

HEADTEACHER'S HALF-TERMLY NEWSLETTER



December 2011

Dear Parents and Carers,

New arrivals...

Our new Year 7s have now settled in to life at Colmers school and have very quickly earned a reputation for hard work, good manners and getting involved in the life of the school. It is amazing how quickly young children adapt to new surroundings and higher expectations. The same can also be said of our new staff, who joined in September. Getting used to brand new school systems, procedures, traditions and expectations is not something for the faint-hearted. Nevertheless, our newest colleagues have very quickly settled and already demonstrated why they were appointed to join our great school.

Farewell...

This month we say farewell to Mr Baker (Teaching Assistant), Ms Galibert (Languages) and Mrs Pearce - whom many of you will have heard or seen in our main reception for the last six years. We wish all both great happiness and success in the next stages of their carer and lives. In January, therefore, we shall be welcoming to our school a new school receptionist – Miss Helen Collins-Hunt. Miss Collins-Hunt comes with great experience as a school receptionist and is as excited to join our school as we are to have her join our team of staff.

Grand Designs...

In the next few months there will be a number of changes to the layout of the school, and the location of facilities.

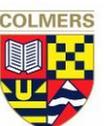
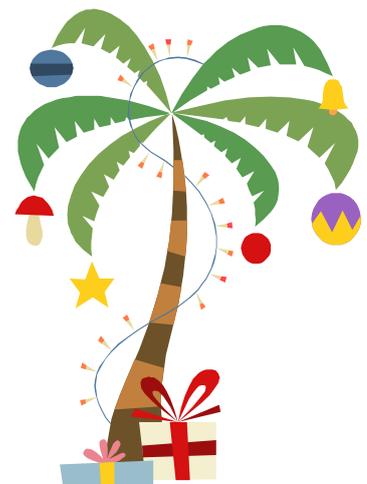
- A bigger library will be created at the centre of the school and therefore rooms 31 and 32 will become the new home for our school library. Its current occupants, Miss Clayton and Mr Briggs, will not be homeless – they will be moving into the current library space and the existing main office – which will refurbished as an English classroom.
- From January there will be an additional 'students only' entrance available through the Leisure Centre doors. This will be used by students to sign in late or if they are dropped off or picked up by family during the school day.
- The foyer in East Building will house a new school reception area and welcome all other visitors to the school.

Year 11 Charity Fundraising...

During the final week of November, each Year 11 tutor group designed and carried out their own fundraising event. Inspired by their Head of Year, Mr Wilcox, and Year 11 tutors, each tutor group raised lots of money for a spread of local and national charities. Cake and sweet sales proved both common and popular. Fundraising also included car washes for staff, the *Bungalow Café*, Morrison's bag packing, sponsored silences, staff *Dodgeball* (our team lost 5-4 but Mr Hunt's team *definitely* cheated!) and a break and lunch café in Rooms 31 and 32. More in Fanfare...

End of Term Arrangements...

School will close for the Christmas Holidays on Friday 16th December at 2.00pm. We will reopen for all students on Wednesday 4th January 2012. Please remember that this is also an early closure day (for students) whilst all staff continue with their Professional Enquiry Groups (PEGs). Students may leave from 1.10pm.





ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

On Thursday 1 December, we welcomed Mrs Sally Taylor to our school as the guest speaker for our Annual Presentation Evening. Mrs Taylor is Director of Education and Commission with Birmingham Local Authority and kindly agreed to speak to our prize winning students and their families.

The evening was a great success and was a very, very moving tribute to many of the remarkable children who make up Colmers School. In addition to prize winners who were rewarded and applauded for their academic successes and achievements, we also honoured those young people who have overcome tremendous obstacles and adversity to become a success on every level.



In the presence of the teaching body, governors and parents, we were reminded that outstanding schools are made up of outstanding individuals. On many occasions, teachers were reminded why they came into education and we all allowed ourselves to feel some pride in being a part of the personal achievements of the children and young people who received awards.

And now, even though midwinter is still a few weeks away, we are beginning to close in on next year's examinations for year 11s with modular examinations and, in the New Year, the commencement of comprehensive revision programmes. Whilst summer may feel many months away, every Year 11 student must begin planning for their futures right now by becoming completely focussed on the revision programme that will lead to the results they will need to compete for jobs, training, education and careers in the 21st century.

BELONGING TOGETHER

Sixth Form Consultation:

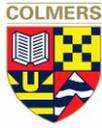
I am very grateful for the response to my invitation to complete a questionnaire for our sixth form consultation. A total of 450 families responded (equating to approximately two thirds of all Colmers families), in addition to the questionnaires completed by every student in Years 7 to 11.

The consultation also surveyed Colmers staff and governors. In addition, former parents and students were also contacted, along with prospective parents in our main partner primary schools. Local politicians were also invited to contribute to the consultation.

Meanwhile, I have visited local schools, sixth forms and colleges of further education. I have outlined the school's aspiration to host sixth form studies and listened very carefully to the advice and guidance freely given by headteachers and principals.

In summary, there exists a strong interest in Colmers providing sixth form courses at a point in the future. Amongst all groups, and including myself, there was a very strong acknowledgement that we are not in a position to replace all of the outstanding facilities and provision offered by N.E.W. College, Bournville College, Cadbury Sixth Form or Halesowen College – our main destinations for Year 11 leavers. Instead it is clear that Colmers should seek to establish, from the beginning, a small but very successful sixth form college; offering courses, facilities and outcomes that will be at least as good as existing providers. Danger exists in 'running before you can walk' and therefore we are currently designing a sixth form proposal that will involve approximately 40 – 50 students in year one, rising to a ceiling of 80 -100 students thereafter.





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On Wednesday 7 December, the Governing Body approved a motion to submit a proposal to introduce sixth form courses for students aged 16 to 18 years from September 2013. Consequently, I am in the process of drafting that proposal, ready for submission to the Local Authority (LA) in the New Year. Once completed, a period of two months is set to allow any member of the local community to submit representations to the LA regarding this proposal.

In the New Year, there will be a new link on the school website, in the parents' zone, that will enable you to study the detailed results of the sixth form consultation, a copy of both the rationale for sixth form provision *and* the official proposal document itself. All documents are very comprehensive and I feel many parents will be interested to read and explore these documents in more depth.

Student Attendance, Conduct & Uniform:

Our drive on high levels of attendance continues as we encourage all students to achieve between 95% and 100% attendance. Indeed, 95% sounds high but even that equates to one day off every month – a record that few employers would appreciate! The best predictor of end of school attainment is a child's attendance and therefore I cannot emphasise enough the importance of all students being more resilient and determined when it comes to getting out of bed and into school if they have a sniffle or are feeling a little less bright than normal.



Since joining the school nearly eight months ago, one of the most striking and encouraging features of Colmers is the support of parents in working together to improve student behaviour and conduct. When we, the adults, are united in challenging poor behaviour, then the prospect of improving behaviour always improves. Nevertheless, I am keen to ensure standards of behaviour and conduct continue to rise; ensuring your sons' and daughters' learning or wellbeing is never interrupted by other students. In this respect, we are currently exploring amendments to our behaviour policy, a summary of which we shall write to all families about in greater detail in the New Year.

We have been pleased with the improved uniform worn by students and expect those improvements to gather pace in the New Year. With the possibility of new purchases during the Christmas break, I would like to remind parents that our web site provides full advice and guidance about our expectations to help support the right purchases.

Finally, we are currently exploring uniform supplies for next year and are at advanced stages of discussions with *Marks & Spencer's* who are interested in us becoming a flagship school for their new school uniform service. A number of parents have been in touch with me or other senior colleagues with regards to uniform. We are deeply conscious that parents want value for money, quality garments and easy access to supplies - and these principles are at the forefront of our minds. If you would like to discuss this issue further then please speak to Mrs Pavey, Deputy Headteacher. Again, more on this in the New Year.



Winter Concert

On Thursday 24th November, parents and staff were again treated to another evening of singing, music and, very occasionally, comedy moments from the compere. Hugely courageous young people got in front of an expectant crowd and delivered entertaining and moving performances. From works of art in progress to genuinely breath-taking performances, we were again reminded of Colmers' strength in depth. Personally, my favourites were faithful renditions of Jimi Hendrix's *Purple Haze* and a duet from Stephen Sondheim's *Miss Saigon*. Perhaps the first time those names have appeared in the same sentence!

Many thanks to Mrs Green, Mrs Docherty, Mr Boardman and Mr Young for bringing the show to the stage. Also to Mrs Howell for providing refreshments during the interval and Mr Gladstone for his compering. Peripatetic staff were also there to support their students and provide backing during several performances.





CHALLENGING MIND-SETS

Key Stage Three Diploma winners...

Earlier this term I spent a wonderful day with students of all abilities who had made the most progress towards their Key Stage Three Diploma. We spent a day at the nearby Blackwell Centre and gave each an opportunity to try new sports and activities whilst being recognised and rewarded for their superb attendance, punctuality, progress and attainment. The enormous zip wire was a little too much for some but many, like me, pulled a brave face and hurtled down the hill at tremendous speed. I managed to avoid a second jump, instead claiming it 'was all about the kids...'



On-Line Assemblies

Every Wednesday, each Key Stage gathers together to hear an assembly by a senior member of staff. Much time and thought goes into these assemblies, all of which are designed to remind and reinforce the school's values, beliefs and ethos. Each assembly is, in itself, a learning opportunity. For this reason we have begun to video record these assemblies and they will become available through the 'Video On Demand' section of the school portal. Your son or daughter's password will enable you to view these assemblies and we hope they will give parents another insight into the experiences and education at Colmers. These films may even fill the gap vacated by *X Factor* or *Strictly*...

LOOKING AHEAD...

Dates for Your Diary

- School reopens on Wednesday 4th January 2012 for the new spring term.
- INSET Days 4 and 5 (out of 5) are due to take place on Thursday 9th and Friday 10th February 2012.
- Please remember... if the school is forced to close due to snow or severe weather, then one or both of these days will become normal school days.
- School closes for half term on Friday 10th February 2012, reopening on Monday 20th February.
- The annual Year 9 Options Marketplace will take place for all year 9 students and parents on Tuesday 20th March.
- School closes for the Easter holidays on Friday 30th March, reopening for all students on Monday 16th April.

Not forgetting...

- Monday 11th June – France v England at 7pm (prediction: 0-2)
- Friday 15th June – Sweden v England at 7pm (prediction: 0-0)
- Tuesday 19th June – England v Ukraine at 9.45pm (prediction: 3-1)
- Quarter Finals – either Saturday 23rd or Sunday 24th June at 9.45pm (prediction England 1 – 1 Rep of Ireland. England win 5: 3 on penalties)
- Semi Finals – either Wednesday 27th or Thursday 28th June at 9.45pm (prediction England 2 – 1 Holland)
- Euro 2012 Final – Sunday 1st July at 9.45pm. (prediction Spain 2 – 2 England. Spain win on penalties, obviously.)

