with the mark scheme, it can be easy to feel that the tipping points at which marks are awarded or not are very clear. This may be so for the experienced teacher. However, finding the words to actually convey what is needed to students who lack experience of the subject, and the mark scheme can be a real challenge.

In many subjects the tipping point can be quite nuanced. Interesting work into the difference in response between fragile Grade 7+ GCSE historians and secure Grade 7+ Historians, concludes that it often comes down to a student's choice and deployment of abstract nouns that makes the critical difference in highlighting the student's analytic nuance within an elegant conclusion or otherwise. The example given was the distinction between the use 'the public' versus 'the people'. They look to be interchangeable, "[but] choosing 'the public' gives this analytic claim more power. A 'public' has agency. It can be appealed to. There are mechanisms by which a 'public' can respond". What struck me when reading the article in which this observation is made was the attention to detail applied by the teacher in evaluating the differences, in doing so she has also been able to craft digestible feedback. Such analysis is worth the effort.

Much of what is written above may feel a little uncomfortable for those teaching and studying in subjects where answers are right or wrong with little in between. Nevertheless, advice is as pertinent, if not more so, in those subjects. I have taught Maths and Physics and students are often quick to appreciate why their answer was wrong. They are often able to articulate why it is wrong with a gentle nudge. However, that appreciation can be very specific to the question in hand, as a result relatively superficial. It is important to explore with the student why they got it wrong – allowing access to the depth of understanding needed to identify the inhibitor, enabling the development required to apply tricky theories with the flexible pragmatism expected in the upper echelons of the mark scheme.

The overarching conclusion that we have come to is that students and teachers need to have the time and space to develop and maintain effective feedback loops, and that those loops require the positive engagement and interaction between the provider and the receiver of the feedback. We know that the nuance and detail of the approach will vary from subject to subject and by year group. Students and teachers need to work together create the conditions and the relationships needed for effective feedback. This research has taught us that must prioritise the development of those conditions in every teaching group at the beginning of each academic year.

You can read more about our research community on our website:

<https://www.catscambridge.com/research/>

CATS Cambridge students are very welcome to join our research community to join teacher led projects or to start their own. If you are interested in do this, let your PT know

You will find a longer version of the article above and a video there or by following this link:

<https://www.catscambridge.com/research/adopting-a-flavoursome-approach-to-making-feedback-moreish/>
