



WOOTTON UPPER SCHOOL
& Performing Arts College
HEADTEACHER'S NEWSLETTER

Number 8

March 2007

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Rather than a newsletter be 'lost' in the lower strata of students' bags over a vacation, it is our custom to issue an end-of-term newsletter earlier than the normal last Friday of the month. So, as this update on our progress reaches you, it is not a case of 'March hares' turning my head!

You will recall from last month's newsletter that we were forced to reschedule the Year 9 Students' and Parents' Consultation Evening from the (snowy) 8th of February to Thursday 22nd March. One outcome of this is that we are unable to distribute the mid-year analysis of parents' questionnaires until the April newsletter - I can assure you that this informed view (of yourselves) will be distributed on Friday 27th April, and that your collective comments will inform our planning for the academic year beginning September 2007.

Organisation of the timetable 2007/8

The theme of responding to your comments is one part of a change we are implementing for 2007/8, namely increasing the time allocation to Physical Education at Key Stage 4 from (the current) one hour per week to two. There is, of course, a broader national agenda of healthy eating and living and encouraging active participation in sports as part of a drive to influence positively the lifestyles of the future.

One consequence of the above is that we are re-packaging what we generally call

'Guidance', i.e. the registration of students, their personal, social and health education programme, and the overall support which Tutors provide. Linked to this, we are also changing the assembly arrangements for each year group. From your viewpoint there will be little visible 'change', for the work we are developing is fundamentally internal, i.e. part of our students' daily timetable.

The above will, of course, come into place in mid-June (Monday 18th June to be specific) when we roll over into next year's timetable.

Times of the School Day
from September 2007

One aspect of a further change we are considering may lead to a visible change in our daily pattern, namely the proposal to trim a little time off the current lunch-break **and finish afternoon lessons at 3.00 p.m.**

The above proposal has been the subject of a long debate with the staff and there are aspects we have yet to finalise such as a fast-pass system for lunch for students engaged in a lunch-time activity. Acknowledging that there are implications for all our community in this proposal, the Governing Body determined at last week's meeting that we should communicate with all parents and students as quickly as possible and ascertain your views. Hence, senior staff have already had an initial discussion with the School Council and it is our intention to meet with all the Year

Councils next week, as well as organising an opportunity for all students to feed their comments through to myself.

For parents, we acknowledge that finishing at 3.00 p.m. rather than 3.15 p.m. as presently may have implications for your daily arrangements and patterns. We do believe that we can re-organise eating arrangements such that this does not have a detrimental impact on our lunch-time programmes. Also, we believe that the twenty-minute morning break and (proposed) forty-five minute lunch-time leaves students with ample time to eat their food and prepare for their next lesson(s).

In making this proposal we have looked at patterns of behaviour across the day and I believe a slightly shorter lunch-time has to be a constructive way forward in the better interests of all our community. Moreover, I believe that the proposal better meets the health and safety responsibilities implicit in our role as 'in loco parentis', i.e. as a caring parent I am concerned at the relative boredom I see in the final quarter of the present lunch-break and at some of the consequences of this.

If you have an especial issue you wish to raise about this proposal, can you please do so **in writing to myself by Friday 20th April 2007**. If this proposal comes to fruition, the change will come into place when the new school year commences in September 2007, and in the meantime we shall be discussing the likes of bus arrangements with County Hall. The proposal is intended to be constructive and I hope this early consultation is helpful to yourselves.

Careers Convention

Further to Mr. Fleure's letter to all the school, can I remind you that we are holding a Careers Convention on **Thursday 29th March 2007, from 6.00 p.m. -9.00 p.m.** in the Humanities Block.

A total of twenty-two organisations will be represented including: The Army, Connexions, local Colleges of Further Education, Bedfordshire County Council Tourism, The Royal Veterinary College and local Universities.

In order to ease the flow, both in the Humanities Block and the car park, it would be very helpful if Year Groups attended at the following times:

6.00 - 7.30 p.m. - Year 10 & Year 11

7.30 - 9.00 p.m. - Year 12 & Year 13

The Gifted and Talented Academy

We have just received confirmation that the following students have now been enrolled in the National Academy for Gifted & Talent students - congratulations to:

Joanne Callister	Year 12 (SW)
David Carline	Year 9 (KC)
Melissa Corney	Year 12 (KF)
Nicholas Freestone	Year 9 (MAB)
Henry Harris	Year 9 (KC)
Ruth Hunt	Year 9 (DB)
Gaius Manser	Year 12 (RSW)
Elliott O'Connor	Year 12 (RS)
Maria Riley	Year 9 (SM)
Natasha Rozentals	Year 10 (SG)
Ashleigh Usher	Year 11 (KLM)
Thomas Ward	Year 10 (BH)
Margaret Whiffin	Year 12 (SW)

Tesco 'Computers for Schools' Scheme

The above scheme is of course in season (running from 5th March until 13th May 2007), and in the spirit of 'every little helps', truly the range of hardware and software is ever-expanding.

If you could collect vouchers and forward them to either the School Office or your child's Form Tutor, this would be very helpful.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 29th March	Careers Convention: 6.00 - 7.30 p.m. - Year 10 & Year 11 7.30 - 9.00 p.m. - Year 12 & Year 13
Friday 30th March	Spring Term ends, 3.15 p.m.
w/c 2nd and 9th April	School closed - Easter Holidays
Monday 16th April	Staff Training Day - school is closed to students
Tuesday 17th April	School resumes, 8.35 a.m.
Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th April	AS Drama Evenings
Friday 20th April	A2 Drama Evening
w/c Monday 23rd April	Year 10 (South) - Work Experience
Monday 23rd April	AS/A2 Dance Evening
w/c Monday 30th April	Year 10 (North) - Work Experience
Tuesday 1st & Thursday 3rd May	GCSE Drama Evenings
Monday 7th May	May Day - school is closed
Tuesday 8th May	Key Stage 3 SATs begin
Monday 14th May	Year 10 Examinations
Tuesday 15th May	GCSE Dance Evenings
Friday 18th May	Year 11 & Year 12 Study leave begins
Friday 25th May	School closes for half-term, 3.15 p.m.
w/c Monday 28th May	School closed - half term

To conclude, Easter is almost upon us with its special sense of rejuvenation and new beginnings. Every student at this school should be optimistic about their future and utilise the many opportunities which the staff provide to build their better future. Working in unison, as parents and staff, we can all make a real difference to our children's prospects and ensure a healthier prognosis in the future for all parts of our community.

Let us trust that the weeks ahead are positive in every respect.

Yours sincerely,

A.R. Withell
Headteacher