



Headteacher's Update April 2011

Dear Parent & Student

What a very busy term we have had and as always I will only have space here to be able to give you a taste of what has been occurring since my last 'Update' to you. Winning ways, international experiences and fantastic charity fundraising achievements characterise much of what I have to share in this Spring 2011 'Update'. Before I do this, however, I would like to wish you all a very happy Easter holiday.

The Easter holiday is always a busy one for public examination students. A lot of hard work preparing for examinations needs to be undertaken at home throughout the holiday but hopefully a chance for some rest and relaxation will be taken too so all can return refreshed and ready for the final stage in the academic year. I wish all our senior students the very best of luck with their forthcoming examinations and trust that they will adopt a 'can do, will do' approach and go on to achieve the success they deserve.

With very best wishes to all

Kathleen Higgins
Headteacher

Altwood's Winning Streak



I am thrilled to be able to report that our young people have been enjoying some considerable success in a range of recent competitions. Our Year 9 students have won through to the next round of the ***Mock Trial Competition***. They are now in the Regional stage of this National Competition. They learnt a lot from the area competition experience and are showing real determination to succeed at the next stage. We wish them huge success. All their hard work and enthusiasm deserves to be rewarded.

Another National competition that our students have participated in is the ***Red Cross Dance for Life***. On 4 March Year 9/10/11 young women competed in the Bedfordshire, Thames Valley & Hertfordshire regional final and were victorious. They now proceed to the next round which will take place on 3 July in Oxford and should they be victorious there, the National final is held at the O2 arena later in the year. The nature of this competition led to our young people choreographing and performing a dance based on the allocated theme of children being captured and forced to act as soldiers. This competition fulfils many functions. It

provides opportunity for focus on controversial and significant problems and issues, it provides opportunity for young people to perform / dance and it provides opportunity to raise money for the Red Cross who provide much needed emergency support around the world. Here's hoping that our wonderful young people will continue to very much enjoy this experience and also secure the success they deserve.

A final 'winning' experience was had by our *Young Enterprise Team 'Gold Dust.'* This group of Sixth Form students have worked incredibly hard and achieved the very creditable accolade of being 'runners up' in the North Berkshire final, bringing back to school a huge and very impressive trophy which we will display with great pride.

Talented & Gifted

Clearly, as you can see from the successes highlighted above, we have very talented young people here at Altwood. I am exceptionally proud of them. For those students who have been identified as particularly academically able, we have also had some additional activities taking place as part of our 'Talented, Able & Gifted Programme'.

Those students contemplating *Oxbridge Entrance* meet every fortnight to explore possibilities, engage in a 'readiness' programme. They have been working on their university application, personal statements and also making application to attend summer schools which will help their

preparation in their preferred subject areas and enable them to interact with similarly positioned young people from other schools.

Our 'Talented & Gifted' students have also been engaged in other activities recently. They hosted a special celebration evening for their parents where they show-cased their work. This was very well received and we will therefore hold similar future events.

The 'Acumen Society', another focus for our able young people, has been focusing on what they described as 'high octane' career pathways. They are currently undergoing a rigorous process of skill-building through problem solving and self-evaluation. Although a very serious business, I understand from students that this extra-curricular group are also having some considerable fun, so well done!

Students are always keen on having new and exciting opportunities which will inspire them to aspire and achieve. The request to parents, therefore, is to please advise us if you have a particular business or specialist interest / experience that you would be happy to share with students. They would very much welcome the chance to hear about the career experiences of others and the opportunities of others and the opportunities they can look forward to. If you feel you might have something to offer us, could you contact Ms Proudfoot-Taylor.



The International Dimension

We have had much opportunity to broaden perspectives through both travel and also hosting overseas visitors.

The *February Ski Trip to Austria* was a huge success. Enthusiasm for travel and for skiing means that Mrs Witney is now exploring running a ski trip next year again. Before that, however, we have a trip to *Venice*, a trip to *Poland – Auschwitz*, a trip to *Madrid*, trip to *Le Touquet* and a day trip to *Boulogne* to look forward to. Some of these adventures are shortly to take place and all will be undertaken prior to the end of this academic year, so we look forward to sharing some highlights in the next edition of 'Update'.

We now hold an **International School's Award** and the reason for this is our commitment to making links with schools around the world. In January we hosted a visit from two Lebanese teachers and this was the commencement of a 'Connecting Classrooms' project where we will partner with two schools in the Lebanon. Our first project is to look at lifestyles of students in each other's country and share these through video and writings. Our bigger project will take the theme of 'Tourism' which lends itself to a wide variety of exciting possibilities

Last week we welcomed eight Chinese teachers to School who led a range of workshops – dance, calligraphy, cooking – with a number of our Key Stage 3 students. We will be seeking to explore further this link with *China* and will be doing so in partnership with Reading University.

International awareness and charitable work does, however, link in respect of one of our projects. Via the *Peru Childrens' Trust* students are sponsoring a child in Peru. For £18 a month they are supporting a boy called Marlon to receive an education and to be supported in terms of what needs to be done to improve his quality of life. This generosity also allows much to be learnt about developing countries and the way in which overseas aid can make a dramatic difference to the life and life chances of young people of a similar age around the world.

Charity Fundraising



Year 7 are to be congratulated for raising £1198.68 for the charity *Lepra*. This is a phenomenal amount of money to be raised by one Year group. They did this via a sponsored workout, so fun and exercise was had whilst enough money was raised to save 57 lives.



Rosie's Rainbow Fund was another excellent cause supported by our Key Stage 3 students. This charity works to support sick and disabled children in hospital, school and the community. Last week a 'Special Person's Gift Sale' took place and £113 was raised. An excellent achievement.



Sharing social responsibility is not, however, only about raising money. As a School we have now engaged with the organisation **TRAID** as part of efforts to become a 'greener' school. As a school, we have linked with the new re-cycling scheme which the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead have introduced. We saw this as a great opportunity to further raise the awareness of our school community about the issues surrounding our 'throw away' society as well as the immense benefits of re-cycling. We already have an active re-cycling student voice group within school who are always looking for ways to cut back on waste and encourage others to do so, and this is an extension of the work done here. We are going to do 'our bit' to help lessen our carbon footprint by re-using and re-cycling any unwanted clothes and shoes. We have already filled one TRAIT bin on the school site and are aiming to fill our second one. As a result of having a TRAIT charity textile bank in our school we receive the following:

- *association with this fantastic charity;*
- *a TRAIT workshop took place for students;*
- *30 pence per kilogram (£300 per tonne) for clothes and pairs of shoes collected;*
- *access to TRAIT's educational resources including workshops and assemblies;*
- *accreditation towards our 'Eco-Schools' status;*
- *marketing materials to raise awareness of textile recycling;*
- *updates telling us how much textile our school has diverted from landfill and the CO₂ saved;*
- *a free TRAIT newspaper.*

Forthcoming Events



As we 'go to press' with our Spring 'Update' we are very much looking forward to our annual '*Altwood Palladium*' which will take place at Norden Farm on Wednesday 6 April at 7.30pm. This is always a fantastic opportunity to see our young people showcasing their talents both in terms of performance but also the technical and production side. It is always a fun evening and I hope as many of you as possible will be able to be with us.

Other very special events for our young people to look forward to are:

Our *Year 11 Ball* on Friday 1 July being held at the Holiday Inn. This is always a super evening. A 'black tie' event which celebrates the end of the GCSE examination period and, therefore, the significant stage that the young men and women of Year 11 have reached.

The *Sixth Form Leaver's Reception* is being held at Norden Farm on Friday 24 June. Our most senior students have a special night out together planned, but they are commencing the night by hosting a reception for staff. We are delighted that our young people are so keen to show their appreciation to the staff of Altwood. They are a wonderful group of students who have fantastic futures ahead of them. It is no surprise that the process of application to university has been so successful for our Year 13 students. Fantastic offers have been received at a wide range of universities across the country which is exceptionally pleasing.

Use of Technology

We are in an increasingly technological age and we know how important it is to harness the positive power of communication via mobile phones and the internet. Thank you for your feedback on our recently revised *Mobile Phone Policy*. I know our students value the clarity and opportunity this Policy provides. I also know that parents appreciate the value of mobiles in promoting safety but



also the need to have controlled usage in School. In light of your feedback, there is one further amendment to the Policy. As you know, for inappropriate use, a mobile phone will be confiscated and returned to a student after two days. If, however, there is an urgent need for a parent to have access to the phone – this would be exceptional circumstance but has happened – then we are happy for a parent to collect the phone from the School Office. I hope this will be of assistance to you if these special circumstances pertain. I thank you for your support and enforcement of expectations and the requirements surrounding the use of mobiles.

Internet Safety is something we are very keen to promote, and I trust that you all received the recent guidance letter from Mr Sleeman relating to social networking sites. As part of our work to promote safety, we will also be providing some awareness training to students and parents. The Parent Advice Session will be communicated shortly. We would urge as many parents as possible to avail of this opportunity. The young people are very advanced users of these technologies, quite often much more so than the adults, but they become vulnerable because of their inexperience and trusting natures. We, therefore, wish to enable parents to know and provide the support and guidance needed at home where the problematic usage can take place.

Admissions into Year 7 in September 2011

One final piece of information you may be keen to know about relates to the new members of our community due to join us in September. We were certainly oversubscribed in respect of applications and currently have some families on the waiting list. We are doing everything possible, however, to accommodate these children, so if existing families with siblings are in this position or you are aware of friends or extended family that have experienced difficulty securing a place, then please get in contact / advise them to be in contact with School.

We are, of course, delighted with our School's popularity and now are determined to enable all those wishing to be with us in September to secure a place.

Public Examination Results

AS & A Level Results – Thursday 18 August

GCSE Results – Thursday 25 August

More detail on what happens on these days will be issued to students later in the year, but I hope a reminder of these dates is of assistance.

Uniform Standards

When the new term commences, Please remind your child / children that established uniform standards are to be adhered to even though in the summer terms the weather becomes warmer.

Other Key Dates

26 April	Start of Term 5
29 April	Bank Holiday
2 May	Bank Holiday
3 May	School returns
16 May	Public Examinations commence
23 May	Year 8 Examination Week
27 May	End of Term 5
6 June	Start of Term 6
4 July	Year 10 Work Experience Week
7 July	New Year 7 Induction Day / Parents' Evening
15 July	Sports Day
19 July	End of Term 6
6 September	Start of Academic Year Year 7 & Year 12 students
7 September	Years 8/9/10/11/13 return