



Guided Home Learning

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Through our pioneering and holistic Guided Home Learning initiative, launched in March 2020, GDST girls have found that their educational experience has remained engaging, exciting, varied and uplifting - in spite of the limitations and challenges imposed by the pandemic.



Teaching and Learning: Collaboration and Innovation

“When we set up Guided Home Learning last March, it rapidly became clear that EdTech could be so much more than just a facilitator of live teaching and learning. It presented opportunities for collaborative teaching and learning between our schools. GDST teachers work across the family of 25 schools, pooling and sharing ideas, resources, pedagogy and expertise, thereby enriching and broadening their students’ virtual classroom experience and bringing the curriculum to life.”

Dr Kevin Stannard, Director of Innovation and Learning



Outstanding teaching and learning have continued at the GDST as standard. Live lessons delivered by expert teachers, taught in line with students' existing timetables, provide continuity, consistency, structure and routine: key pillars of sound mental health for young people at a time of significant unpredictability.

To give you a flavour of what's on offer to GDST pupils: Spring 2021 will see, amongst other things, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils from schools across the GDST family of schools eco-coding together as part of the **Junior Techathon**; Year 6 girls from Nottingham to Notting Hill working together on an **Animation** project; live science experiments courtesy of the Royal Institution, for girls in Years 3-6; and live Shakespeare workshops from the **Globe Theatre** for Junior and Prep girls of all ages.

At Senior and Sixth Form level, students can undertake the interactive and self-paced **GDST Leadership** or **Limitless Learning** initiatives, carrying out research, sharing ideas and debating in real time with peers from different schools. The collaborative approach inherent in Guided Home Learning really does offer students across the GDST family, opportunities for ever-greater diversity of thought and discussion.

A Balanced Curriculum

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Guided Home Learning is so much more than academic courses: we are proud of the wide-ranging and exciting **extra curricular activities** the GDST as a family of schools can offer. Outside academic lessons, GDST students continue to access a rich extracurricular offer: sport, music, art, drama, careers guidance continue, in innovative and creative ways.

Sport is delivered through a range of fun and creative activities, including the **GDST Lockdown Dance Challenge**, with students across the 25 schools choreographing, recording and sharing a one-minute dance. 'We set tasks and challenges to ensure pupils have time away from their screens each day,' says GDST Consultant Teacher and Director of Sport at Sutton High School, Alexis Williamson-Jones.

An alternative for those not in the mood for exercise might be a lunchtime **Book Club Live** session which allows book lovers to come together for light-hearted discussion.



GDST Girls Are Future Ready

As educators, we are aware, more than ever, that we need to stimulate and motivate our students, putting their needs first, maintaining momentum and morale, and ensuring they are as prepared as they can be for life after Covid.

We have adapted our **GDST CareerStart Programme** for Guided Home Learning, to encourage Sixth-Formers across the GDST to learn together on topics such as university preparation and transferable skills.

'The GDST CareerStart programme focuses on **practical employability skills**, in order to expose students to the workplace earlier,' says Karen Kimura, GDST Learning and Development Manager. 'Students also develop greater confidence from continued exposure to career related skills despite lockdown.'

To see an example of this in practice, look no further than **GDST Enterprise** which sees student teams, mentored by GDST Alumnae, competing with each other to set up a social enterprise. The added challenge of doing this in lockdown, via Guided Home Learning, has only made students more creative and determined.



Health and Wellbeing

Our students' **wellbeing and happiness** lie at the heart of everything we do, which is why expert, **bespoke pastoral care** underpins all elements of Guided Home Learning. Students continue to have daily access to form tutors, heads of year, school nurses and school counsellors, as well as a raft of resources and support through **robust PSHE provision**. 'PSHE lessons provide a dedicated space and time to specifically develop social and emotional awareness and skills as well as an understanding of the wider world,' explains Michelle Holder, Pastoral Trust Consultant Teacher. 'This in turn enables students to reach their full potential and develop resilience to thrive and cope with the pressures of the world in which we live.'

All GDST pupils have access to the **Positive programme**, which sets out to equip them with age-appropriate tools, such as the 'Emotional Barometer', to monitor their emotional wellbeing, identify warning signs and address them early.

And while technology has provided a lifeline during this period enabling schools to facilitate and reach students, learning opportunities have not all been screen-led. Guided Home Learning necessarily encourages young people to learn **away from the screen**, too. The **GDST Gets Active** challenge will see the GDST family of schools competing to see who is the most active during the month of February, encouraging everyone to get outside and clock up the km for their school.'



“Even before the pandemic began, we were already ensuring our girls are future ready: equipping them with technological skills and knowledge; providing a device for every one of our pupils; supporting our IT teams and E-learning specialists to be experts in their fields; and developing opportunities for our pupils to come together and showcase their ideas through events like the Junior and Senior Techathons.

Without making light of the incredibly difficult period we have lived through, it has in many ways provided the rocket fuel to accelerate our digital learning programme. And we have shown that these technologies can foster the arts and sustain pastoral care as much as they facilitate academic learning.

We are confident that the GDST’s Guided Home Learning will leave a legacy of innovation, collaboration and creativity that will enrich face-to-face teaching well after lockdown has (hopefully) become a distant memory.”

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST