

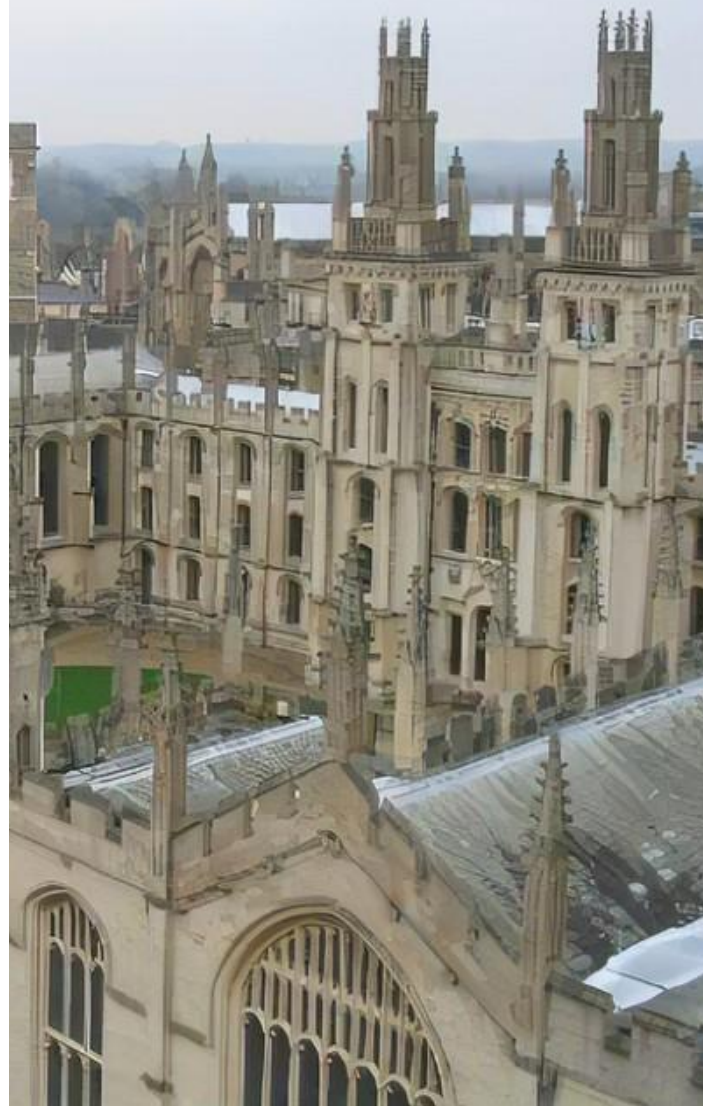
Annual Report 2021



DECEMBER 31

Registered Charity Number: 1196570

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Liverpool.**



Our winning formula

Our Director's thoughts



Whilst 2021 has been another difficult year to operate, Aspire Liverpool has continued to build on its offer and engage students throughout. Holding our monthly sessions online has meant that our students have had opportunities that would ordinarily be really difficult to organise. Our Year 10 and Year 12 students have heard from world renowned academics, from Prof. Peter Frankopan covering the Byzantine Empire to Dr Jackie Bell, our scouser hopefully on her way to space!

It was disappointing to have to cancel our residential trip to St Peter's College, Oxford. We had two full coaches booked, 110 people in total with 10 teaching staff. Ultimately, safety comes first and we were extremely grateful to the team at St Peters for their support in pulling together a virtual day of activities for our Year 12 students who were in the process of deciding where to apply to over the summer. A massive thank you to Professor Judith Buchanan, Master of St Peter's College, for her unwavering support for Aspire and helping to make things happen! We now plan to run the residential in Easter 2022. I would also like to thank the access & outreach officers at both our link colleges: Anna McMutrie (St Peter's, Oxford) and Tess Leyland (Magdalene College, Cambridge) for their support with the delivery of our programme.

September and October were of course our busiest months in the run up to the October 15th deadline for Oxbridge applications. **Our winning formula** has seen yet another increase in applications from Liverpool students, a fantastic 130 applications were submitted, up from 93 last year. It was a tremendous task to organise mock interviews for all of our applicants but we did it! Many thanks to all our expert volunteers who offered their time to conduct mock interviews. Aspire couldn't deliver on its programme without our passionate volunteers who are all working towards getting more scousers into Oxbridge. That's what we do.

2022 is set to be a big year for Aspire. Having been granted charitable status in November this year, we're now on the path to broaden how we operate and deliver our services with the clear objective of advancing the education of students here in the city. We'll be building upon our current offer, looking at new ways to engage with our cohorts, and will aim to have a more visible presence in schools (Covid permitting!).

None of this would be possible without the financial backing and support of our patrons, and now trustees, Sir Terry Leahy and William Currie. We have a lot more to do, but a clear determination to improve the life chances of students here in Liverpool.

Harry Doyle

Oxbridge 2021 Results

Going into results day 2021, Aspire Liverpool had 29 students who held conditional offers for either Oxford or Cambridge. 16 of those offer holders were involved in the Aspire programme from of the outset. I'm please to report that out of the 29 students, 27 gained their place at Oxbridge with a further 1 student gaining a place at Cambridge by adjustment, taking our total for 2021 to 28. Only one of the 16 original Aspire offer holders did not gain their place.

A ranking of schools by Oxbridge admissions is as follows:

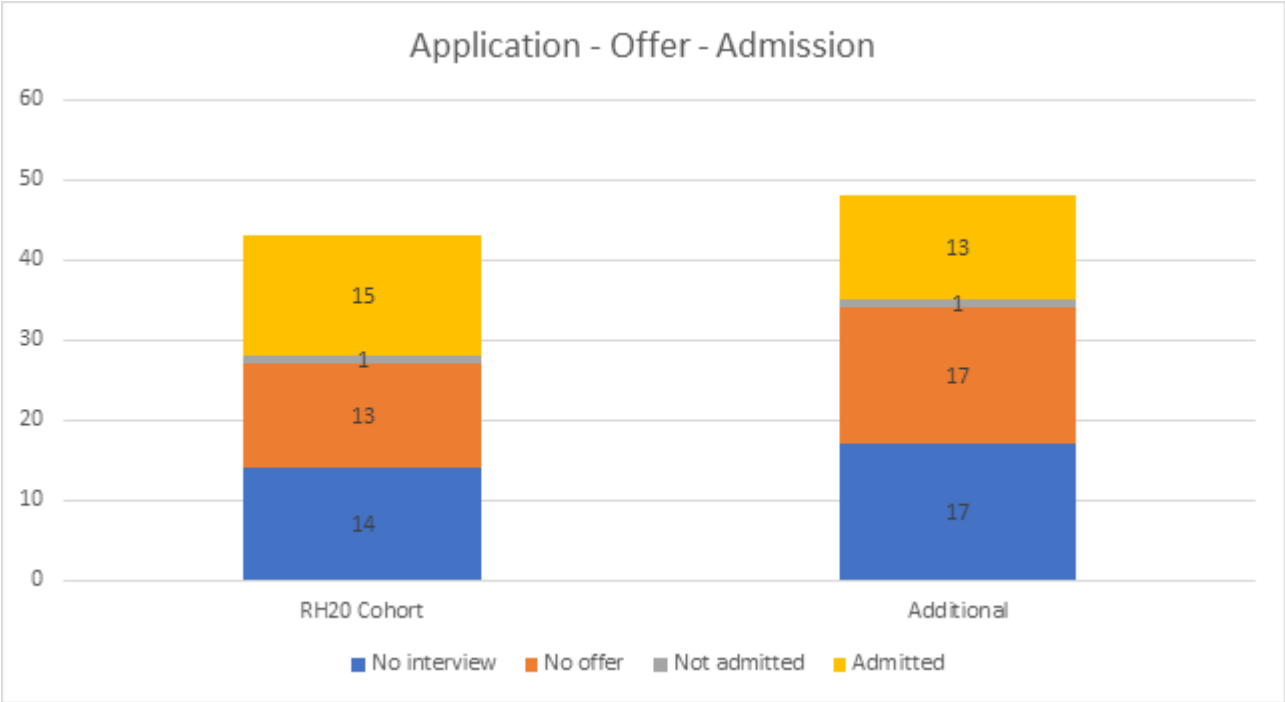
Ranking	School	No: Oxbridge Admissions
1	The Blue Coat School	7
=	St. Edwards College	7
2	Liverpool College	5
3	Calderstones	2
4	Bellerive	1
=	Cardinal Heenan	1
=	King David	1
=	North Liverpool Academy	1
=	Notre Dame	1
=	St Hilda's	1
=	The Belvedere Academy	1

These results indicate that Aspire Liverpool is starting to have an impact on Oxbridge admissions across the city. We know from the Sutton Trust that in 2016, 2017 & 2018, the average number of applicants from the city was 76, with only an average of 18 gaining places. For this 2020/21 cycle, we had 93 applications, 29 offers and 28 confirmed acceptances. This would mean that we are gradually increasing that overall success rate. From the data above over the 3-year period, the success rate from application to acceptance was 23.7%. This year's figures have us on a 30.1% success rate. Almost a third of our Oxbridge applicants from the city gained their places.

Within the city, Aspire is also proving itself as an Oxbridge leader with success rates greater amongst our cohort of students. The table below breaks down this data to show you how students did at each stage of the process. Overall, **43** Reaching Higher students applied to Oxbridge last year with an additional **50** students across the city

also applying, taking our total up to **93**. **67.4%** of our RH20 students were invited to interview, **55.2%** of those students received an offer, and **93.8%** gained their place. When compared to students who were not on the RH20 programme, **66%** were invited to interview, **45.5%** of those received an offer (Although one student eventually gained a place through adjustment after not receiving an offer), and **92.3%** gained their place.

Overall, the success rate from application to acceptance for RH20 was **34.9%**, and of those additional students, the success rate was **26%**.



2022 Applicants

Following the application deadline on October 15th, we have had a record number of Oxbridge applications from Liverpool schools. In total, 130 students have applied for a place at Oxbridge this year compared to 93 last year. This means we have met our first target for this academic year in increasing the number of applications from the city.

A ranking of schools by Oxbridge applications is as follows:

Ranking	School	No: Oxbridge Applications	Difference on 2020 applicants
1	The Blue Coat School	46	↑ 17
2	St. Edwards College	30	↑ 14
3	Liverpool College	13	↑ 1
4	The Belvedere Academy	8	↑ 5
5	Cardinal Heenan	6	↑ 2
6	St Hilda's	5	↑ 3
=	King David	5	↑ 2
7	Broughton Hall	3	↑ 1
=	Calderstones	3	↓ 1
=	St Margaret's Academy	3	🟡 0
8	Archbishop Blanch	2	↓ 2
=	Holly Lodge	2	↑ 2
=	St John Bosco	2	↑ 2
9	Broadgreen	1	↑ 1
=	West Derby	1	↑ 1

The table shows that there is still a dominance of the top 3 schools for Oxbridge applications, although we are starting to see some of our other schools putting forward more than 1 candidate which is a step in the right direction.

At the time of writing, **87 out of the 130 applicants had been invited to interview** at Oxbridge. This indicates a progression to interview rate of **67%**. Last year, the total number of applicants interviewed was **60** which means we have already surpassed this with 27 additional students being called for interview this year. All of our applicants were offered a mock interview before their interviews.

Offers will be released in January 2022.

Impact

At Aspire, whilst we have the aim of increasing the number of scousers at Oxbridge, we value the impact our programme has on individual lives. A large number of high earners are Oxbridge educated. We know, for example, that around three quarters of high court judges are Oxbridge educated and we want to ensure that scousers know that the doors to Oxford and Cambridge are open to them.

We spoke to **Faye Roberts** at the beginning of her first term at Oxford University. Faye, a former pupil at Notre Dame and an Aspire success story, now finds herself studying Ancient & Modern History at one of the world's best universities:

What is life like at Oxford?

I've been in Oxford for just over two weeks, and I am enjoying life in a new city. It is taking a while to get used to all the traditions of the university and the structure of work which is very different to school, but it's all enjoyable. Balancing work and a social life is sometimes difficult, but everyone is in the same boat and figuring it out together. I've met so many new people, not just in my college, but in the wider university and continue to meet many more. The city itself is much smaller than Liverpool, but it's nice to bump into people or see some friendly faces in the streets.

Do you feel you fit in?

I was worried about the people I would meet in Oxford, for a long time I assumed Oxford was a place for rich private school students and not a place for someone like me. However, I've met many people from similar backgrounds to me and we all have many things in common. There is a very friendly environment within the university, and you find many ways to meet new people, whether that be in a social setting, the people you live with, or in your academic tutorials. It can be quite strange coming to a new city and living with a group of strangers, but I think it's important that no one feels pressured to start university and immediately make the best of friends; there is so many people I have yet to meet or speak to properly, and I think it will take time before solid friendships form, but it is nice that everyone is so open-minded about this.

What made you choose Oxbridge?

My first choice was, for a long time, Liverpool but after the first lockdown I started to consider how moving away and living in a different city could be beneficial to me. I had never considered Oxbridge as a choice of university until the summer of year 12 when my teachers selected me for Aspire. It was this encouragement and my own research of Oxbridge, Oxford in particular, that led me to apply. In all honesty I did not expect to get into Oxford, but it proves that you will never know unless you try and it's better to take the risk than wonder what if.

How did Aspire help you?

Personally, I think the resources Aspire provide are the most beneficial in the somewhat daunting Oxbridge application process. One resource I found particularly helpful was the arrangements of mock interviews. The interviews are a major part of the application, and it was very useful to have a 'practice run' of an interview before the real thing. In addition, perhaps the most beneficial resource that Aspire provided me was a mentor in my chosen subject who studies at Oxbridge. My mentor studied history at Cambridge and was able to help me with the intense application process of Oxbridge; her own experiences of the process and her support in the months that followed was invaluable to me. Aspires guidance and ability to provide support throughout the process as well as their continued communication now has been extremely useful.

Have you come across any other scousers at Oxford?

Yes! I met a girl, who was not only on Aspire herself but coincidentally went to school with one of my best friends, in the McDonald's queue! There is also a fellow scouser in my college and I have found many more people with links to Liverpool. For example, some people have relatives who are scouse, have lived or live near Liverpool, or simply support Liverpool FC and love to chat about Liverpool with me. I've also met scouser outside the university who are in Oxford for a variety of reasons and there is a lot more scousers here than you may think. They say no matter where you go you will find a scouser and with such a distinctive accent, it's very easy to pick us out!

Would you recommend Oxbridge to other scousers? Why?

I would 100% recommend Oxbridge to other scousers. The idea of living in a city and attending a prestigious university is a very strange concept to a lot of people, including myself, however, since being here for a few weeks now, I've realised it's a lot more normal than people may think. There are so many talented scousers who have the ability to apply and be successful at Oxbridge, you just need the confidence to try. It is a different experience to other universities and a different place to Liverpool, but one thing I've realised is Liverpool isn't going anywhere, you're only a train ride away from home and get to spend a lot of time at home too (8-week terms, 6-week breaks). The opportunity to apply to Oxbridge is something I would recommend everyone thinking about applying to do.

Do you think it's important to have more scousers at Oxbridge? Why?

Definitely. We deserve to be in places like Oxbridge just as much as anyone else from other parts of the country. I think there are huge misconceptions surrounding Oxbridge, including the stereotype of posh, rich private school students. It is only through the inclusion of students from places like Liverpool that such stereotypes can be broken down and Oxbridge can become a more accessible place for not only scousers, but for those who may have not had the same opportunities as the above-mentioned private school students. With a larger representation of scousers at Oxbridge, those who may have doubts about applying to a university that seems so different to their life in Liverpool can step outside their comfort zone and succeed in a new environment that they are suited for just as much as any other students who apply here.



We're incredibly proud of Faye and all our scousers at Oxbridge!

Thank you for reading our 2021 report.

A special thank you to our steering group, teaching staff and partners who have supported us this year. We look forward to working with you all in 2022.

Our Trustees



Sir Terry Leahy



William Currie



Rachel Stalker