

Headlines...

Moving forward together in 2008

Recently the government published its ten year Children's Plan which aims to improve the quality of life for our children. A number of independent surveys last year suggested that young people are not as happy as they might be. There were even international comparisons indicating that England was slipping down the league tables for literacy. Various explanations have been offered such as the test-driven national curriculum, the dominance of electronic media in youth culture, the decline in reading, the diminishing time parents have for their children because of work pressure and unhealthy lifestyles. Certainly there is some hope that the testing regime may be slightly relaxed. The new government curriculum changes put more emphasis on thinking skills and the relevance of knowledge to the community and the world of work. Here at Verulam we are doing our best to address this agenda. Our annual parents meeting held well-attended sessions on Internet safety, we already run courses teaching thinking skills and we involve parents and students in many initiatives to make national tests and exams less stressful. We are at the forefront of the sports partnership programme that aims to get students to try new sports and to stay healthy and active. Verulam's curriculum is immensely enriched by extra learning activities in trips, the Duke of Edinburgh programme, team sports and cultural events. Through our community and extended schools programme we want to expand opportunities for parents to get involved, sometimes alongside their children. As a high-performing specialist college entering the second phase of the programme from April with an additional specialist subject of languages parents will be able to start or brush up on their languages. Whatever we do to improve the learning, health and happiness of our students we can only do it effectively through the great partnership we have with our parents. I invite all parents to get involved in any way you can. Help out with the PTA, come to community learning, contribute to the next Brighten up Verulam day.



What Next for Children?

DCFS Children's Plan

Finally...

- ◆ Our heating problems are now resolved through the temporary generator installation. We await a permanent fix.
- ◆ Year 11 parents have important decisions to make about post-16 progression. Do look at the International Baccalaureate. You will also shortly know you son's average points score based on the trial exams. No doubt a few of you will be having some serious discussions with your sons about moving up a gear (or two!) if they want to have a full choice post-16. *Mr D. Kellaway*

2007-2008 Term Dates

Spring Term

7 January - 19 March

Inset Day: 1st February (pm)

Inset Day: 20th March

Half Term: 11th February - 15th February

Summer Term

8 April - 18th July 12 noon

Half Term: 26th May - 30th May

Inset Day: 7th April

Upcoming Events.

- 7th Jan. Start of Spring Term - **Yellow Week**
- 10th Jan. Year 11 Post 16 Evening
7pm - School Hall
- 15th Jan. Year 11 Additional Science
Exam - Biology
- 16th Jan. Year 12 Consultation Evening
5-8.30pm
- 17th Jan. Year 9 Alternative Curriculum
Evening
- 18th Jan. Year 11 Additional Science
Exam - Chemistry
- 21st Jan. Year 11 Additional Science
Exam - Physics
- 23rd Jan. Year 9 Consultation Evening
5-8.30pm
- 31st Jan. Year 9 Guided Pathways Eve
(GCSE Choices) 7pm
- 1st Feb. School finishes Noon - Inset

PTA Uniform Sale

This takes place 10am-12 midday on the 1st Saturday after every holiday in the school canteen. A large range of outgrown uniform is available. This is an opportunity to replace lost PE kit or stock up on other items of uniform. We also need to maintain the stock of uniform (especially PE and games uniform). Therefore please can you let us have your outgrown uniform as a donation. Uniform can be left in the canteen, labelled "For Secondhand Uniform Sale".

The dates for forthcoming sales are:

- ◆ 12 January 2008
- ◆ 23 February 2008
- ◆ 12 April 08
- ◆ 7 June 08

Another First for Verulam

Two sixth form students from the BeauSandVer consortium have broken new ground by taking part in the British Informatics Olympiad. This prestigious annual event puts Britain's best young computer programmers head-to-head in a nationwide contest using computers to tackle mathematical problems against the clock. The winners of this competition are invited to represent Britain in a similar international competition.



This year, for the first time, Verulam's Computing Faculty entered a team on behalf of the BeauSandVer consortium. This comprised Chris Wood from Verulam (representing Year 12) and James Allardice from Beaumont school (representing Year 13). They tackled a gruelling three-hour examination, writing computer programs to solve – among other things – the Goldbach Conjecture and the workings of the Enigma Machine.

Mr Durham, Head of ICT and Computing at Verulam, praised the performance of his two students. "This was a fantastic effort. The Olympiad questions are aimed at the cream of Britain's Computing talent, and consequently, the exercises are very difficult indeed. These problems would be challenging for a professional computer programmer. Some schools arrange special coaching for their students, and provide practice exams and additional material – our boys just volunteered to take the exam, turned up and did it. These boys are really a credit to the Consortium".

Both boys found the exercise challenging but rewarding. James Allardice explained the nature of the challenge: "This wasn't just about solving mathematical problems. It was also about designing and writing quick and efficient programs – the computer had to give an answer within two minutes of a problem being keyed in. This meant that we had to design our software very carefully". Chris Wood agreed: "The examination time-limit was particularly tough – it isn't easy to program well under those conditions."

The three hour examination took place in the Verulam ICT suite, where both students used laptops to design, write and test their software. Chris Wood tackled the exercises using the Visual Basic programming language, while James Allardice opted for C# object-oriented programming.

David Kellaway, Headteacher, also congratulated the boys. "When our students tackle competitions like this, what impresses me most is their can-do attitude and willingness to try new challenges. I'm sure this will stand them in good stead in their university studies and future careers."

Important Dates for Year 9 Parents

- ◆ On 17th January at 7pm, we will be holding an Alternative Curriculum information evening. If you are required to attend this evening, you will be receiving a letter.
- ◆ 23rd January, 5-8.30pm is our Year 9 Parents' Consultation Evening for all parents.
- ◆ 31st January, 7pm is our Guided Pathways Evening, when information about GCSE preferences will be available, for all parents.



Boys should accompany their parents to the above meetings.

Homework Club

The home work club will be running after school as from next week, Monday 14 January. This will be at the following times:

- ◆ Monday 3.30-4.30pm
- ◆ Tuesday 3.00-4pm
- ◆ Wednesday 3.30-4.30pm
- ◆ Thursday 3.30-4.30pm

You do not have to book - just turn up at Room 9. For further details please see Mr Little.



DofE Gold - Morocco

On Tuesday 29th of Jan at 8pm, we will be holding an information meeting for those who wish to visit Morocco in 2009 for the Gold D of E and their parents. Non DofE participants are welcome to attend. Anyone interested should speak to Mr Toley.

