



PPEs and Focus Day

This week our Year 11, 12 and 13 students have continued to sit PPEs in preparation for the looming summer exams. In PSHE during this half term, Year 11 students will be supported to prepare for these by constructing revision timetables and thinking about good learning habits. Support at home is also crucial to examination success and I would ask parents to discuss the PPEs with students and also ask them about revision and be supportive of their need to study at home. School life is about more than examinations and a timely reminder of that was our Focus Day last week. Focus Days have now been running for the last five years and are a very popular way for students to extend their learning and explore subject areas in greater depth. More detailed reports from each subject area are included further on in the Newsletter.

Lent

Lent is also well under way now and is an opportunity for us all to reflect; the Thoughts for the Day this week have been focused on 'Walking the Walk' and asking students whether they have given something up, done our best to help those in need and taken time to pray. During busy examination periods and indeed in a school that is always busy, moments like these, when students can stop and reflect on the bigger picture, are invaluable. Supporting each other as a community and valuing each individual is at the heart of what we do as a Catholic School.

Sean Hayes



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Focus Day – Friday, 3 March

Year 13's day centred on skills that they would need when they leave us in a few months: First Aid, Budgeting and Interviews. We were able to secure guests to lead each of these sessions from St John's Ambulance, Anglia Ruskin University and Bauer Media ensuring that the students engaged with a variety of people. The day was not only a learning experience for all students but they all thoroughly enjoyed the different skills and activities.

The year 12 focus day was a fantastic success. Students felt it was a perfect mixture of hard hitting material delivered in succinct sessions by really effective presenters whose aim it was to remind our young people of the dangers of becoming young drivers on today's roads.

The fire service, the police, drug experts and a drama workshop host gave us all the opportunity to have experiences in unique and compelling ways, things like a virtual accident from the inside of a mock car, a mock court setting where we discussed a defence for hypothetical accident victims, analysing the morality of choices made by all parties. We put ourselves in the role of occupants in a friend's car and reflected on how passengers need to also change their behaviour when it comes to helping our friends drive carefully.



"A huge thank you to Mrs Wilmore for putting such an inspiring and important day together. The speakers commented numerous times to staff on how impressed they were with the respect and enthusiasm our students demonstrated throughout the day. We sincerely hope that the pupils will share some of the more important lessons learned regarding road safety with friends and family".

In the Maths department we hosted Year 11 and they did, well Maths all day. A big thank you to Year 11 who remained mostly calm and focussed despite an intense revision day and being in the middle of their final mocks. The point of the activities was to demonstrate how people learn and different ideas for revision with memory techniques, computer based learning and students teaching each other. Feedback from students on the day was very positive with lots of praise for the PiXL app, the folding paper memory skill and learning the nine times table using fingers and thumbs. If you need more information on what the last sentence means; ask a Year 11!

"Hola, me llamo Maria y soy de Mexico." Last Friday, Year 9 students experienced a range of activities exposing them to Spanish and Latin-American culture and vocabulary. They learnt about el Día de los muertos and made skeletons with Q-tips with Dr Karangi.



Students were also spotted mastering the steps of salsa and merengue dancing following the lead of our guest teachers and encouraged by Mrs Khan who also joined in the dancing! Music was the next stop: there were conversations about different types of music and opinions about them. Students became judges on La Voz España and discovered different artists. Mr Perera got students in the artistic mood and beautiful portraits à la Picasso were created. Finally, there were quizzes about Spanish and Latin-American cultures with Mr McGarry. A fun day was had by all! The Language team is now planning the next Focus Day with much anticipation. We will be taking some Year 8 and 9 students to France for the day. A gentle reminder that payments are now due.

Miss Rodriguez

Year 10 GCSE Drama

Year 8's had a science focus day. On this day we tried out many chemistry experiments such as picking up ice with string using salt, creating volcanoes and making alien blood. We also carried out an experiment with oxygen and fire, made a balloon squeeze through a bottle opening just by using fire and carried out a crazy candle experiment where a coloured liquid took up the space of oxygen in an upturned glass placed over a burning candle. We were able to see the liquid rise and move into the bottle as the oxygen is used up. Science is a fun subject with lots of entertaining activities. Everybody who participated in the science focus day had lots of fun and learned new things. The whole day was entertaining and educational.

Mobin Hosseini – Year 8

Year 7 had great fun celebrating the Day of the Dead. We had three sessions running on the day and had a great time trying out new things. With Ms Guppy and Miss Devanny, students made decorative clay masks. As a DT task, students worked with Ms Pignatiello and Miss Griffin making decorated skeleton puppets. Our final activity was Flash animations with Mr Akbar and Mr Echendu.

Thank you to all of Year 7 for working so hard and being so positive all day. Thank you also to the support staff and Year 10 work experience students for being such a huge help.

Miss Griffin



World Book Week Celebrations

On 28 February, KS3 pupils enjoyed a visit from author Mark Robson. Mark came in and regaled the pupils with stories from his fascinating life so far!

Mark began by explaining how he became an RAF pilot. However, at the core of his talk was how any initial dream may seem unrealistic but that nothing is unachievable without hard work and determination; a message which we promote greatly within school. Amongst his many anecdotes, Mark talked about exploding teeth in an unpressurised cabin as well as flying at such huge speeds that the wings of his plane started to peel away. Definitely not for the faint hearted!

Naturally, Mark revealed how he became an author and the great lengths it took to become published and eventually secure a deal with one of the most prestigious publishers; Simon & Schuster which then led to him being nominated for the celebrated Carnegie Medal in 2008.

In the afternoon, around twenty five Year 8 pupils participated in a workshop with a focus on characterisation and story arching.

Ultimately, his message was motivational and something that many of the students will be thinking about for some time.

Thursday, 2 March saw the culmination of our celebration for World Book Day. Many members of staff dressed up for the occasion with the English department promoting one of their GCSE texts 'Macbeth'. Along with a fabulous Cruella De Vil, Willy Wonka and many more besides; it was fabulous seeing the faces of staff and students alike staring in wonderment at the amazing effort colleagues had gone to. Students were given book tokens to help towards the cost of their own choice of books as well as a quiz in forms which looked at the texts studied in school across KS3 and KS4 so far this year as well as other questions on famous current books such as the 'Hunger Games'. It is good to remind ourselves as well as relaying to our students, the pure enjoyment that reading can bring and how this stays with you for a lifetime.

Miss Stewart

Year 10 Work Experience

Last week, all our year 10 students completed a Work Experience placement. Students were placed with a range of employers including vets, medical practices, schools and nurseries, small businesses and large national companies, hotels, restaurants and cafes and shops. All students were visited by a member of staff during the week and the feedback from employers was overwhelmingly positive:

"Her confidence grew as the week commenced, she was a helpful, polite, young lady. We would be only too happy to give her a part time job."

"She was a fantastic student. It was a real pleasure to have her here for the placement. If she needs any further placements we would be more than willing for her to come back."

"A pleasant and friendly young man who demonstrated his ability to learn new skills quickly."

"His attitude towards work is perfect and with the guidance we have given him he can become a very good software engineer."

There will be the opportunity for students to reflect on and celebrate the experience during their Citizenship lesson today. We are very proud of our students' efforts and look forward to next week's newsletter when they will have the opportunity to write about their experiences.

Voice in a Million

Yesterday SJF Rock Pop Choir travelled to London to perform with 6500 other singers in a show which provides an opportunity for students from across the country to sing at Wembley Arena whilst highlighting the plight of children in care around the world and the issues and problems facing prospective adopters and raising money for children in poverty.

Students have been rehearsing the repertoire for months and the practice certainly paid off at this extravagant event which was a brilliant experience for all involved. A big thank you to all students and staff who were involved and we are all looking forward to next year.

Mr McCoy