



Olympic Gold Medalist Alex Danson MBE inspires girls at NGHS Sports Awards Evening

Nottingham Girls' High School was proud and delighted to host its third Sports Awards Evening on Thursday 20 April in its new performing arts centre 'the space'. The PE Department were especially excited to welcome guest speaker, Alex Danson MBE, to present the awards.

Alex Danson became a household name after securing the gold medal for Team GB, along with her teammates, in women's field hockey at the Rio Olympics in 2016. Prior to this, Alex already held an impressive array of medals from other championships such as the Commonwealth Games and Euro Hockey Championships as well as a string of international honours.



The girls (and staff) at NGHS see Alex as a true sporting role model, having been just 16 when she made her senior international debut in 2001. She was also runner-up in the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year in that same year. Her passion for her sport is an inspiration and one that the school holds up as an example to all of the girls. Head of PE, Julie Abbott, said: "Alex is a brilliant role model for our girls, totally dedicated to hockey and passionate about sport. We are

genuinely thrilled that she is joining us today, we all remember watching the Rio games and being so proud and excited when Team GB clinched the gold."

Alex's gallant view of success is also inspirational, seldom referring to "me" but focusing instead on "us" when describing sporting victories, emphasising the importance of teamwork. Her realistic approach to sport in general pulls no punches either, as she once told Sky Sports: "Sport is amazing and it can also be heartbreaking," acknowledging that setbacks and defeats are all part of the journey, a sentiment shared by the school's Head, Julie Keller, who said: "We really encourage our girls to push themselves, work together

and strive to be the best they can be, and of course they will occasionally fall down, but the important thing is that they learn from this and bounce right back – no sore losers here.”

Alex attended an independent all girls’ school herself, further testament to the opportunities available in such a learning environment, and the girls at Nottingham Girls’ High School were delighted to meet her. She spent the afternoon signing autographs and even coaching some of the Senior girls and giving them some tips. Charlotte Staniforth in Year 11 enjoyed the training session and said: “It was brilliant to meet Alex, she was friendly and helpful, and even showed us the amazing reverse stick hit that she’s famous for. We all had a go but it will be a while before we reach her standard – she’s the best in the world.”



The evening itself was a great success. Alex gave an inspirational speech about her journey to success and stressed the importance of practice and dedication, and how the whole squad are involved in the victory, not just one individual. A procession of girls then received awards for their incredible sporting achievements in all of the sports on offer at the school.



Nottingham Girls’ High School has an excellent record of sporting successes reflected in the fact that it was shortlisted for Nottinghamshire Sporting School of the Year for five years in a row, and placed in the top three on three occasions. The school also provides girls with amazing opportunities to travel overseas to take part in competitions – a recent Hockey tour to Barcelona having just returned.

Extending their thanks to Alex Danson for attending, the school is always eager to promote a love of sport and fitness and has some exciting plans for the expansion of its sporting facilities - having such an influential role model was a real bonus on this night, as Julie Keller stressed: “We’re so grateful to Alex for coming along. It’s fantastic for the girls to see just what is possible when you challenge yourself, focus on what you love doing, and never stop practising.”

Alex herself loves keeping active and enjoys surfing, snowboarding, climbing and cycling, on top of which she has also completed an OU degree with a view to going into teaching - a career that would tie in with her work as an Athlete Mentor for Sky Sports Living for Sport and the Youth Sport Trust; she is truly an all-round inspiration.

Notes to Editors

About Nottingham Girls' High School

Nottingham Girls' High School is an independent day school for girls between the ages of 4 – 18. Part of the GDST (Girls' Day School Trust) Nottingham Girls' High School is one of the largest schools within the group with over 800 pupils.

About the GDST

The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) is the leading group of independent girls' schools in the UK, with nearly 4,000 staff and 20,000 students between the ages of three and 18. As a charity that owns and runs a family of 24 schools and two academies in England and Wales, it reinvests all its income in its schools. Founded in 1872, the GDST has a long history of pioneering innovation in the education of girls.

For more details about GDST schools, please go to www.gdst.net and follow us on Twitter @GDST