



HeadLines

Some weeks ago, I delivered the good news to you that we had been designated a High Performing Specialist School and had been offered the opportunity to take on a second, additional specialism. Part of the process by which the choice is made is a consultation with stakeholders. This has just begun with governors and staff. And this newsletter serves as an introduction to the process for parents. More information will follow early next term in order for our first and second preference to be submitted by 17th October.

The eight specialisms we will be offered are:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Applied Learning (previously Vocational) | 5. Science |
| 2. Raising Achievement (RATL) | 6. Mathematics and Computing |
| 3. Leadership Partner School (Leading Edge) | 7. Languages |
| 4. Training School | 8. SEN/Inclusion |

The funding provided will be £60 per pupil per year (minimum £60k per year and maximum £90k per year from April 2009).

Option numbers 5-7 will be familiar to you as curriculum or subject specialisms. 1-4 and 8 may be less familiar. I believe that 1 and 8 should be disregarded as inappropriate for this school. They do not fit our curriculum or pupil profile or match up with the type of school we are. (The SEN option is usually perceived as more appropriate for Special schools.)

In presenting the pros and cons of the others on offer, we have to consider four points:

- Why we have selected a particular option and how it fits the needs of the locality.
- Which schools and other institutions we will be working in partnership with and how they support the achievement of the partnership's outcomes (e.g. community links).
- How the preferred options(s) fits with the school's development priorities and those of our partners.
- The outcomes that the partnership(s) are aiming to achieve and the timescales.

It seems to me that, bearing in mind the specialism of local schools and how we would like to develop in the future, there are three front-runners:

Raising Achievement through Teaching and Learning This programme is designed to support schools 'that have the potential to raise achievement'. We have already been identified as a suitable school for this programme because of (a) our own success in raising achievement and (b) our work with other schools. There are two parts to the programme: one is about developing and building good practice; the other is more about innovation. Our School Development Plan already identifies areas for development and raising achievement. The programme would fund us to focus on particular areas e.g. KS3 progress or KS5 achievement or the use of new technologies or approaches to pedagogy. We see ourselves as a 'Teaching and Learning' focused school and the funding would enable us to share our good practice within school and beyond the school. It is a new and high profile specialism which both fits our profile and provides us with a boost for further improvement involving all the staff, not just one area. It is about academic improvement and often focuses on English, Maths and Science as the key motivators. We would have to work with other schools at national and local level, which also matches our three-year plan to 'look outward' as well as 'inward' for inspiration and ideas. Very few schools have 'RA' as their specialism and relatively few are encouraged to do so. It would be an honour and a positive advantage to be chosen. I make no secret of the fact that I favour this as one of our preferences.

Science 'Chosen' as our potential second specialism four years ago initially, Science could enable us to enhance various areas of Science teaching and learning and to raise achievement substantially. We know from our Science weeks that it can engage the whole school community but that it does not involve the whole community throughout the year; any area apart from the Arts or Sport would be hard pressed to do this.

The circumstances have changed since Science was first mooted as our second specialism, but it remains a strong and vibrant choice and a complement to the Arts. However, as with all the curriculum specialisms, we would have to take on additional achievement targets at a time of new courses for the Science staff.

Mathematics and Computing A strong case has already been made by the Mathematics and ICT areas of the school to be able to work together closely. Both Maths and ICT produced strong results last year. Both departments see being linked as a more natural development than ICT being linked to Technology as at present. In terms of how we match up to expectations and how funding would improve our capacity to offer more, this has to be a front-runner. However, a local school already has this as its main specialism and this could well be a stumbling block to our success. Nevertheless, it is clear to see how the ICT and indeed, the Maths could have a whole school impact as our specialism.

As you can see there is much to consider before we put forward our two preferences. However, at this stage I would recommend that we propose one of the curriculum options, Mathematics and Computing or Science and the 'Raising Achievement' option, with the latter having my stronger recommendation as it enables us to be the flagship school in Hertfordshire for the specialism whilst enabling us to focus on building and maintaining strength in a variety of subjects over the next few years. It also allows us to work alongside the best schools nationally in sharing excellent practice in teaching and learning.

I would appreciate your written comments on the second specialism debate but in the meantime, we should not forget that we have been awarded the additional specialism because of our exceptional GCSE results; that is something to celebrate.

Sandra Samwell, Headteacher

HEMEL IN THE NEWS

In the 'Hemel Hempstead Gazette' last week, there was an article about Astley Cooper School which was unduly uncomplimentary. This week two letters appeared, one of which compared us unfavourably with Astley Cooper! For your interest, I reproduce the original letter and my reply. You may wish to write to the editor too in order to address the monstrous assertions of the letter they printed. I trust that they will print my letter next week or even phone up for an interview!

Hemel Hempstead Gazette letter:

Report is unfair to school when you look at the vital statistics

The fact is that Astley Cooper School is under threat of closure if it does not improve on its GCSE performance.

Unfortunately this is another initiative announced by our government to lead us to believe that they will be tough on educational failure.

Once again they demonstrate an unwillingness to address the real problem and use an unnecessary big stick, hitting out in all directions hurting the most vulnerable.

In the light of this new initiative I analysed the league tables for our local comprehensives.

While it is not possible to list all the facts through this letter, I think it fair to point out that the best performing Hemel Hempstead School boasted 185 eligible GCSE pupils of which 9.5 per cent have Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Astley Cooper on the other hand had 127 eligible GCSE pupils and 38.5 per cent listed as SEN.

It doesn't take a brain surgeon to work out that there is a strong imbalance in favour of Hemel Hempstead School of pupils without SEN.

One might also suspect a degree of selection taking place to ensure that teachers at Hemel Hempstead do not have to suffer the indignity of handling a high level of more challenging pupils.

We often criticise our teachers for failing pupils, but is it perhaps the system?

Might it not be a good test if we Hemel and Astley Cooper teachers swapped places for a term or two?

Under the assessment criteria the government employ we could see a reversal of fortunes.

My letter in reply:

'I was dismayed to read Jeff Streeter's ill informed and divisive letter in 'The Gazette' of June 25th 2008.

Whilst it is commonplace for national league tables to be criticised, it is not acceptable to set up one school in opposition to another school in this way. Since coming to Dacorum and Hertfordshire from another authority three years ago, I have been impressed by the excellent relations between schools and amongst the Headteachers in the area. Standards have risen sharply and many accolades have been heaped on local schools over the past year. The Hemel Hempstead School is pleased to be working closely with Astley Cooper and other schools on the new diplomas, for example.

Mr Streeter is working on a misapprehension as to how 'value added' is calculated for each school and how the admissions system in Hertfordshire state schools operates. There is no 'degree of selection' for my school and my staff would be justifiably offended at the jibe about 'suffer the indignity of handling a high level of more challenging pupils'. You only have to read our recent Ofsted report which judged our care and teaching of Special Needs students to be 'outstanding' to understand one of the many reasons why my school appeared in the list of the top hundred most improved schools of 2007 and in the top thirty six Specialist Schools nationally for its GCSE results and the value it adds to pupil performance.

As someone who was previously Headteacher of a school with a much higher level of SEN students than Astley Cooper School, I know that schools with a strong sense of purpose and exceptional teachers can overcome any odds. It seems to me that Anne Smithers and her staff are doing an excellent job for the benefit of the students at her school, just as my staff and I are working in a totally committed way to ensure success for the young people of The Hemel Hempstead School. It is vital that we do everything we can to enable all our schools to be discussed with a supportive understanding of the challenges we face rather than a simplistic analysis, which results in a 'my school is better than yours' rivalry. Partnership is at the heart of how secondary schools work together in Dacorum and the Headteachers of the borough are fully committed to this philosophy.'

Sandra J Samwell

HEADTEACHER'S COMMENDATIONS

For excellent work in Science: Stephanie Foster 8L, Alex Eykelbosch 8F, Sarah Grover 8P, Lillith Hickling 8N, Jack Dickinson 8A, Jordan Kelly 8P, Bradley Keeley 8C.

For participation in District Rounders Tournament: Matthew Bateman 7N, Francesca Quinn 7F, Sonia Odedra 7F, Zoe Littlechild 7L, Sarah Worger 7A, Alice Stride 7F, Tara Keith 7F, Jade Gardiner 7A.

For participation in Dance and Drama Festival: Melissa Hardy 9C, Thea Simpkins 9P, Philippa Carr 9P, Sam Flowerdew 9N, Emma Worger 9L, Carrie Smith 9F, Lucy Harding 9F, Alex Dukes 9L, James Tavener 9P, Daniel Cottrell 9F, William King 9L, Alexander Blake 9F, Alexander Radford 9C, Sharmin Sultana 9F, Georgina Ellis 9F, Katie Mogan 9F, Grace Kershaw 7F, Sonny Western 7A, Callie Waters 7C, Emily Crawley 7F, Francesca Quinn 7F, Lucy Bradbury 7A, Brittany Woods 8A, Shona Berloth 8F.

For representing the school in Athletics at the East Region final: Arron Austin 8C, Zachary Booth 8L, Dylan Bransgrove 8F, Jack Eykelbosch 8P, Jordan Hobbs 8N, Ryan Howe 8A, Sam Izzard 8L, Noah Jones 8L, Ben McFarlane Barnes 7L, James Shaw 8L, Charlie Stewart 8F, Abaan Suqlain 8N, Ross Taylor 8A, Cauley Woodrow 8L.

For representing the school in Athletics at the County Schools Championships: Sam Izzard 8A, Jack Eykelbosch 8P, Ross Taylor 8A, Courtney Hart 9N, Sarah Grover 8P, Paul Minter 11P, Kane Calcutt 11N, Holly Gallagher 11P, Rebecca Armorgie 9A, Alex Eykelbosch 8F.

For service to the school: Matthew Bateman, Ryan Georgiou, Lois Messenger, Alex Underhill, Beth Bellis, Courtney Rowe 7N.

For excellent work in Geography: Molly Banham 7F, Chloe Hann 7f, Jennifer Imrie 7F, Tara Keith 7F, Sonia Odedra 7F, Zoe Dennis 7L, Dionne Donaldson 7L, Tiffany Harrison 7L, Zoe Littlechild 7L, Alice Markham 7L, Louis Mayhew 7L, Mark Baldwin 7N, Daniel Ford 7N, Stephanie Horton 7N.



HOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL Monday 30th June

The final Major Performing Arts Festival is to be held this Monday. House Captains have worked extremely hard in the preparation for this event and it promises to be an exciting and enjoyable evening. Tickets cost £2 and are available from Student Services every break and lunch time. On the evening itself, doors open at 6.30 pm and the performances start at 7 pm. The anticipated finish is 9.30 pm. Refreshments will be provided by the HHSA.

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Mr Mitchell



Dates for Your Diary

Blue Week

30th Jun	HOUSE MUSIC
1st Jul	Yr 10 Art trip to Royal Academy of Art
2nd Jul	DISTRICT SPORTS Yr 12 Chemistry trip to Science Exhibition Art Show in Art Department, 4 – 6 pm
3rd Jul	Yr 10 Science (group 10W) trip to Great Revel End Farm Yr 10 History trip to Munich Parents' Information Evening in M9, 7 pm
4th Jul	Yr 7 Prizegiving, School Hall, 10 am Yr 8 Prizegiving, School Hall, 12.20 pm Yr 9 Prizegiving, School Hall, 2.30 pm

Gold Week

7th Jul	Yr 6 Mathland Yr 8 Gifted and Talented Science Activity
8th Jul	Yr 6 Mathland
8th – 16th Jul	Yr 10 French Exchange students here
9th Jul	Cross Curricular 'Olympics' Day
10th Jul	Yr 6 Taster Day Yr 10 Science (group 10B) trip to Bovingdon Nursery
11th Jul	Yr 10 Prizegiving, School Hall, 10 am
11th – 18th Jul	Yr 9 Lake District Trip Yr 9 Team Challenge Week D of E Gold and Silver Expeditions
12th – 17th Jul	Yr 10 History trip to Munich

ART SHOW

We are holding our annual GCSE and A level Art exhibition in the Art Department on Wednesday 2nd July from 4 – 6 pm.

We would love to see as many of you there as possible to celebrate the hard work and achievement of the students. We would particularly welcome Year 9 students and their families who wish to look at the GCSE work in preparation for the start of their course in September.

Mrs Lane

Library Notices

Orders from the Scholastic C2C magazine need to be in the Library by the end of the school day on Monday 30th June.

Please return any overdue books to the Library immediately. No fines will be charged between now and the end of term.

Mrs Krajewski, Librarian

Year 12 Higher Education Convention 24 June

On Tuesday 130 of our students were given the opportunity to attend this annual event at which over 120 higher education institutions were represented. Students were able to obtain prospectuses and to discuss entry procedures and courses with admissions tutors from these institutions. Also, a series of talks was provided during the day on matters which ranged from subject specific information to student finance. Despite the crowds and the heat, this was a valuable and informative day from which our students were able to gain a great deal. My thanks to all my colleagues who played a part in making this such a successful event.

Mr Ross

Gold Letters issued recently:

Letter 181 Year 10 Work Related Learning/Enterprise Week

Letter 182 Year 12 Work Related Learning/Enterprise Week

Letter 196 Year 10 Science visits

Letter 197 Year 12 Chemistry trip to Royal Society Science Exhibition

Letter 204 / 205 Years 7 – 10 Prizegiving Assemblies

Sickness/absence line

Please will all parents contact us daily if your child is sick, going to be late in due to a medical appointment, or is absent for any other reason. Please call our sickness/absence line on 01442 390103 by 9am if possible.

SPORT



FIXTURES

30th Jun Yr 10 Cricket, Peter Wright Memorial Trophy, semi final v Potten End (A) 5 – 8.45 pm

2nd Jul District Sports Athletics Yrs 7 – 11 @ Jarman Park 8.30 am – 5.15 pm

RESULTS

Yr 8 District Cup Cricket v Kings Langley – lost

Yr 10 Cricket Peter Wright Memorial Trophy quarter finals v Boxmoor CC – won by 101 runs.

FUN RUN RESULTS

Overall – Elite Race

1	Ross Taylor	8N	35.00
	Kieran North	8A	35.00
3	Max Farrelly	10N	36.12
4	Christian Schramm	8P	36.39
5	Greg Deer	Guest	37.04
6	Ollie Edwards	9N	37.11
7	Rory Tinker	7P	37.31
8	Jack Eykelbosch	8P	38.35
	Cauley Woodrow	8L	38.35
	Bradley Penhallow	9L	38.35
11	Daniel Twine	10P	38.38
12	Sam Izzard	8L	39.38
13	Adam King	9C	39.40
14	Josh Harris	10C	39.44
15	Rebecca Armorgie	9A	40.07

Overall – Wheelchair Race

1	Jack Morrell	8L	33.40
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Top 10 – Boys

1	Ross Taylor	8N	35.00
	Kieran North	8A	35.00
3	Max Farrelly	10N	36.12
4	Christian Schramm	8P	36.39
6	Ollie Edwards	9N	37.11
7	Rory Tinker	7P	37.31
8	Jack Eykelbosch	8P	38.35
	Cauley Woodrow	8L	38.35
	Bradley Penhallow	9L	38.35
11	Daniel Twine	10P	38.38
12	Sam Izzard	8L	39.38

Top 10 – Girls

15	Rebecca Armorgie	9A	40.07
41	Sarah Kinley	9P	44.25
	Sarah Grover	8P	44.25
	Alex Eykelbosch	8F	44.25
	Sophie Morris	8C	44.25
50	Ellie Phillips	9F	45.25
52	May Critchfield	9L	46.00
59	Francesca Quinn	7F	46.57
87	Carina Archer	8C	51.09
93	Polly Taylor	10P	52.00

Top 5 Staff/Parents – Male

17	G. Mullings	Staff	40.12
20	K. Taylor	Parent	40.38
39	T. Miller	Staff	44.20
56	P. Bryson	Staff	46.23
75	G. Cracknell	Staff	48.50

Top 5 Staff/Parents – Female

55	A. Large	Staff	46.20
96	K Bellingham	Staff	53.08
97	N. Black	Staff	53.16
145	C. Bandle	Staff	59.30
146	A. Moore	Staff	59.30

Top Year Group Finishers

7	Rory Tinker	7 Boy	7P	37.31
59	Francesca Quinn	7 Girl	7F	46.57
1	Ross Taylor/Kieran North	8 Boy	8N/8A	35.00
42	Sarah Grover/Alex Eykelbosch/Sophie Morris	8 Girl	8P/8F/8C	44.25
6	Ollie Edwards	9 Boy	9N	37.11
15	Rebecca Armorgie	9 Girl	9A	40.07
11	Daniel Twine	10 Boy	10P	38.38
93	Polly Taylor	10 Girl	10P	52.00

House Team Competition

Year 7

House	Total Team Points	House Points
A	352	60
C	707	20
F	676	30
L	710	10
N	517	50
P	525	40

Year 8

House	Total Team Points	House Points
A	774	10
C	288	50
F	674	20
L	240	60
N	539	30
P	289	40

Year 9

House	Total Team Points	House Points
A	540	40
C	630	20
F	617	30
L	370	60
N	728	10
P	475	50

Year 10

House	Total Team Points	House Points
A	1095	20
C	548	40
F	0	0
L	445	50
N	291	60
P	588	30

Overall House Team

House	Total Team Points	House Points
A	526	20
C	412	50
F	696	10
L	389	60
N	476	30
P	458	40

100 BONUS POINTS awarded to the house with the most runners in the TOP 100: **LATIMER**

IMPORTANT REMINDER FROM THE PE DEPARTMENT

Students are reminded that **ALL** valuables **MUST** be handed in to PE staff at the beginning of PE/Games lesson.

Miss Bevan