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HeadLines

This week's headlines might well be subtitled 'Planes, politics, pride and parent power'. Prior to the election being announced the government made a number of pronouncements about education, most of which have been modified or withdrawn from the manifesto. For instance, Gordon Brown himself (and in the interests of fairness, I have to tell you that other politicians and other parties are available) announced that parents who are dissatisfied with the standard of education their children are receiving will be able to complain to their local council and trigger a ballot of all parents in the school. This could lead to universities, colleges, successful schools and private sponsors taking over the running of the school.

Whatever we think of that scheme and what might happen in reality, the parental voice and the student voice is something to which all schools must listen. Listening is not a notable skill of institutions or of anyone really; I heard Maggie Smith's son, Toby Stephens, talking on Radio 4 recently about the acting exercise where actors exchange roles and say what the other person should say. Are they good at this? According to Toby, they are 'rubbish'; 'they are too concerned with what's in their own heads'.

For several years now, we have been running the Kirkland Rowell survey. A national set of questionnaires and analysis, it enables us to benchmark against other schools and to see the longitudinal progress of our school. Many of you responded to this survey as did a good proportion of our students. What were the results and what can we conclude from them?

A good overall score was given with a high proportion saying the school had improved over the last year and, indeed, over the past five years. The results indicated more positive views than three years ago or the three years prior to that when previous surveys had been conducted. Parents of new students said, in the main, that the school had lived up to their expectations or was better than expected. The survey revealed that the school 'had reason to be happy with most of its activities'. With regard to academic subjects, parents were most happy with the delivery of Art, ICT and Graphic Products. In non-academic areas they were most happy with the delivery of 'Choice of subjects, Careers advice and Exam results'. They were least happy with the delivery of 'Computer access, Social health education and Control of bullying'. The latter is interesting in that the students' survey showed that they rated the control of bullying very highly and thought it was a strength of the school.

Parents' top priority for improvement was school communication. Some areas received significantly higher scores than in previous surveys: Mathematics, school facilities; whilst one area, computer access, received a significantly lower score.

Two absolutely outstanding features were singled out: school meals and the school's image in the community.

Many of the parental comments were very positive and the negative comments tended to be qualified in the light of the parents' overall satisfaction with the school. Comments were very diverse and there was no theme which dominated. Parents were pleased with the overall standard of education provided, referring to staff as helpful, supportive and dedicated. Several parents felt that communication between the school and parents needed to improve and thought there was a lack of feedback from teachers to parents with more direct communication from their child's form tutor being requested. Some parents commented that the school's uniform policy should be enforced more strictly and the allocation of homework was perceived to be 'inconsistent' by some parents and 'excessive' by others. More frequent provision of reports and parents evening was requested by three parents. There was much comment on extra curricular activities with views being expressed from 'fantastic' to 'could be improved'. A number of parents asked for something which took me aback somewhat which was 'more school trips' (more or different?) and some, inevitably, commented on the cost of trips currently available.

Ofsted would have been impressed with the positive feedback which Kirkland Rowell assessed as falling in the good to outstanding and outstanding categories, mainly.

Next week, I will share with you the results of the student survey and the clarification provided by students on what they meant by 'improving facilities' for example. I will also tell you about the action plan to be put into place to improve school communication over the next year and I would welcome your views on this area; for example would you prefer most of your communication from the school to be emailed to you...including this newsletter and any future surveys!

So, I've touched upon parent power and politics and pride in discussing the survey; what happened to planes? Unfortunately, we began this week with ten staff scattered around the globe and unable to return to school. Plans were put in place to ensure that students were taught, not by supply teachers, but by our own staff volunteering to do extra and supporting examination classes, in particular. Three of the teachers who were stuck are back today and we look forward to welcoming the others shortly. Fortunately, I travelled to Northampton for part of my holiday and was able to negotiate the A605 safely despite discovering in a village called Upton that my family had owned a very lovely stately home in the seventeenth century but had lost it in a dispute about wills and titles. So near and yet so far!

Sandra Samwell, Headteacher



ARTS NEWS

Exam Time

Practical exams are occupying everyone's attention at the moment, with a moderation day for GCSE Dance this week, and performances of A level plays. Students were in rehearsing over the holidays in all the Performing Arts subjects, and preparing for their exams in Art.

Preparations are also going ahead for the joint performance in Dance with Mgezwa School next year, with the Dance Department now beginning to focus on the fundraising Fashion Show. This promises to be a fabulous event and we hope to attract some well-known names to come and share the day with us.

Ms Darby, Assistant Headteacher

HEADTEACHER'S COMMENDATIONS

For Excellent Work in Art

Tessa Wilson and Lauren Stone 8P

For Excellent Work in English

Amy Dowse and Ellen Rogers 9C, Nicola Kennett and Rachel Lotts 9N, Penny Taylor, Ellie Ward and Lucy Wiseman 9P

For Excellent Work in History

Luke Bradley, Simon Brown, Rosie Cowley, Daisy Gobby and Callum Hicks 7A



Science & Maths News



SCIENCE REVISION (AND COURSEWORK) TIMETABLE (began Tuesday 20th April)

| | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| LUNCH 1.30 – 2 pm | Yr13 Physics in PH1 Mr Goodfellow Yr12 Chemistry in CH2 Mrs James | Yr13 Physics in PH1 Miss Phung Yr12 Biology in BI1 Ms Gilmore | Yr11 Chemistry C5 and C6 in CH2 Mrs March | Yr10 Physics coursework drop in in PH1 Miss Phung | Yr11 Physics P7 in SC2 Miss Taylor P5 and P6 in SC1 Mr Smith Yr11 Physics (11I, V and W) in PH1 Miss Phung |
| AFTER SCHOOL 3.30 – 4.15 pm | Yr13 Physics in PH1 Miss Phung | | Yr12 Physics in PH1 and PH2 Mr Smith and Miss Taylor Yr13 Biology in SC2 and BI1 Miss Ramji and Ms Gilmore | Yr11 Applied Chemistry (11I, V and W) in CH2 Dr Brown Yr11 Biology B5 and B6 in BI2 Miss Whitehouse | |

MATHS STARS OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH

Year 7: Maddie Bugden 7A, Yasmin Brand 7A, Rio Baah 7F, Rob Ferguson 7L, Elizabeth Markham 7L, Josh Wells 7N, Harvey Dean 7P.

Year 8: Sophie Kinley 8A, Isabel Briggs 8F, Christie Berry 8F, Max Green 8P, Emily Wager 8P.

Year 9: Carl Needs-Mayoss 9A, Amber Lane 9C, Alice Stride 9F, Jenny Imrie 9F, Kieran Cavanagh 9P, Sam Mairs 9P.

Year 10: Thomas Impey 10A, Rebecca Martin 10C, Anthony Power 10C, Alice Masterman 10F, Sam Pigott 10L, Jamie Scott 10L,

Careers Department Information

There is a Higher Education, Careers and Gap Year Fair being held at Berkhamsted School (Castle Campus, Castle Street, HP4 2BB) on Thursday 29th April between 7 – 9 pm. There will be around 100 exhibitors from universities, colleges, professions and gap year organisations so it should be a worthwhile event for everyone, especially those in Years 11 and 12 who are making important decisions about their future.

Miss Bond, Careers Coordinator

History Stars of the Month for March and April

7A: Katie Arthurs, Yasmin Bond, Simon Brown, Dominic Mansaray, Laura Norman-Phipps, Robert Wells.

7P: Charlotte Agg, Anna Bennett, Jack Grover, Keziah Johnson, Camy Lecoecue, Florin Reid, Charlotte Withers.

Year 8: Dean Breed 8F, Lucy Church 8P, Jack Rolfe 8C, Lauren Suzeyman-Raine 8A, Ellie Wilson 8A.

Year 9: Daniel Agg 9F, Emily Crawley 9F, Jamie McIvor 9A, Tim Moss 9N, Levi Smith 9A, Chris Andric 9F, Charlotte Bartlett 9A, Matthew Henton 9F, Mary Pattison 9P, Francesca Quinn 9F.

Year 10: Alex Burgess 10C, Amelie Lecoecue 10P, Ivo Murrell 10C, Sidra Sadiq 10A, Jessica Smith 10P, Cale Tilford 10C, Marc Craig 10L, Courtney Worrell 10L, Alice Rimmer 10L.



Dates for Your Diary

Blue Week

- 26th and 27th Apr** Year 11 GCSE Art Exam
26th Apr Year 7 Parent/Pupil Maths Workshop Evening
27th and 28th Apr Year 8 Geography trips to London Docklands
28th Apr Years 11/12/13 HPV vaccinations
 Years 12/13 'Question Time' House Event
29th Apr Years 7/8 Junior Maths Challenge
 Year 12 Drama Practical Exam Part 2
 Year 10 Duke of Edinburgh's Award Information Evening
30th Apr Years 8/9 Maths Team Challenge (selected students)

Gold Week

- 3rd May** BANK HOLIDAY
4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Year 8 Biology visits to Boxmoor Trust
4th and 5th AS/A2 MFL Oral Exams
6th and 7th GCSE MFL Oral Exams
9th – 10th Year 10 D of E Award Bronze Practice Expedition

Gold Letters issued recently:

- Letter 179** Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition and Training
Letter 180 Year 8 Ecology Field Trip

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.

PTA News

The following items have been funded by HHSA since the beginning of September 2009:

- Drama Department - TV and Audio Boomblasters
- Humanities Department - TV
- PE Department - Six Table Tennis Tables and Basketball kit
- Art Department - Photographic equipment
- Library - Seven additional Beanbags
- Music Department - Six Xylophones and accessories

We will continue raising money for much needed extras for our students.

Please help us raise these funds by participating in the events we run, including Theatre Trip visits, Jumble Sales etc. – see details in these newsletters. You can register your interest in Theatre Trips by emailing hhsatheatregroup@hotmail.co.uk

Date of next meeting: Monday 24th May, 6pm in the Library.

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

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

Athletics matches are as follows:

- Tuesday 4th May** Match 1 @ Jarman Park
Tuesday 11th May Match 2 @ Jarman Park
Tuesday 18th May Match 3 @ Jarman Park
Thursday 27th May Match 4 @ Watford
Thursday 17th June Match 5 @ Jarman Park
Monday 21st June Match 6 @ Watford

SPORTS NEWS

All Cricket, Rounders and Athletics practices will start on Monday for all students and extra curricular timetables have been issued to all tutor groups. All students are welcome to attend, as always.

On Friday 23rd April the Under 14 Girls Basketball squad will be playing their next Basketball match. The side have now progressed to the LAST 16 in England and will be playing The Brunts School from Nottingham. The match will be held at JFK School at 2 pm. All support is welcome! This is a fantastic achievement for this young side and I would like to wish them the very best of luck!

On Sunday Miss Black will be running the London Marathon. I am sure that students and parents would like to join the PE Department and myself in wishing her the very best for Sunday. Good luck!!!!

Miss Bevan, Learning Leader: PE

