

The importance of a strong community and the value of caring

Roy Blatchford

May 2022

As UK students enter the month of May there is the resumption of the familiar routine of exam preparation and entry into invigilated exam conditions - a reset 'normal' after the hiatus of the past two summers.

Yet spare a moment of reflection for millions of students - in different parts of the world - denied the opportunity to enter exam rooms and show what they know and can do. So many will either miss exams altogether in war-torn zones, or will have to be content with online testing and coursework.

Much has been written recently in the UK media about the fascinating city of Shanghai, a city and schooling system I have visited: [Postcard from Shanghai](#).

So I give over this column to the students, teachers and families of this outstanding international school. Their tale below, and it continues today, is a tale of our global village - and the value and values of caring.

The word 'Community' can be defined in many ways. It can be used to describe those connected through our physical location, our common interests and association, or even our shared values. However we choose to define it, we can agree that being surrounded and supported by a strong community in times of challenge is especially important.

At Dulwich College Shanghai Puxi our community is connected through our care for one another, our concern for the wellbeing of our students and families, and our College Values: [Aim High, Work Hard, Be Kind and Respectful, Make a Difference](#). We all aspire to make a positive difference in the world, one action at a time. Sometimes our community makes a difference globally, and sometimes we look a little closer to home.

The last few weeks have undeniably been a challenging time for those in Shanghai. Throughout the challenges though, we continue to see the strength and generosity of the Dulwich Puxi community shining through.

Below is a story of how the parent community, led by the Friends of Dulwich, stepped up in recent weeks to demonstrate their care and support for our teachers during this difficult period.

During Spring Break, concerned about challenges staff may have in securing food during lockdown, the Friends of Dulwich core committee reached out to the broader parent body with the aim of creating care packages to augment those being sent out from within the Dulwich College International organisation:

Message from the Friends of Dulwich:

The epidemic in Shanghai is unexpected and has caused supply shortages. All our Dulwich College Shanghai Puxi teachers are currently in lockdown with their families. Many of the expatriate teachers have been in China for 2-3 years, unable to reunite with their families abroad. Now they are teaching online and, in many cases, taking care of their own children at the same time. Dulwich Puxi is a people-oriented international community full of love. The Friends of Dulwich, by combining the resources of our parents, has begun plans to send a care package to all staff to show our care and support. Now, we are collecting parents' opinions for this purchasing process, and donations will be welcomed. This difficult time will soon pass, and we look forward to all teachers and families getting back to school safely.

The response was immediate and overwhelming:

"This is so thoughtful! I was so worried about the teachers, not sure if they know how to do group purchase and how can they store up their supplies."

"Donated. I hope everyone is safe and sound."

"I hope they can feel the warmth of life in a foreign country."

"I hope the teachers can get through this tough time."

"So lovely to see the teachers receiving supplies. Thank you to all who were able to arrange deliveries and source products. This is what community is all about."

"The College is a community made up of the management team, teachers, students and parents. We don't stand outside to evaluate the College, we are all inside the College and we make it better together."

"We all belong to the big Dulwich Puxi family, full of love and care."

Within 24 hours the Friends of Dulwich had collected more than enough to fund the care packages and had put together a team of volunteers to handle the logistics. Over the course of the next two weeks, they arranged the delivery of incredible care packages to every single member of staff.

The first priority was those with babies and young children, in order to get much needed supplies such as nappies and baby formula to them as soon as possible. Next, were care packages that included both food staples and some special “comfort food” treats, and then an even larger care package with important staples that would last a long time.

Finally, one last care package was sent specifically to the children with some special treats. In total, four care packages were sent out, utilising logistics companies and a range of expertise and knowledge from within the parent community. The mammoth effort was a true testament to the strength of the Dulwich College Shanghai Puxi community, and the response from staff highlighted the close bonds and connections we share.

Thank you, Friends of Dulwich and all of the parents who supported this effort. You truly embody the College Values. The actions of our community over the past few weeks have exemplified what it means to ‘Make a Difference’, and shown us the importance of having a strong, supporting community that cares for one another.