St John Fisher News

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Happy Easter

We returned to school this week after the traditional holiday to celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Day. It was probably more appropriate this year that most of the holiday fell after the day itself but this does not make these comments late as the celebration of Easter runs for seven weeks until the Feast of Pentecost.

I am sure that much chocolate has been consumed in the last few weeks and after the fasting of Lent so it should be. But we also found our students again fundraising for good causes and this too has been successful with £588.48 raised to date.

(Beverley £72.81, Cambridge £243.65, Rochester £106.26 and Westminster £165.76.)

Welcome

At the start of this new term we welcome four new members of staff:

Heather Davies, *ICT Teacher*
James Harness, *ICT teacher*
Jamie Clark, *Catering Manager*
Lelde Bardina, *Teaching Assistant.*

We also have several new students starting this week and next and I would like to say a special word of welcome to them.

China – Bon Voyage

You will be aware that we have an Assistant Headteacher from Jack Hunt School, Mr Barwise, working with us this year. This has enabled us to do some joint work with this school and included in this was the option for our students to join their annual visit to China. Two students persevered with the selection process to the very end, including lessons in the Chinese language and trying a real Chinese meal. So today we say Bon Voyage (in Chinese on the right!) to Aiden Bailey and Archie Murfitt – and Mr Barwise. We hope that the visit is successful and rewarding and that the boys will tell us all about it on their return.

Maths GCSE Results

Year 11 students must feel as if every week is somehow connected to exams, but this week is very important as yesterday results arrived for those students who took GCSE Maths in March. This was an additional sitting for the exam and students receive a proper result grade, unlike the English exam they took in January where the results are being withheld until the summer.

98 students sat GCSE Maths last month and we are delighted that 64 achieved a grade C. We hope that the feedback from the boards for those who didn't get a C this time will be valuable for them in revising for the next exam in June: there are only about 15 lessons remaining now until then. Students are issued with personal timetables for their examinations and these include seating details, but I would point out here that this year some of the exams are later than they have been in recent years so most students will find they have exams into middle or late June.

Holidays

As we return from a proper school holiday I would like to mention yet again that these are the times when parents should plan holidays, including visits to relations, and not during term time. We have made our policy on requests for absence during term time very clear, in line with government expectations, but I still receive requests continually: during March I kept a tally and it was at least one request every single day. Almost all of them have been refused because they were not for exceptional circumstances, or did not meet the other criteria, but I noticed that when we returned to school on Monday we had quite a few students who were absent.

We are obliged to issue penalty notices when this happens and parents are then fined. But this is not the reason for doing this: students need to be in school in order to benefit from their education and parents have a duty to ensure that they are.

I am also concerned at the number of students who have been late for school more than once a week, on average, this year. I have asking the Heads of House to work with these students to improve the situation and will be asking parents for support in doing this.

Sean Hayes

Library Word of the Week: Euphoric
Characterised by or feeling intense excitement and happiness

Learning Habits Group

Over the past four months a group of students from across the school have been researching the learning habits of students in our school and looking at ways to improve them. The groups have dropped in on classes, led assemblies, taken part in bespoke training, led staff training, presented to heads of faculty and led form time activities. I have been incredibly impressed by the way the students have risen to this challenge and taken the project on board.

Creating good habits of mind supports all aspects of life at school and beyond. *Metacognition and self regulation strategies have been recognised as being one of the most highly effective approaches to improving learning in students at school and throughout their lives. (Sutton)*

In other words learning how we learn and practising positive learning attributes help us to become better learners.

As a result of these initial activities the student learning group is implementing some initiatives to have a direct impact in all lessons and form time periods. One of the key initiatives is the implementation of the 5Rs across school which followed an inspirational session with students from The King's School. The group decided that they would like to adapt some of the ideas for use in our school, particularly the 5Rs. Please look at the attached sheet to see what the 5Rs are. They have been produced after consultation with staff and the whole student body and are designed especially for our school and will be used across school.

Initial ideas the group came up with to help students practise the 5Rs were to provide some stuck strategies to help when students get stuck in class or at home (see attached sheet) and for teachers to provide more opportunities in lessons to practise different learning attributes. Following this, and the teacher training day led by Will Ord held last term, this has begun to happen by using strategies such as split learning objectives and 'Treasoning'.

The next stage will be for the group to design games and activities for a programme of study aimed at practising learning attributes which can be used in any subject and as a stand alone activity in form time.

I want to say well done and congratulations to the students involved in the learning group for the commitment and leadership skills they have shown so far, along with outstanding learning habits!

The students are: **Markus Balogun, Dominika Ciach, Fred Cook, Rianna De Paolo, Gracie Dunkley-Lock, Ruby Eric, Tristan Goodfellow, Callum Jones-Molyneux, Ciaran Kelly, Michalina Klupiec, Ahmad Moradi, Archie Murfitt, Ewelina Strug and Alexander Wicks.** All of them will be receiving an award for being leaders in learning.

Mrs Pereira

Year 8 Spelling Bee ...
... 5 weeks to go

Sixth Form Retreat

On 14 March, the whole of our sixth form attended a retreat at Peterborough Cathedral, led by a team from Soli House in Warwickshire.

We began the morning by thinking about our future and assessing the topic of "taking the leap". We were then split into smaller groups and completed a range of activities focussing on prayer, reconciliation and our relationship with God.

It was a very enjoyable day and we managed to learn a lot about ourselves. The experience of this retreat has taught us to be confident within ourselves and truly take a leap of faith in order to achieve our goals.

Holly Hung, Sixth Form student

Parent Perception Survey

As an important part of our monitoring and evaluation process, we will be sending out a Parent Perception Survey next week which will help us to identify areas where progress has been made and also areas where we need to improve. Please could you take time to complete this survey and return it to Student Services by Friday 10 May 2013. Thank you. *Mr Reilly*

Spelling Bee Buzz!

On Wednesday 27 March a number of pupils took part in the first ever St John Fisher Spelling Bee contest and it was a huge success. Contestants practised extremely hard leading up to the event and, despite a large crowd, performed well under pressure. Each team, consisting of four pupils, battled for a place in the final with one group recalling 20 words in just two minutes. The final round lasted for an impressive 10 minutes! Finally an overall winner emerged and was crowned Spelling Bee champion after recalling over 22 words correctly. Staff, pupils and parents alike commented on how much fun they had during the event which lasted for around an hour. Niall Speechley the overall winner of the competition said '*when it first started I was really nervous so I can't believe I won the whole thing*'. However Basera Nassari commented that it wasn't all about the winning for her '*although I wasn't the actual winner I am still proud of myself*' . This was echoed by many of the pupils including Mohammed Dhanji who said '*I was very proud to be part of the Spelling Bee and my parents were so proud of me*'.

Overall the event was roaring success and the effort of pupils and staff alike was both admirable and inspiring. Our congratulations go to the following Spelling Bee winners:

Best Group: Mohammed Dhanji, Niall Speechley, Yasoda Thapa , Basera Nassari

2nd Place: Sayeda Mehdi

Winner: Niall Speechley

Finally, a huge thank you to Lynette Winlock for all her efforts in organising the event and also to everyone who attended to show their support.

Lucy Henderson - Head of English Faculty

What are the 5Rs?

1. Resilience:

- I am not afraid to get things wrong in order to succeed
- I explore all avenues, persist and do not give up
- I can overcome obstacles and stay on task
- I can practise again and again in order to succeed
- I can focus on positive things and look past the negative

2. Resourcefulness:

- I can show initiative
- I can search out the best resources for the task I am completing eg textbooks, dictionaries, internet and teachers
- I can decide when to work with others and when to work alone
- I can use C3B4ME and other stuck strategies
- I ask good questions

3. Responsibility:

- I can follow the 5Ps for responsibility
- I can work as part of a group and help others
- I can think ahead and bring the correct equipment
- I can fight off distractions and do not distract others
- I can take responsibility for the completion and quality of my classwork and my homework

4. Reasoning:

- I can give reasons for my opinion and explain my thinking
- I can consider all the evidence and take others' views into account
- I can choose the best method for working something out
- I can take time to plan
- I can think through problems logically

5. Reflection:

- I learn from and respond to my WWWs and EBIs
- I can describe my progress
- I can question myself and check my work before I hand it in
- I learn from my mistakes so I can improve next time
- I set targets for myself and do everything possible to reach the targets set by my teachers and myself

How can I help my child become a more independent learner?

- By using the 5Rs at home
- By really praising effort and practise
- By being a good role model yourself eg not giving up when things get difficult/talking about how you are not afraid to get things wrong sometimes, etc
- By not giving your child the answers straight away – encourage them to think things through, look for answers in text books, try to work it out first / work it out together so your child can see how you think through a problem
- Asking open ended questions rather than closed questions to encourage your child to think and explain their thinking
- Encouraging responsibility for homework and equipment
- These are habits for success and for life and the more practice we get at them the better we become at them!
- By looking at the learning attributes of successful people - use the 5Rs

Help! I'm Stuck: Try these stuck strategies:

1. Read the question again to see if you've missed any words and you will understand it better.
2. Fight off distractions in class – be responsible
3. Use the 5Rs
4. Break down the question into smaller chunks
5. Find out what words mean to unlock the meaning of the question
6. Come up with an answer and then work backwards
7. What did you do last time you were stuck?
8. What have you forgotten to do?
9. Imagine you are someone who is not stuck. What would they have done?
10. Try again but do something differently this time
11. Use C3B4ME
12. Ask someone else in the class to explain it apart from the teacher
13. If I gave you a million pounds, would you still be stuck?
    Think about it – are you really stuck? Or could you get unstuck if you really put your mind to it?
14. Do the best you can (even if it's wrong) and then let your teacher help you understand why – don't be afraid to get it wrong to succeed!
15. With homework try to find somewhere quiet to think things through / talk through the problem to be solved with family / use resources available at home / internet
16. Getting stuck is not a problem, staying stuck is....
17. Good learners practise getting unstuck

Remember: '**Being stuck is the beginning of learning not the end**'