St John Fisher News

22 February 2013 No. 171

A period of waiting

Last week we began the season of Lent when we wait and prepare for Easter. This period of prayer and reflection was unexpectedly given a very different tone by the shock resignation of Pope Benedict. This week in assemblies I have been talking to the students about the process of electing a new pope and about the potential for significant change. It will certainly be the first time in 600 years that we will have a pope reigning while his predecessor is still alive. The last two popes have not been Italian but have been European: there is much speculation that this time the cardinals may choose someone from further afield.

It will certainly be a different and exciting period of waiting, and the students now know what to expect when the process begins in a few weeks time.

Statement from Caterlink

I am sure that some parents will have been concerned to hear in the national news about the discovery of horsemeat in the food chain. I asked our caterers to provide a statement about whether or not we should have concerns about the food served in school. This is their response:

> We have agreed (along with our parent company WSH Ltd), via our trade body the British Hospitality Association (BHA) to share with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) details of any test data provided by our suppliers.
>
> We can confirm that Caterlink do not use any meat based product from any of the producers or processors currently associated with the on-going FSA investigation.
>
> Caterlink is proud of our farm to fork journey which ensures that we can trace the origin of our freshly prepared meat dishes. All of our suppliers are audited by an external body to ensure that they comply with our and statutory obligations.
>
> As a precautionary measure we have instructed our suppliers to block any processed beef products that may have the potential to have been affected. We will only reinstate these products once our suppliers have demonstrated that the beef is 100% authentic and from a known source. As we make all our beef main dishes on site from fresh meat this is likely to only affect a small amount of products.

Government announcements

There was much relief before half-term when the government announced that they would not be continuing with plan to replace GCSEs in some subjects from 2015 with new, tougher exams. Among the bodies concerned about the proposal was the exams regulator, Ofqual, who said that the timescale was not sensible to ensure that the changes were made properly.

Unfortunately it seems that the government intend to proceed with most of the changes and are only saying that they will not change the name of the exam or move to a single exam board. These changes will affect the current Year 7 and so we will continue to monitor the situation as it develops.

Of possibly greater concern was the news that the government intend to change the performance tables against which schools are measured. Among the proposals is an intention to move from counting how many students have five or more GCSE passes at grades C or above (including English and Maths) to counting the average points score of the best eight subjects that each student takes. Up to this point the proposal makes sense as it will stop school having to concentrate on the C grade students. However, I am very concerned that another difficulty could arise as only certain combinations of subjects will be acceptable and so students may have less choice about which subjects they take for GCSE.

There is also no mention in the consultation document about when this change might occur. It would be sensible for it to be from 2017 when the first results of the new exams are published, but it seems very likely, given the track record of the current secretary of state, that the change will be brought in sooner. If this is the case we will have to change the structure of our options choices for students in Year 8, and possibly Year 9, even though the latter have just finished making choices for next year.

This is not a healthy way of introducing change and I am concerned about the possible way in which students' options may be limited in future. If we do not step in line with the change we will find ourselves being labelled a failing school because not enough students meet the new measure, and this is something that must be avoided. I will discuss this with the governors next month and keep parents informed of developments via the newsletter.

Sean Hayes

ESOL Course

A reminder that the ESOL Parents/Carers support course will start on **Monday 25 February at 4.00 pm.** Please come to the School Reception where you will be met by a member of the EAL staff.

Ms Roberts

Sports News

Year 11 girls recently participated in a Dodgeball competition for the area. I was very pleased at the number of girls who wanted to play and how much they wanted to win!

We played against King's A, King's B, Thomas Deacon Academy, AMVC, Voyager and Jack Hunt in order to qualify for the semi finals. We won every game except for the match against King's A. This gave us joint 1st place with Jack Hunt and put us through to the semi final stage, where we were drawn to play King's A again.

The game was hard fought but eventually won by King's which unfortunately took us out of the competition.

Well done girls - I was very proud of your determination and resilience as the competition went on. Keep it up! *Ms Daniels*

Humanities Field Trips

During the first few weeks of this term, all Year 9 students were given letters to bring home regarding History and Geography trips for the next focus day on 14 March. Due to a lack of response, the History visit to the Imperial War Museum has been cancelled. Any monies already paid will be refunded.

The Geography visit to Nene Park will go ahead and there are a number of places still available. If students would like to attend, permission slips need to be returned as soon as possible. *Dr Bottrill*

Youth Theatre Conference

On Friday 8th and Saturday 9th February, three GCSE Drama students attended the first ever Peterborough Youth Theatre Conference at The Key Theatre. This was a two day event where students had the opportunity to work with theatre companies and professionals within the industry in order to develop new skills. Here is one student's experience of the event.

Vivacity Key Theatre Peterborough

"It was great. I'm so pleased to get the opportunity to meet other talented young people from Peterborough and develop new skills which will help me on my journey towards gaining a good grade a GCSE Drama. When I arrived the staff made us all feel very welcome. I was able to sign up for a number of workshops such as improvisation and stage combat! Each workshop helped me to build up my confidence and gain new skills and throughout the day everyone's confidence grew.

We were also able to see two pieces of drama; the first was called 'The Party Piece' by a local youth theatre company and the second was by 20 Stories High Theatre Company from Liverpool.

This was a great experience and one I hope to repeat in 2014 at next year's conference".

Jade-Alice Neal (Year 10)

Lithuania Week

This week we are celebrating Lithuania and have been learning about famous Lithuanians in form time. Lithuania is a small Baltic country with a tradition of migration and East Anglia is home to many Lithuanians – we have a Lithuanian member of staff and 41 Lithuanian students at St John Fisher, the sixth largest group in the school. Lithuanian is the sixteenth most commonly spoken second language in England and Wales and Lithuanian nationals also speak Russian or Polish. The UK is one of the three favourite destinations for Lithuanians, the other two being Ireland and Norway. *Ms Roberts*

House Update	Points	Attendance
Beverley	8325	92.8%
Cambridge	6075	94.1%
Rochester	9425	92.5%
Westminster	11175	93.9%

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