



Parents' & Students' Newsletter: July 2014

(parents - please forward this to your daughter)

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Giving 110%, Going the Extra Mile and other clichés...

Our education system is quite different from many other countries in the world – in particular, what each country expects their schools to deliver.

A good number of countries set up and fund their schools to deliver a vital core and no more, so they are naturally surprised (and impressed) when they look at what a British state school offers over and above that core, much of it 'free' or at least not at a realistic cost; in particular, it is quite normal elsewhere to run a school that teaches core subjects in the morning and that's it - if parents and students want 'extras', such as sport or the more creative subjects, they find alternative provision in the afternoon.

At AHS, staff work incredibly hard to do their 'day jobs' and, as with every other school, the demands of teaching and supporting 1300 students are, for want of a better word, demanding. However, as well as providing around 45,000 lessons in the past year, staff somehow managed to run an amazing selection of clubs, teams, exchanges, expeditions, trips, performances, competitions, talks and exhibitions (and that really was just in the last fortnight!). I am sure the range bears comparison with any school; watch out for next week's *Highlights* to get a glimpse at what has been going on.

There is apparently a Vietnamese proverb, courtesy of the internet, which says, "When eating a fruit, think of the person who planted the tree". So please do spare a thought at this time of year if you or your daughter has appreciated the core part of the school, or benefited from one or more of the wider activities in the past three terms.

My gratitude to all tree planters this year, to all students for so much hard work and endless energy, and to parents for your continued support; I hope everyone has a great summer and returns in September ready for another action-packed and enjoyable year. For those students leaving us, farewell, good luck and do keep in touch.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Rosen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Rosen

Staffing news

You may be aware that Mrs Thompson has been off school since January and is unlikely to return in the near future. She is very grateful for the kind messages and support. With Mrs Matthew's retirement earlier in the year as well, we have been a little stretched so my thanks to all members of staff who have taken on extra responsibilities and to everyone for your understanding. In September's newsletter I will introduce the new members of the Leadership Team and their responsibilities, together with everyone who is joining us for the start of the new academic year.

As always at this time of year, we are saying farewell to a number of colleagues:

Mrs Adam has taught Maths at AHS since 1984 so while she hasn't taught an infinite number of students in those 30 years, it is certainly a very significant figure; we wish her a happy retirement.

Mrs Beardmore started as Head of Spanish in 2001 and then became Assistant Head in 2003, taking on a wide range of leadership roles over the years. In particular, I would like to thank her for looking after Child Protection so well over the years, an unseen but essential job.

Mrs Bowles has kindly covered Mrs McGowan's classes over the past year and we are very grateful for her work in helping to set up the new subject of Computing; at the same time we welcome back Mrs McGowan after her maternity leave.

Mrs Dore started here back in 1999 and, as well as her much-valued contributions to Drama plus teaching General Studies and L4L, directed some memorable performances over the years.

Mr Jimenez Diaz has been Head of Spanish for five years and leaves with our appreciation for his hard work in the classroom and participation in a number of trips in the UK and abroad.

Miss Leigh has been teaching Maths here since 2012 and we are grateful for all her work in the classroom, as a form tutor and in helping with our Kenyan link.

Mrs Lloyd has been in the Finance Office for a year and leaves with our thanks for her hard work during a significant period of change in the team.

Mr Mathieson has been teaching Maths this year and leaves with our thanks and best wishes.

Miss Pink has been covering Mrs Jarrett's classes during her maternity leave and will be much missed by colleagues and her classes alike.

Mr Tinnion has led Biology for nine years. Biology is our most popular and successful A level subject and much of that is due to Mr Tinnion's leadership and hard work. He is retiring to pursue his many outside interests and leaves with the sincere gratitude of everyone who has benefited from his love of the subject.

Mrs Woodgate leaves with our thanks for her many contributions to the Biology and Science teams over the past three years.

Our Year Head and Pastoral Support Assistant teams for 2014-15 will be:

Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Miss Melliush	Miss Graham	Mrs Waugh & Mrs Johnson	Miss Doherty	Mrs Sillence	Mr Ochiltree	Mrs Bevan
Mrs Ray: KS3 PSA			Mrs Newman: KS4 PSA		Mrs Sutton: Sixth Form PSA	

2013-14 School Improvement Plan

At the start of the year I outlined the areas we were going to focus on in 2013-14 to move the school forward. Staff and Governors have been monitoring the plan and here is a very brief summary of the progress that has been made:

Curriculum		
1.1	Improving teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ INSET days devoted to different aspects of teaching ➤ Running well-received Learning Lunches which focus on sharing good practice ➤ Teachers undertaking Improvement Projects which enable them to 'experiment' on their classes to identify the most effective techniques
1.2	Tracking student progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Changing the data calendar to make it fit in better with other school events including parents' evenings ➤ New data system introduced which uses <i>Likely to Achieve</i> rather than <i>Working At</i> grades and levels (this will take some time to work its way through the school) ➤ CATs tests used for baseline assessment in Year 7 as Key Stage 2 results are not available for everyone and CATs give a national benchmark
1.3	ICT in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The piloting of iPads in a number of subjects has demonstrated their capabilities and potential. A number of teachers also have iPads for evaluation.
1.4	Review curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working group about to report to make recommendations for 2015 and beyond
Students		
2.1	Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appointment of Student Welfare Co-ordinator has been very successful
2.2	Behaviour consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Detention system improved to help students to keep on track with homework
2.3	Tutor time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More time made available for tutors to have conversations with individual students
Personnel		
3.1	New pay/appraisal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National system introduced successfully
3.2	Working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Data, ICT & curriculum groups have met and moved their areas forward
3.3	Support for new staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revised induction support for new staff has worked well
3.4	Management training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A number of colleagues have successfully completed nationally accredited training (eg NPQML and NPQSL for middle and senior leaders)
3.5	Smarter ICT (for admin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Finance system (SAGE) being used more effectively (eg BACS payments, budget holders' access to accounts) ➤ ParentPay use enhanced to include trip consent ➤ Use of on-line surveys improved
Resources		
4.1	Improve ICT infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ System more reliable (including updated servers) and better supported
4.2	Premises improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Major toilet, fire alarm and boiler projects this summer
4.3	Sense of ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some progress with improving the care taken of form rooms and subject spaces
4.4	Budget decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Careful budget management & planning continuing, work with other schools on obtaining Fairer Funding for Bucks secondary schools
4.5	Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some progress this year but more to do next year in terms of communication and celebrating our successes

We have been working on the 2014-15 plan this term and I will highlight the main areas in my September newsletter.

Industrial action, Thursday 10 July

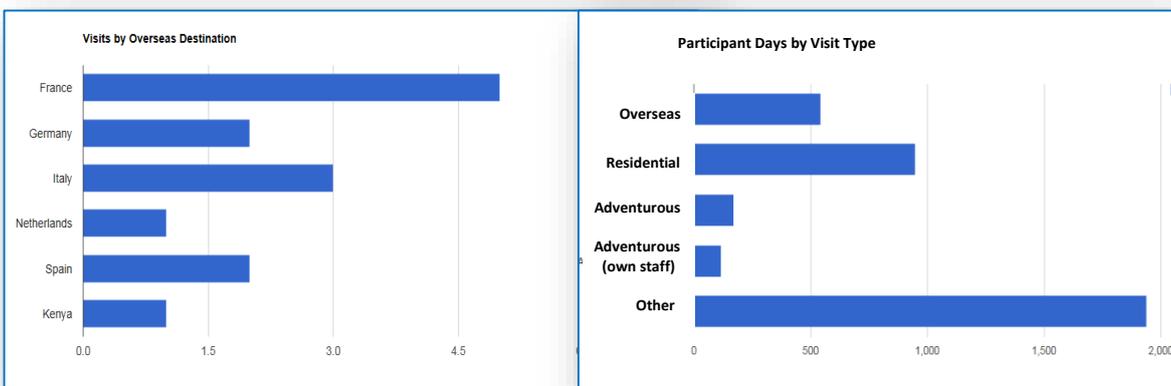
One of the teachers' unions and some of the support staff unions have called a strike for Thursday. As always, we will not know the impact of this until the day itself but at the moment the intention is to run business as normal; students are asked to bring in some private study/reading material in case it is needed.

Trips and Visits in 2013-14

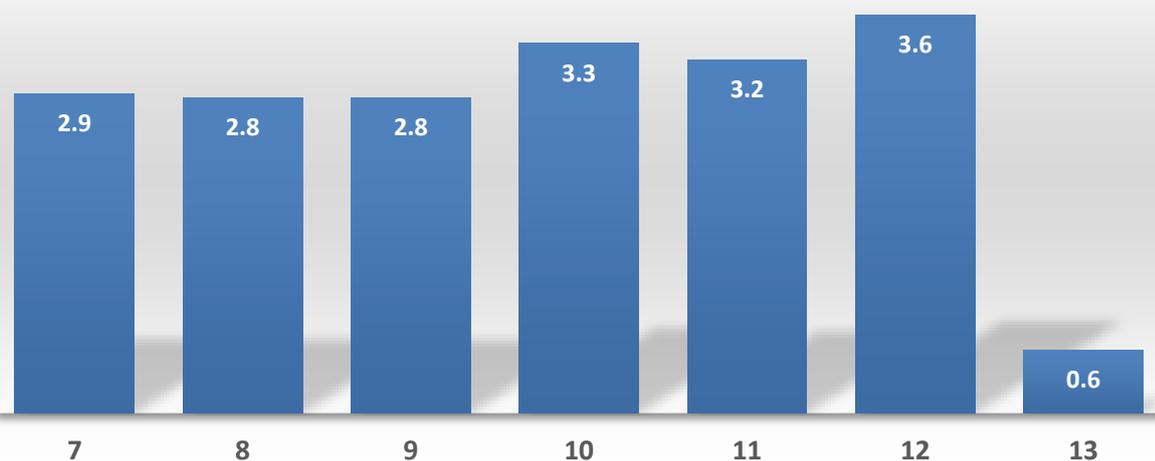
We use a computer system to log almost all trips which are off-site, and it does a certain amount of number-crunching to tell us what happened this year. Given our sporting successes this year, it is no surprise that those who have been on the most trips are in the sports teams, but the range and number of all types of trips are a tribute to the staff who run them.

Total number of Visits	77
Total number of participants	2908
Total number of days	172
Total number of participant days	6196

Visit Types	Overseas	Residential	Adventurous (external)	Adventurous (own staff)	Other
Total participants	543	948	170	117	1940
Total days	93	118	10	5	53
Participant Days	543	4236	170	117	1940



Trips per person by Year Group



Term Dates 2014-15 - reminder



Please note that these are not the same as other schools; in particular, we start the Autumn Term earlier and finish the Summer Term earlier than most Buckinghamshire schools. Also, we have put the 5th INSET day on a Wednesday to avoid missing more Mondays and Fridays.

Term	First day of term	Half Term	Last day of term	Other days to note
Autumn 2014	Wednesday 3 September	Monday 27 – Friday 31 October	Friday 19 December	INSET 1: Monday 1 September INSET 2: Tuesday 2 September INSET 3: Friday 10 October
Spring 2015	Tuesday 6 January	Monday 16 – Friday 20 February	Friday 27 March	INSET 4: Monday 5 January
Summer 2015	Monday 13 April	Monday 25 – Friday 29 May	Friday 17 July	INSET 5: Wednesday 15 April Bank Holiday: Monday 4 May

A calendar of key dates will be distributed with September's newsletter.

School Funding



It is probably not headline news that we have a really tight budget and we don't expect too much sympathy as many businesses will be in the same position! Our main funding is in two parts - for the Sixth Form and for Key Stages 3 & 4. The Sixth Form funding is determined nationally and has been going down for several years, and will continue to do so. The funding for Years 7 to 11 has also gone down (despite the government's contention that this part of the budget is protected), although not by so much. At the same time, we have had inflation, changes to pensions, pay awards and

the need to continue to look after and develop the school site.

In March, the government announced additional funds for 'the least fairly funded local authorities' and the results of the consultation on their proposals will be announced later this month. Bucks is one of the lowest funded authorities for mainstream schools' funding (147th out of 151 authorities) and should be receiving additional funds for 2015-16. Secondary schools have been working hard to understand the way that funding is presently allocated to Bucks schools and are preparing plans to try to ensure that each pupil in Bucks is fairly funded. We have met with MPs and with Ministers, and will soon be in a position to submit proposals to Bucks to try to make the funding within the county more equitable.

At the same time, the DfE has published an interesting study into whether school funding affects attainment, ie does additional funding lead to higher exam performance? The answer seems to be that there *is* an effect but it is quite small and there is a remarkable lack of research in this area, given successive governments' initiatives, including the current (worthy) policy of directing scarce money to address disadvantage through the Pupil Premium.

As one of the lowest funded schools in the country, as are our fellow local secondary schools, we have always had a policy of managing our budget extremely carefully. As I hope parents and students will agree, the school is in a strong position at present, in terms of its curriculum, staff and facilities. To maintain and even improve that position, we will be launching a Development Campaign early in the Autumn Term, aimed at enhancing the school's ability to provide the best possible education to every girl (but not to fund our core activities). Please watch out for this!

The Giving Machine

Are you doing any on-line purchasing this summer or shopping early for Christmas?

If so, could you spend a couple of minutes registering at

www.thegivingmachine.co.uk?

*Companies such as Amazon, John Lewis, W H Smith and M&S will all make a donation to the AHSA, **at no cost to you**, if you go via The Giving Machine to buy anything.*

It is completely pain-free so please do sign up before you reach for your credit/debit cards!

A selection of our 400+ participating stores



Home to School Transport

Bucks CC have apologised for the failure to provide transport at the start of the Summer Term and we have set up an improved system so that we can now be confident that they have the term dates of the three Aylesbury Grammar Schools.

Summer 2014 Exam Results

GCE Results - Thursday 14 August 2014

Y13 candidates can pick up their results from the Dining Hall from 9.00 am onwards.

Y12 candidates (and any others who have taken early AS/A2 exams) can collect their results from the Dining Hall from 10.30 am. Please do not come earlier as we will be dealing with Y13 students' queries.



GCSE Results – Thursday 21 August 2014

Y11 candidates can collect their results from the Dining Hall from 9.00 am.

Y10 candidates (and any others who have taken GCSE exams) may collect their results from the Dining Hall from 10.30 am. Please do not come earlier as we will be dealing with Y11 students' queries.

After 12.00 pm on all results days, any stamped, addressed envelopes will be posted and any uncollected envelopes will be kept in Reception until the start of the Autumn Term.

Please note that no student's results can be released to any other person (including parents/relations) without a signed letter of authorisation from the student, giving permission for her results to be collected by that person.