



The Hemel Hempstead School

News

17 July 2009

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HeadLines

In the early sixties, when I looked into the telescope I have mentioned before in these headlines, I learnt that my grandparents' stories of the 'man in the moon' weren't necessarily true and I could see no evidence of it being made of cheese either. By the last year of the sixties, the surface of the moon became clearer! Forty years ago this week, the first man to step onto the surface of the moon did so. Neil Armstrong made history that day: the film footage and the 'small step for man, giant step for mankind' line was used and misused constantly over the next decades. Since then, people have disputed that it ever happened and conspiracy theories have abounded but it remains one of the iconic moments of the century.

Which moments will we remember from this year? I will remember marvellous moments from last year's summer school, the joy of seeing those wonderful examination results for the first time, the exultation of students and staff who had done so well. I will recall the pleasure at experiencing the performances of 'Anything Goes' and 'Rock Challenge' and 'Music on the Moor' and much between. I will remember many excellent lessons I have observed. All the letters and awards and accolades we have received culminating in being named in the top 30 schools will come to mind.

Every student and member of staff will have different memories but there is so much to look back on with pride and so much to which we look forward with eager anticipation. As ever, Work Related Learning Week has been a marvellous time for us all punctuated as it was this week with our dancers' appearance in front of Prince Charles at the British Council Event noted elsewhere in the newsletter. Well done to Mrs Botha, Miss Billinge and Miss Sepala. Well done to Mrs Bailey on her fabulous organisation of the great 'Music on the Moor' last weekend.

Have a safe and happy summer holiday. I look forward to seeing all our students, old and new on 3rd September. Congratulations to all our staff and students on a magnificent year. Thank you to parents and carers for all your support.

Some of you will be delighted that these are the last headlines for a while. Others will be at a loss for holiday reading. I promise or threaten, depending on how you look at it, that we will be back next academic year with some more highlights of The Hemel Hempstead School.

Sandra Samwell, Headteacher

Uniform

May I remind parents not to buy canvas shoes in place of proper sturdy school shoes in preparation for the new school year. Canvas shoes are not a part of regular school uniform. Students who wear them to school on the first day, or any day, will be sent home.

Sandra Samwell, Headteacher

Gold Letters issued recently:

Letter 236 Interim Report – Year 7

Letter 237 Interim Report – Year 8

Letter 238 Interim Report – Year 10

All Gold Letters can be viewed on our website:

www.hhs.herts.sch.uk

School policies can be viewed on our website under 'about HHS/School Policies'. If you require a hard copy of any of the policies please get in touch with the School Office.



ARTS NEWS

Big Arts Week Report

We had an extremely busy Arts Week! Quite apart from the Summer Concert, we had a Performance Poet, Chinese calligraphy workshops, an IT Doodle competition, fantastic lunchtime dance performances – the list could go on and on!

Two things to report on in more detail: first, the fiendishly difficult Arts Quiz, which was won by Ross Taylor of 9A. The boy certainly knows his artists! The hardest question, which defeated everyone, was the name of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog – Flush. Famous because of the poem she wrote in Flush's honour.

Secondly, mention must be made of the lessons in this week, where teachers in all subjects tried to use one or other of the Arts to make lessons more memorable. In Maths, Year 7 made up some amazing raps on subjects such as Fractions and Negative Numbers while in Science Year 8 made models of erupting volcanoes. A challenging task for Year 9s in French was to describe a famous painting (in French!) to a partner well enough for him or her to be able to draw it. Year 10s sang British patriotic songs in Citizenship to explore the concept of 'being British', while Year 12 students went in role to debate Cromwell's reforms. Other exciting activities included a Dragon's Den experience for Year 7 in English, and a novel way of learning vocabulary through the use of Saint Saen's 'Carnival of the Animals'. An ambitious idea emerged from the Science and Art departments – The Solar System is to be painted, to scale, on the ceiling of the Science corridor!

Well done to everyone who took part in this week.

Ms Darby, Assistant Headteacher

English Department Learning Leader Commendations for July

Eliza Dickinson 7P
Jemma Whitbourn 7P
Emily Wager 7P
Tessa Wilson 7P
Chloe Hann 8F

The History Boys

The History Boys is a very hard play to perform, dealing, as it does, with themes such as sexuality, the teacher-student relationship, inherent establishmentarianism and (perhaps most importantly) the inanity of the National Curriculum and the danger of an overbearing headteacher. Watching the performance we were treated to, courtesy of the direction of the peerless Miss Kat Smith, you might have been forgiven in thinking it is the easiest play in the world to do.

I start with the best performance I have ever seen, regardless of stage, or age, or 'professional skill', the absolutely exquisite Hector, played by Dan Mahoney. You could have been forgiven in thinking that The Hemel Hempstead School had hired a genuine Shakespearean actor to play the role, given the adeptness with which Dan played the part. Sharing his pain, his anguish, his delight, his disgust, the audience were treated to a feast of acting talent, which displayed all of the true themes Alan Bennett wished to portray in his work. Hector, an eccentric English teacher whose relationship with the boys often crossed the line into inappropriate was superbly captured by this true spark of acting genius. However, Mahoney could not have held the piece on his own. A good performance is the sum of its parts and there were many memorable depictions in this work. Max Farrelly gave an imperious performance as the sometimes laddish, sometimes sensitive Dakin, fully exploring the role of the 'alpha male' coupled with a sensitive interpretation of the conflicted teenage boy exploring his sexuality. Another difficult part, which was nonetheless adroitly handled by the occasionally exotically accented Sam Smith, is that of the troubled Posner, juggling his personal feelings and thoughts with the starkly religious views of his Jewish parents.

Of course, there could be no school without hardworking teachers, and we were given a tantalising glimpse into the workings of the staffroom as the increasingly stressed Irwin, played by George Pearce, was pulled first one way and then the other by the boys and his desire to teach them and the requirements of the tyrannical headmaster, given a real dash of character by Mr Ross. Both the headmaster and Irwin provided moments of comedy to the play. Supporting this feud was a solid performance from Mrs Tompkins as Miss Lintott, who brought a modicum of sanity to an overwrought school. From amongst the boys there were many good performances, their classroom banter being fast and sharp and their role within each scene given the slickness which comes from truly skilled directing. An enjoyable evening, and a fine adaptation of Bennett's piece.

Toby Podmore, ex-student

75th Anniversary of British Council
Wednesday 15th July
The Conservatory, Royal Hospital, Chelsea

We were honoured and privileged to be invited to perform at the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the British Council. Our pupils have rehearsed with Butshilo Nleya, Miss Sepala and Miss Billinge on a dance and drums routine to reflect our Partnership with Mgezwa School in Lusikisiki, South Africa.

His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, met our students at the end of the celebration and accepted a copy of our joint CD made with Mgezwa School students.

The programme was vibrant and exciting and many of the VIP guests approached us and the students to congratulate them. The first was Lord Kinnock who spoke to our students about their proposed dance tour to South Africa next year.

Below the photograph is what the British Council wrote about our Partnership and they are keen to help us develop it further.



‘The Hemel Hempstead School African dance and drums

The Hemel Hempstead School have choreographed a dance routine with drum accompaniment in response to their deepening friendship through the FfID Global School Partnership scheme with Mgezwa Junior Secondary School, Lusikisiki, on the Eastern Cape in South Africa.

As well as learning cultural relevance of dance and music, the schools trade in ideas of global citizenship, with Year 8 and 9s discussing the fundamental issues of freedom and democracy while comparing the structure of politics in each country. As well as mirroring lessons in History, Maths and Physical Education, they have participated in further joint activities, such as the Annual Fun Run, when the students paired up and ran together even though 6000 miles apart.

The partnership continues to flourish after starting two years ago with a visit from the nephew of Nelson Mandela, Joseph Kobo, and continues to enhance the confidence and awareness of the students, engaging them on a personal level with concepts of global citizenship.’



Dates for Your Diary

Arrangements for the start of Autumn Term

Wednesday 2nd September from 2 pm

Students with issues arising from GCSE or GCE AS results or seeking to amend option choices should see their Heads of House (in M9) to discuss these. Sixth Form staff will be available for consultation.

All students (Year 12 and 13) who have chosen to undertake courses with Cavendish, JFK, Kings Langley or West Herts College should register with Consortium Office staff in M9. Many will also need to book appropriate transport for their courses that begin on Monday 7th September.

Thursday 3rd September Year 7 to be on site at 8.30 am for registration in Form rooms at 8.40 am
Year 12 induction in M9 at 9 am
Years 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13 to registration in Form rooms at 10 am

At 1 pm there will be a barbecue lunch for Year 12 following which any remaining option queries will be addressed; otherwise students may leave.

Year 12 and 13 students are not in school on Friday 4th September. However, students who have registered to attend courses at Cavendish, JFK or Kings Langley should be in school by break to travel to their host establishment for tour and information sessions during periods 3 and 4. Classes for Year 12 and 13 students will commence on Monday 7th September.

PTA News

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us raise money over the last year.

The PTA has given money to the PE Department for six new table tennis tables, bought two digital cameras for the Art Department, contributed money towards the Honduras trip, bought weather equipment for Geography, and helped the History Department with the launch of Hemel at War - online.

Also we have catered at every parents' evening and all the House events.

Over the summer break could we ask that you all do a little bit towards raising much needed funds for the PTA by emptying your wardrobes, cupboards etc of all items you no longer need so we can sell them at our next Jumble Sale in October. We can take items from you as soon as we return in September; clothes, good quality books, DVDs, bric a brac, giftware, etc., (please do not send in anything that really should go to the tip).

Also, if you have any good quality second hand/used uniform please send it to us as we can sell it on. At the Year 6 taster day last week we managed to sell £240 worth of used uniform.

May we wish you all, our PTA members, a very happy holiday.

Judith Stallworthy, Chair HHSA (01442 393266 or mobile 07749 727350), email s.stallworthy@sky.com

Diploma Success

I was privileged to be invited to 'Inspire....' last week, the showcase of the Year 10 Creative and Media Diploma students that took place at West Herts College.

The Diploma is a new qualification, which is open to students from all over Dacorum. The students spend all day Thursday working together and study a range of disciplines, such as photography, design, drama, film and dance. The focus is on the commercial application of these skills, and the course is perfect for students who are interested in a range of creative arts, but who are also clear about the need to earn a living when they leave education.

The exhibition showed how much the students have achieved in the first year of the course. On display in the foyer were some spectacular, colourful costumes and props, made for characters in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Accompanying each exhibit was a design diary, from brief to completion. The students' photographs were also on display. All were of a very high standard, with some examples of real excellence.

Next we were shown a collection of mini-documentary films made by the students, on topics as varied as World War II aeroplanes, Nature's predators and Life on a Canal Boat. The films showed how the students had learned camera techniques, editing and sound editing.

Finally the students performed some devised dance and drama pieces based on the life around a bench in a park. They successfully conveyed humour, pathos and tragedy, performing with confidence and style.

This course requires the students to demonstrate independent learning and self-discipline as well as creativity, and this showcase showed just how well they had succeeded. We look forward to what they will be producing next year!

Ms Darby, Assistant Headteacher