



Head's Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue number 4
January 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians and Carers

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of the school and we are thinking about what to do to celebrate. If any of our parents were students at the school in 1977 and have any old photos or memories, perhaps you could email them to head@brineleas.co.uk. Below is a photo that an ex-teacher has sent in; please note that we still have the same curtains on the stage. A parent who was a student has already identified a lot more faces.



The Wedding Singer

Our school show is just a week away and I do hope that you can support this event. Last year we had really good audiences and I hope that we can continue with this trend. I know that the talented cast have worked really hard. Friday night is a sell out but there are tickets for other performances. With my band, I have played at loads of weddings and there are lots of things that ring true from this show. I am really looking forward to a great night out. The show runs from Tuesday 7th to Friday 10th February 2017.

Surveys

Below are the outcomes of our most recent parental surveys. Out of both surveys the most concerning theme is that so many of you don't know who to contact in the first instance. I looked at the individual Year Group surveys expecting to see a change as students progressed through the school; however, the response is similar throughout. Responding to parents is hard to get right. There was one comment which said that the Headteacher never gets back to you. Perhaps it's worth just focussing on that for one moment as responses need to be from the appropriate person. There are many layers in a school and a big school does not have to be impersonal as we have the right number of staff. I speak, or meet, lots of families on a day-to-day basis, however, I am often not the best person to see. Contacting school is a little bit like emergency triage. It is true that judgement should be used. The first port of call, if at all unsure, is to contact the school via telephone, a note in the planner or call in. We have just put a messaging service on the phones so that your call can be dealt with more effectively (see below). One written response said that they had to buy their child a phone as it was expected that parents would text their child if they had dropped off a forgotten PE kit, model dinosaur or chicken thighs etc. If this impression has gone out then it is incorrect and I apologise. Apart from anything else mobile phone reception is not great around the school and I would not expect students to be looking at phones in the middle of a lesson. I have heard reception ask if a child is expecting something to be dropped off; if the answer is no then we will find the child and reunite them with whatever it is that has been forgotten or urgently needed. We do act upon the responses from the Ofsted style questions as well, and we will be pursuing some of the areas below. There are as many comments about insufficient homework as there are about too much homework which I am not sure what to do about. The large percentage who disagree about extra-curricular is a concern as we do such a lot; we will have a look and talk to students.

- **Parental Surveys (taken from Ofsted template on Parentview)**

	QUESTION	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/ N/A	Not answered	Total
1	My child is happy	53%	44%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
2	My child feels safe	54%	43%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
3	My child makes good progress	49%	47%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
4	My child is well looked after	53%	46%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%
5	My child is taught well	46%	52%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%
6	There is an adult my child feels comfortable to talk to if there is a problem	46%	44%	6%	0%	0%	4%	100%
7	Staff treat students fairly and with respect	40%	54%	3%	0%	0%	2%	100%
8	My child receives appropriate homework	32%	57%	10%	1%	0%	0%	100%
9	School makes sure students are well behaved	32%	57%	9%	0%	0%	1%	100%
10	School deals effectively with bullying	26%	56%	7%	1%	2%	7%	100%
11	School well led and managed	48%	50%	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%
12	School responds well to concerns	37%	52%	5%	1%	1%	4%	100%
13	I receive valuable information about my child's progress	43%	51%	4%	2%	0%	1%	100%
14	My child has used homework on line and found it useful	35%	52%	9%	2%	0%	2%	100%
15	My child enjoys extra-curricular activities and House competitions	36%	48%	11%	2%	1%	2%	100%
16	My child knows their targets and how to improve	39%	55%	5%	0%	0%	1%	100%
17	Would you recommend this school	58%	40%	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%

- Office Survey

QUESTION	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure/ N/A	Not answered	Total
Admin staff have positive relationship with parents	40%	55%	3%	0%	1%	2%	100%
Admin staff are always approachable and willing to help	45%	52%	3%	0%	1%	0%	100%
I know who to ask for help with specific enquiries	20%	52%	26%	3%	0%	0%	100%
Queries are answered and response received in acceptable timescale	33%	58%	5%	3%	1%	2%	100%
Telephone always answered promptly	42%	53%	1%	0%	2%	3%	100%
Phone answered in a pleasant, professional manner	48%	48%	0%	1%	2%	3%	100%
Admin staff always relay messages accurately and effectively	43%	47%	3%	1%	3%	4%	100%
Trust the Admin staff with confidentiality	43%	51%	0%	1%	2%	4%	100%
When arriving in reception I am always dealt with immediately	41%	34%	1%	0%	3%	21%	100%
My query receives an immediate and satisfactory response	37%	38%	2%	0%	3%	21%	100%
Students never report negative feedback about student reception/sick bay	27%	29%	10%	1%	9%	24%	100%
I am happy with the procedures followed when a student is ill/has to go home	27%	34%	5%	0%	10%	24%	100%

Phoning School

You may have noticed that we have a new telephone system. I think that the option of 'pastoral' may be throwing a few families. This option should be used if you are concerned about progress, homework and any worries about your child including safety. On the latter, you will be directed to one of the safeguarding team if required; please be aware that the person you initially speak to may not be a safeguarding officer so please bear this in mind when explaining the reason for your call. If you have contact with the school regarding ongoing complex issues, you will be given one direct contact to ask for.

Performance Tables

The official 2016 performance tables are now out. If you want to browse yourself visit <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>. It is worth highlighting a few headlines. Maybe not champagne but certainly a glass of Prosecco.

- KS4**

There were no schools in Cheshire East who were above average in the Progress 8 measure. The Progress 8 measure goes from 0.14 (average) to -0.97 (well below national average). We finished on -0.06 (which is within the average range) which puts us 10th out of the 22 schools in Cheshire East. We had a few students who faced enormous difficulties and the fact that they managed to succeed in something was an achievement. If you take out those 5 or 6 students then our Progress 8 measure would be positive but would still leave the school in the average bracket. Our Attainment 8 score of 53.5 also puts us at 10th. Our English EBacc result is 36% which puts us in 6th place (3rd in 2015) and the 71% A* to C including English and Maths puts us at 8th (4th in 2015 and 2014). The tables also allow you to compare us against similar schools in England based on achievement at KS2. This puts us at 35th out of 55 (19th in 2015, 36th in 2014).

- KS5**

If you want to look at the comparison tables then go to the performance table website but highlight 16-18. I am not including the two independent schools although our progress scores do put us above them. On progress scores, we are 4th in Cheshire East with a score of 0.14 which puts us at above national average. The range goes from 0.36 which is the one school well above national average in Cheshire East to one FE College at -0.65 (which is well below national average). Points score of 31.21 puts us at 8th. AAB in at least two facilitating subjects = 11th.

Funding

Brine Leas School actively supports the headteachers' group in Cheshire East and they, together with the Local Authority, have met with school ministers regarding the national funding formula. We will wait to see what the outcome is. As I said before Christmas, the consultation is not easy to fill in and there is going to be advice on filling this in shortly, however if we all do the same responses then the DfE do pick that up and lump them all together. You may have seen Cheshire East headteachers on the television recently and the message that they are giving is absolutely true; the proposed cuts to the formula, on top of cuts that we currently know about, will have consequences. At Brine Leas we will be receiving 5.28% less for each child in KS3 and 10.84% less for each KS4 student. The cuts at KS4 are particularly outrageous as this the most expensive KS to educate. Along with other schools in Cheshire East, we are going to have cuts (see December newsletter) but I do need to assure you that, if your child has started a course in KS4 or KS5, we will ensure that it is completed (i.e. we will not cut a course from Year 12 into Year 13).

Nuts in School

It's a great headline, but a serious message. We do ask that students do not bring nuts or food that contains nuts into school. We do have a number of children with serious nut allergies who could have a severe allergic reaction brought on by being in the same environment as someone eating food containing nuts.

Medication in School

Please can I remind all parents that no students should be carrying medication of any sort around school in their bags or blazer pockets etc. Whilst it may seem harmless for student to carry a couple of pain relief tablets with them for a minor ailment, there are genuine health & safety and potential safeguarding issues should the medication be misplaced. The Administration of Medicine Policy is available on our website (or you can telephone school to request a copy) and this states that all medication, both prescription and non-prescription, must be brought into school in its original packaging with a note giving instructions for administration and dosage. All medication is stored in the school office and will be given to students in accordance with the instructions provided.

Whole-School Changes to Marking and Feedback

'Everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere' Dylan William

At Brine Leas we are constantly evaluating the impact and effectiveness of what we do, making changes where necessary. These changes can be driven at a national level (eg. the removal of levels as a means of monitoring progress and attainment) or can be driven internally when we feel our own systems can be improved. Recently, the teaching staff have been reviewing how we mark students' work and offer feedback. Marking has two purposes: firstly, students act on feedback to make progress over time; secondly, it informs future planning and teaching. We have found that finding one model of marking and feedback to suit the huge range of subjects, lesson styles, lesson frequencies, ability ranges and age ranges that we accommodate in school is too restrictive. Consequently, we have changed our marking and feedback style to allow subjects to make it work for their lessons. There are still core threads to marking and feedback which every subject must follow:

- Work must be marked regularly (proportionate with curriculum time)
- Most marking will be 'acknowledgement marking'. The purpose of acknowledgement marking is to inform short-term planning; to ensure high standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar; to ensure high standards of presentation, handwriting and effort; to ensure homework has been completed; to identify misconceptions that have arisen so that they can be swiftly corrected. Common marking does not require lengthy comments from teachers to be effective.
- Key pieces of work will be 'triple impact marked'. Teachers will identify strengths in the piece of work and inform students on how to improve it. Students may need to make the improvements on the marked piece (eg. re-drafting an essay in English, incorporating the required improvements), or may need to make the improvements in their next piece (eg. in art).
- Marking codes will be used to identify errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. These codes may have differences across subjects, to accommodate the requirements of that subject, but all will be made clear to the students.
- Grades and scores will only be used when necessary (eg. in a mock exam). Formative marking should be used at all other times.

Subjects may make the above criteria fit the style and frequency of their lessons, to best serve the students.

Should you have any questions on the changes to marking and feedback, please contact subject teachers for subject-specific queries, or Miss Bentley (Assistant Headteacher) for general queries.

Gold Standard

- Congratulations to Emma Currie (Year 8) who not only won her heat of the Interhouse Music Competition before Christmas, but also recently gained a distinction in her singing exam.
- Well done to Sammy Beresford (Year 11) who has been accepted for an apprenticeship in motocross next year; he has started a very intense fitness regime with Birmingham University with the hope to becoming professional. We wish him the very best of luck.
- Congratulations and good luck also goes to Max Beeston (Year 11) who has been given a scholarship by Port Vale Football Club which starts this summer.
- Reeve Davies (Year 8), Will Randles (Year 8) and Issac Wilding (Year 9) have been selected for Sale Sharks DPP squad for the first time. Congratulations!

As ever, we rely on getting information for this section from families; do get in touch if you have anything to celebrate.

News and Messages from Progress Managers

- Mrs Brown (Year 7)
 - Please can we remind students to make appointments for Parents Evening.
 - Thank you to all Year 7 students who raised money for Chance for Childhood; we reached over £1000 in total
- Mrs Beecher (Year 8)
 - A number of students are choosing to wear a v neck jumper under their blazer during this cold weather please can we remind you that the jumper should be black (not navy).
 - Please can parents reinforce the message to students about not walking to and from school in large groups blocking pavements for other pedestrians.
- Ms Batten (Year 9)
 - Well done to all students who took part in the Respect programme.
 - Thank you to all Year 9 parents who attended the recent Parents' Evening; it was the best attended parents' evening so far this year.
- Miss Corcoran (Year 10)
 - Please can all students who are doing Duke of Edinburgh check they know where they are with the programme.
 - Please can parents check uniform and also make up for Year 10 students as we are picking up a lot of students who are not following the school guidance.
- Mr Mottram (Year 11)
 - Thank you to all parents that attended the Year 11 Information Evening; hopefully you found the evening useful.
 - Revision for mock exams should be well underway and students should be using revision guides, notes from lessons and every moment possible to revise. Please do remember the motivational talks; you are on your journey, stay in your lane – do yourself and Action Jackson proud!

Please remember to follow the Pastoral Twitter account: @BLS_Pastoral

Eat Well for Less

The BBC is looking for families to take part in their next series of 'Eat Well for Less'. They are looking for fun, lively families who would love to save some money on their weekly shop and eat more healthily. If you are interested in taking part, please email eatwell@rdfttelevision.com.

Andrew Cliffe
January 2017

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 26 th January 2017	-	Year 9 Exams Commence for one week
Thursday 2 nd February 2017	-	Year 7 Parents' Evening
Saturday 4 th /Sunday 5 th February	-	School Show Rehearsals
Tuesday 7 th – Friday 10 th February	-	School Show 'The Wedding Singer'
Thursday 16 th February 2017	-	BL6 Iceland Trip Departs
Thursday 16 th February 2017	-	Year 9 Auschwitz Trip Departs
Thursday 16 th February 2017	-	Year 10/11 Tattenhall Art Trip Departs
Friday 17 th February 2017	-	Ski Trip Departs
Friday 17 th February 2017	-	School Closes for Half Term
Saturday 18 th February 2017	-	Year 10/11 Tattenhall Art Trip Returns
Monday 20 th February 2017	-	BL6 Iceland Trip Returns
Monday 20 th February 2017	-	Year 9 Auschwitz Trip Returns
Friday 24 th February 2017	-	Ski Trip Returns
Monday 27 th February 2017	-	Inset Day
Tuesday 28 th February 2017	-	School Re-opens
Saturday 4 th March 2017	-	PSCA Trip to Alton Towers
Wednesday 15 th March 2017	-	Year 9 Options Evening
Thursday 16 th & Friday 17 th March 2017	-	Year 10 Geography Fieldwork
Friday 17 th March 2017	-	Picardie Trip Departs
Friday 17 th March 2017	-	Drama/Music London Trip Departs
Sunday 19 th March 2017	-	Drama/Music London Trip Returns
Monday 20 th March 2017	-	Picardie Trip Returns
Tuesday 21 st March 2017	-	Year 9 Immunisations
Wednesday 21 st March 2017	-	French Exchange Departs
Wednesday 22 nd March 2017	-	German Exchange Arrives
Thursday 23 rd March 2017	-	KS5 Business Revision Conference
Friday 24 th March 2017	-	Deadline for Year 9 Options Forms
Monday 27 th March 2017	-	Year 8 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 28 th March 2017	-	French Exchange Returns
Tuesday 28 th March 2017	-	Year 11 Immunisations
Wednesday 29 th March 2017	-	German Exchange Depart
Friday 31 st March 2017	-	Inset Day
Monday 3 rd April 2017	-	Easter Holidays Commence