



## Term Dates 2016-17

The draft dates for next school year are on our website for reference. We are planning the staff training dates and will then confirm the final dates before half term.

I mention this now because there have been some queries about these draft dates as they differ to Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire. I pointed this out at various meetings to see if the dates could be aligned but it seems that it is felt too late to change them now as some schools had already informed parents and some holidays have been booked already for 2017. The difference affects both the Spring half term and the Easter holiday, which is unusual and unfortunate. Headteachers have asked to be consulted in future so that we can ensure this doesn't happen again but for 2017 it seems the dates can't be changed.

## Focus Day News

Last Friday the school was buzzing with a variety of different activities, most of which are reported in this week's newsletter. I hope that you find this interesting and thank the staff and other visitors who planned and led the day.

Today we say farewell to Jade George who has been teaching History with us for five years. We wish her and her husband well for their new life in the United States. On Monday we welcome Dan Scherling to the Humanities Faculty in her place.

*Sean Hayes*

## Sixth Form Quiet Room

A quiet study room has recently started for students to work in. This is for any student but primarily those who are below their target. This room should be used for focussed study and completion of work. There will be no talking in this room, no use of school computers and no phones allowed. Students should prepare work to complete in these sessions and are required to attend if they are underachieving. The aim of this quiet study room is to support students in the final weeks leading up to their exams.

*Mrs Wilmore*

### The Little Shop of Horrors

Wednesday 10 & Thursday 11 February 7.00 pm

Tickets available from Student Services

£5 Adults / £3 Students/Concessions

## Focus Day : 22 January 2016

We decided to have a whole school theme for this focus day. Departments were asked to plan activities around 'Raising Aspirations'. Different approaches were taken for each year group. The Year 7s in their retreat were encouraged to think of events in the wider world and the impact they could have. Year 8s looked at how Science could be applied in practical ways, as a link to future careers in Science. Year 9 students began thinking about their future with a visit to Anglia Ruskin University. Year 10 were invited to look at Careers in the Army and were given a challenge that encouraged them to use skills essential in many careers: team work, creativity, independent thinking, practical application of ideas. The sixth form had presentations from representatives of different organisations, inviting them to consider a range of future career options.

The year 11 day was slightly different; Year 11 spent one focus day on English and last week was the turn of Maths. Gaining a good GCSE in these subjects is essential in improving their chances of getting good jobs and moving on to the next stage of education.

A review of our Focus Day programme took place last term. Heads of Faculty and Subject Leaders worked with me to look at what we provide for our students and to assess the impact. We also canvassed the views of students as part of this review. What came across very strongly was how important Focus Days are to students. The feedback we received strongly reflected an enjoyment of school visits and the opportunities they provided; an appreciation of the chance to extend their learning and explore topics in depth or look at areas outside the regular curriculum; a desire to continue engaging in activities that required them to use different skills and had a practical approach. In terms of what students would like more of, the two main things were more school visits and more days focussed on different cultures. We will seek to incorporate these requests into next year's programme; we always try to evaluate the days and improve on them where possible.

The Senior Leadership Team in the school recognises and values the hard work of Subject and Faculty leaders and their teams in planning and delivering these days and the work of support staff in providing administrative and technical support. An incredible amount of thought and hard work goes into these days and we would like to take an opportunity to thank staff for their hard work.

*Ms Wilson*

## Year 7 Retreat

For their Focus Day, Year 7 had a retreat day led by the Chaplain Luke Turner and members of the Diocesan Youth Team Ignite. The day was based



around Pope Francis' declaration of the 'Year of Mercy' and the theme of 'Who is my neighbour?' Starting together as a year group with some games and team building activities, Year 7 then participated

in a series of workshops; looking at what their vocation in life might be, a session looking at who our neighbours are and what we do to help them, a meditation and an activity designed to put them in the shoes of a refugee.

Luke Turner

*"I really enjoyed the retreat day because it gave me a chance to do something that wasn't like school and a chance to stop and think about myself."*

*"It was a really good fun day! I liked spending time with my friends and learning in a different way."*

*"Thank you to the Ignite team for helping us have a really good day thinking about myself and God."*

## Year 8

On Friday in Science Year 8 were exploring the exciting world of Kitchen Chemistry. With a cycle of



different activities the students had a chance to make ice cream (and taste it), extract kiwi DNA and burn food to find out the calorie content. After a hands on and explosive morning, students then found out how different

foods were made including doughnuts, chocolate and cheese. This left all of Year 8, and the Science staff's mouths watering after an exciting day.

Miss Hayes

## Year 9 Visit to Anglia Ruskin University

Year 9 students were taken to Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge for the day. The aim was to encourage all students to begin thinking about their future, particularly because Options Evening was coming up and they needed to focus on making the right choices and understanding all the options available. The students were given presentations about Higher Education and also had the opportunity to tour the campus and speak to student ambassadors. Students enjoyed the visit; the most helpful events were the more informal aspects of the day, where they got to speak to university students and see life on the campus. Many students would have liked to have had access to more areas of the University and also seen Halls of Residence to get a feel for how students live. Here are a few of the responses:

*"It was good to see the university. I definitely want to do A levels and apply for university."*

*"It was an interesting day. I don't think I want to go to university but it did make me think about what I would do instead."*

*"It made me realise that university is for me if I want it – the students I met were people like me."*

## Year 10

Year 10 spent the day working with the Army and Technology faculty. The day was introduced by the Army who explained the options available to students if they were to join, giving them an insight into career choices, places they could be posted and educational training. When the Army had finished with their presentation they introduced a structural design brief linked with current flooding problems in Yorkshire. The brief was to design a bridge made from paper, tape and nuts and bolts, the final prototype had to hold as much weight as possible with the strongest bridge group receiving a prize. A



secondary prize was awarded to the group with the more interesting design. Students enjoyed the day and became very competitive, especially between teaching groups.

Mrs Butter

## Year 11

Year 11 students enjoyed a day of Mathematics. We participated in various activities: Mathsland, Maths Vegas, Hegarty Maths, Treasure Hunt and Relay Maths. My favourite activity was Maths Vegas which involved using our mental maths and written logic to solve problems. I didn't participate in the Maths Relay which I was told would be great. I also enjoyed Mathsland where we went on a journey through a land of fantasy. To continue through we had to solve riddles involving our Maths skills. My least favourite part of the day was the Treasure Hunt where we walked around school searching for and solving GCSE exam questions.

In the Hegarty Maths session we were introduced to a really good Maths revision website. We made mind maps on topics each of us needed to improve on – so it was personalised and then completed online tests to see if we had improved. All in all a great day to revise GCSE Maths.

Jake-Michael Neal

## Sixth Form

The focus of our day was: Life Post-18. We had representatives from several different careers: NHS, Engineering and Law. We also had Mencap in to talk about voluntary work, DeMontfort University spoke about university life and the Skills Service spoke about the possible pathways when you leave school. Year 12 were introduced to Unifrog which has a full catalogue of universities and apprenticeships with minimum entry requirements to help focus and inspire our students. As one student said: "They were rather interesting and has even made me think about a career in that field later on in life." And another: "I know how to achieve my goals now."

Mrs Wilmore