



Head's Newsletter

Dear Parents, Guardians and Carers

I am still wrapping my head around 2018. We are doing the calendar for 2018-19 already and before you know, it will be 2020. Now, in my head, I am just getting over going into the twenty first century - it may be an age thing, time seems to go faster the older you get.

Newsletters

I was going over the top with the freedom that an electronic newsletter gives. However, parental feedback says that this is making it very difficult for some of you to download. In the future we will put some sort of link to the website, so you can see photos in full glorious technicolour. In the meantime, please accept this rather dull looking one-off version whilst we sort out the technology.

Parent Focus Groups

The moment that you are prepared to ask questions, you need to be prepared to get answers that may sit a little uncomfortably with you. Thanks to the parents who recently took part in the focus groups. I've tried to summarise the main points raised. There's always things we can do better. I always think that if ever I get to the point where I think I've cracked it, it will be time to raise a glass to retirement

Discussion item	Action
Students arrive in September not knowing their Form room.	All new Year 7's congregate in the main hall on their first day and they do get taken to their Form rooms. We tend to use rooms in close proximity to the main hall on intake day and evening so need to make that clearer.
Information Evening	Make the purpose clearer and improve the letter that goes out to parents
Merits	We're trying to reward everyone who deserves it but we do have a focus group looking at ways to improve this system.
Positive and negative Bromcom records	We're looking at ways this can be improved
Challenge in Year 7	A tightrope to walk but it's one of my own performance management targets so it is an area of focus already
What are they learning? What are they supposed to be skilled in?	We are revisiting course guides and looking at possible video links on website to help you know what your child is supposed to be learning
Homework	All sorts of comments were made regarding homework. Hopefully more and more is being recorded online; it's a whole school target. We will try to take account of those who genuinely have not been able to finish their homework.
Marking	Make our policies clearer. Don't publish marks too late in the term.
Exams/tests	Make it clearer to children what expectations are for internal tests/exams
Communication and dates	Do a downloadable calendar. Do a video link on how to access info on your child. Have a mobile friendly head's newsletter.

Gold Standard

Many children do amazing things outside of school and I'm sure I only get to find out the tip of the iceberg. Golden Corner in the Head's Newsletter is the chance to celebrate success in absolutely anything.

- Grace Wilne (Year 8) ran the Cheshire Schools Cross Country earlier this month, representing BLS and South Cheshire in the Year 8/9 age group. She finished 4th out of 40+ girls in very muddy and wet conditions. Well done Grace, an amazing achievement.
- Isaac Wilding (Year 10) was selected to play for Worcester Warriors U15 Rugby academy team against Bristol and is actually playing at the time of writing this newsletter. We wish him good luck

Mobile phones

In terms of impact, this has to be the most effective and yet simplest change we have ever made. The honeymoon period is over, and we have had to up the sanctions for using a mobile device as too many were prepared to simply have their phones confiscated. What has improved?

- a. Interaction between students at break and lunchtime is much better.
- b. There are fewer 'squabbles' during the day over trivia. No data was kept on this, but anecdotal experience says this is true, as does my own experience on the yard at lunchtime.
- c. Fewer parents turning up announced as a child has rung them direct to say they are poorly. The office team are really pleased with the change as it allows us to ensure that children are being looked after.

Phones continue to be useful on trips and fixtures as families can be kept informed of the return times.

School Show

I think that the process of hatching a school show is as important as the final product. Providing that the rehearsal schedule is sensible, and retention is good, then the experience of being involved in a school show should be a really rich one. It's virtually a sell out so a big thank you to everyone who has supported this production. I know that the cast are very excited, the show band is as laid back as can be and the staff are frantic. Slap on the greasepaint, turn on the lights and curtains!

Stop press It's fantastic!

Funding

We continue to look at ways to save money. There is currently a consultation with staff on how to reduce spending by an additional £200,000. This is on top of last year's cuts. I am very grateful to those families who are able to support us financially through School Fund. An email was sent out recently and is also available on the website and contributions would be welcomed. A big thank you to those families that have already responded.

Exchanges

Thank you to all those families who continue to support the various Exchanges that we do. It is a big commitment for everyone and relies such a lot on trust. I know that the students do get a lot out of the exchanges and for some of them they continue to keep in touch.

Careers Convention

This event grows a bit bigger every year and the students get a lot out of it. A huge thank you to the many contributors and all the staff that organised the event, especially Miss Morrison and Mrs Cundy. Also thanks to the Miss Downes and her team, along with KS4 catering students, who prepared the fantastic lunch for the visitors.

BL6 Recruitment

We have received over 200 applications for Year 12 places in September. This will hopefully translate to at least 130 new students in 2018. BL6 thoroughly earned its Outstanding status and if there is anybody still wondering about applying, it is well worth still having a look and seeing if it suits.

Homework

My teaching group had 6 students who claimed they can't see homework on line. I have done some digging on this and it's been covered loads of times. However, that does not mean it's gone in. Click on the VLE button at the top of the website home page. Follow the instructions – your username should be whatever you use to log into the school network, although it needs a ./ in front of it.

Music

For those of you who like music do try and support the Nantwich Jazz and Blues over Easter weekend. There are quite a few BLS folks who are musical and are involved. For those of you who may not be that fussy about their musical standards..... Wayne and the Hairy Peaches are playing at the Bowling Green on Good Friday at 9pm and on Easter Sunday in the Studio at 7pm.

Sport

Lots of students participate in extra curricular sporting activities. I know that this half term has been very busy. Do have a look at the Twitter feed (also available via the main school website), to get an idea of the sort of sports they have been up to.

Audlem Foundation

The Audlem Foundation is an organisation that can provide financial assistance to pupils and students who have not attained the age of 25 years and are resident in the Ancient Parish of Audlem, to enhance their education. (The Ancient parish of Audlem comprises of the civil parishes of Audlem, Buerton and Hankelow, and part of Dodcott-cum-Wilkesley and Newhall). The committee meets on a monthly basis to consider applications. If you feel this may benefit your child, please visit <http://www.audlem.org/directories/groups/audlem-education-foundation.html>

Finally.....

We have a number of residential visits out over half term so a big thank you to the staff who are going with them. There is also some revision sessions over half term. I hope that you all have a lovely half term and we come back on a Week 1.

Andrew Cliffe
February 2018

Dates for the Diary

Friday 16 th February 2018	-	Inset Day followed by February Half Term
Friday 16 th February 2018	-	Ski Tip Depart
Friday 16 th - Sunday 18 th February 2018	-	Tattenhall Art Trip
Monday 19 th February 2018	-	Iceland Trip Returns
Friday 23 rd February 2018	-	Ski Trip Returns
Monday 26 th February 2018	-	School Reopens to Staff and Students
Thursday 1 st March 2018	-	French Exchange Depart
w/c Monday 5 th March 2018	-	Year 10 Mock Interviews
Thursday 8 th March 2018	-	French Exchange Return
Wednesday 14 th March 2018	-	Year 9 Options Evening
Monday 26 th March 2018	-	Year 8 Parents' Evening
Thursday 29 th March 2018	-	Inset Day followed by Easter Holidays
Monday 16 th April 2018	-	School Reopens to Staff and Students