



Headteacher's Update December 2011

Dear Parent & Student

What a fantastically busy and successful two terms we have had since the start of the academic year. It is hard to believe it is actually Christmas, but we have celebrated our Carol Service and have end of term festivities planned. All that remains for me to say, therefore, apart from sharing some highlights of the last term, is to wish you and your family a very happy Christmas holiday and every joy and blessing in 2012. Thank you for your support this year so far. We are undoubtedly a strong community with much to look forward to in the new year.

My very best wishes to you all.



Kathleen Higgins
Headteacher

Christmas Carol Service



On Thursday 8 December we shared in a lovely community celebration of Christmas at our parish church, All Saints. Students from across all year groups participated via

music, singing and reading. There was an excellent opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and to share hopes for 2012. Our young people were, as always, very impressive in their commitment and enthusiasm for this very special occasion. I was very proud of their efforts and very appreciative of the hard work of Miss Slater, Miss Frohnsdorff and Mrs Bukht who enabled our young people to lead us in such a meaningful reflection and service.

Seasonal refreshments were enjoyed afterwards, enabling us all to have a chance to enjoy the very social side of this special school event. Staff, supported by members of our newly formed 'Friends of Altwood School Association', served refreshments which were lovely.



'Friends of Altwood School Association'

Our current Chair writes:

'I am pleased to let you know that, following a meeting at the school earlier this month, there was strong interest from a group of parents in setting up an organisation for parents and others to organise events in support of the school.'

We had interest in such a group from both the teaching and non-teaching staff as well as from parents. We therefore decided that the group should be called the 'Friends of Altwood School'. We have provisionally elected a chairman, treasurer and secretary and begun the process of registering the association as a charity, opening a bank account and drafting a constitution. Its purpose will be to advance the education of children at Altwood by developing relationships among parents, staff and others through a programme of activities and by raising funds for the school. We will invite pupils and staff to nominate a first round of proposals for how any money raised should be spent.

We agreed that our first event should be a quiz night, which will be held at the school on Saturday 24 March 2012 at 7.00pm. We further agreed that the 'Friends of Altwood School' would operate a monthly prize draw to raise money for the school. Further details will be circulated shortly.

In the meantime we would be pleased to hear from parents or others who have:

- *Suggestions for further social or fund-raising activities;*
- *Experience or expertise that might be useful to the Friends of Altwood;*
- *Ideas for how we might use Facebook, Twitter and other social media to keep in touch with parents and others about events.*

We would also be pleased to hear from any parents who are willing to help out at events organised by the Friends of Altwood School. We want these to be fun social occasions for all concerned.

You can contact me at the following email address greghurst@btinternet.com or the Association's secretary Sally Gray at davidcamerongray@hotmail.com or 01628 822979'

So, if you would like to participate in the Association, please do get in contact. If that's not possible, please do think about coming along to a 'Friends' event. The 'Quiz Night' on Saturday 24 March promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable community event.



Altwood Acoustic

In terms of thoroughly enjoyable events, on 15 November we held our first 'Altwood Acoustic' evening.

This was the first of what we hope will be a regular event and is a student conceived and initiated project.

Adam Callaway, one of our Year 13 students, presented an excellent proposal / business plan which would enable our young people to show case their talent to friends and family. With a technical and production team which he led and trained, Adam enabled a number of student bands to perform.

Huge congratulations to Adam and all the following students who participated:

*Robert Nash,
Adam Humphries
Emily Calton
Louisa Hennessy
Dan Parsons
Jake Hynard
Paul Lewis
Nicole Kalinowska
Darren Tull
Alyssa Gonzales
Liam Gardeline,
Dylan Pickering
Rebecca Hughes
Jordan Day-Roberts
Steven Merritt
Hannah Poole
Shaimaa Khan
Monica Bucu
James Clarke
Ollie McEnteggart
Lewis Toppin
Avnish Parkash
Andrea Arcuri
Hannah Bond*



Charity Fundraising – Key Stage 3 'Student Voice'

Our young people have been incredibly impressive in a number of ways. Currently our Key Stage 3 'Student Voice' charity group is engaged in a year long project to raise funds for the Nelson Mandela Foundation appeal to set up a children's hospital in Africa. So far, £500 has been raised which is excellent. Activities such as:

- washing staff cars;
- hot chocolate mornings;
- sponsored cycle events;
- dogs walking;

~ planning a student disco
are all underway or have taken place
Congratulations to all those involved and particularly the project leads:



*Mhairi-Claire Maxwell
Erika Gale
Barnaby Miles
Lee Granville
Louis Spafford
Billy Hutchinson*

If you would like to donate or find out more on the work of this charity
<http://www.mandela-children.org.uk/>

Trips & Visits

Not only have our students been very active in school, they have also participated in a number of trips and visits.

In terms of residential trips, our Key Stage 3 students had an excellent outward bound challenge experience at *Kingswood* on the Isle of Wight. The centre staff who facilitate all the activity challenges were so impressed with our young people that they wrote to me and expressed their admiration and congratulations! Miss Groom and the team of staff who led the trip were similarly impressed, so very well done students!



Outdoor adventure was also the theme of the Sixth Form *mountain walking expedition to Snowdonia, North Wales*. Physically demanding but highly exhilarating was the feedback. Excellent teamwork was observed and therefore another excellent

experience and impressive achievement for our students.

So far this year, we have run trips to:

Tate Gallery
Hengistbury Head, Dorset
National Portrait Gallery
Drive Safe Conference for Sixth Form
UCAS Conferences
Clara Court
City Temple
Longridge

In the new year, and throughout the remainder of this academic year, we can look forward to:

Battlefields in Belgium & France
'Science Live' competition
MFL Trip to France
Trip to British Airways
Ski Trip

Other adventures are also in the planning, so please keep an eye out for the opportunities when they are publicised in letters home. We can not stress enough how valuable in extra-curricular experiences are.

Extra Curricular activities are, however, also available on a weekly and daily basis in school. These are advertised to all students and are on our school website as well.

International Learning Links



Our students are not the only members of our community who have been engaged in exciting travel for purposes of advancing learning and achievement. Mrs Witney has just returned from Beirut as part of the 'Connecting Classrooms' British Council project that we are participating in. This is setting the foundation for a long-term project that will enable our students and students in Lebanon to work together and share learning experiences. It is an exciting project with massive opportunities for our young people. Mrs Witney writes.....

'We are very fortunate to have the privilege to be involved in links with Lebanon as part of the scheme 'Connecting Classrooms'. In March two teachers from our link schools - Saint Anthony's College, Hammana, Mount Lebanon and El Amliyeh for boys, Beirut - both visited in March of this year. We have now made a return visit and the teachers and students are delighted to be linked with us and expressed this by showering us with gifts! Both schools have notice boards in high visibility with work on Altwood School and our links displayed there. As part of this project students in our school will be working on three joint projects over the next year. We are also looking at ways of fostering even greater links with these schools. This is a very exciting project and as well as the main benefits of broadening awareness of other cultures we will also be working towards achieving the British

Council Intermediate 'ISA' Award. Work will start in earnest in the New Year.'

Learning Explored at Community Evenings in School

We were delighted to welcome parents of Years 10 and 11 students to our recent 'Science Curriculum Evening'. We were also extremely pleased to welcome so many of our Year 7 families to our recent Year 7 Tutor / Community Evening. If you were unable to be with us on either of these occasions but would appreciate receiving information shared, then please do let us know.

Memorial Statue Fund

You may have been aware, due to recent media coverage, that a statue to honour the memory of four children who died in an accident on a school tour in 1988 was stolen. There is a fund now set up to receive donations to assist in the replacement of this memorial. If you would like to make a contribution, there is information on our website. Donations can also be 'gift aided' and therefore if you are eligible it would be most beneficial if the Gift Aid form could also be completed. Thank you. We are most pleased with the donations already made, so thank you to those generous people who have already contributed.

Important Reminders

The new term commences on Tuesday 3 January at 08.45am. We are looking forward to a highly successful 2012. Over the holiday I ask that issues to do with students not having correct uniform items of clothing are addressed. It is expected that all students will return in January in full school uniform.

Another important reminder relates to procedure for the remainder of the winter should we face extreme weather conditions. It is vital to note:

- we should be able to contact parents / carers at all times and therefore we must have up to date information regarding contact telephone numbers;
- students must have the means to access their homes should they need to leave school early due to conditions and parents are not at home / able to collect them;
- students should be aware of alternative means of making their journeys to and from school;
- the school website is a vital means of communication and notices about closure will be posted on the website;
- local radio stations will be used to broadcast information;
- the Local Authority website will be used to share information.

Obviously closure only happens in the most extreme of situations, but I hope this information proves helpful. It is always useful to be prepared, just in case!



Sixth Form Admissions

We have recently held our Sixth Form Opportunities Evening and also a Sixth Form Open Morning. These events are intended to assist our young people, and indeed those from beyond our immediate school community, in making that all important decision about what to study post GCSEs and how they can fulfil their career aspirations.

We invite all applications to be returned to School. We will commence our 'Progression Meetings' with students and their parents in February. These are individual meetings where progress at GCSE and progression post GCSE on to Sixth Form courses are discussed. Students will receive invitations to these meetings post receipt of application.

To assist in the decision-making process, we will be holding a 'taster' experience for our Year 11 students where they become Sixth Formers for the day. This special event will take place on 27 January 2012.

It is an exciting time in our Year 11 students' lives and we are looking forward to continuing our engagement with them and

support for them, in making the right decision.

Finally, important reminders of *Key Dates* are as follows:

3 January	Start of Term 3
12 January	Year 8 Parents' Evening 4.00pm
1 February	Year 11 Parents' Evening 4.00pm
10 February	End of Term 3
20 February	Start of Term 4
14 March	Year 9 Parents' Evening 4.00pm
30 March	End of Term 4
16 April	Start of Term 5