

# HEADTEACHER'S HALF-TERMLY NEWSLETTER



March 2012

Dear Parents and Carers,

Despite a slightly spluttering start to a milder season, the threat of a snow closure has passed and we now look forward to the warmer weather we associate with summer examinations. For our year 11 students in particular, the final straight is coming into sight as we move into the summer term.

As I outlined in my newsletter in February, all students facing examinations this summer ought to have begun their revision programme and investing increasing amounts of time on that revision each week, until they are over in June. Students are provided with comprehensive guidance and support to ensure their revision is successful and also to help them manage their time and emotions during the weeks ahead. My colleagues and I can remember all too clearly the effort and hardships associated with revision – but the investment in time and energy is worth it in the end!

## *Site developments...*

Recent visitors to the school will be aware of the changes taking place with the site. Our new entrance for students (through the Leisure Centre) is now up and running, with the school nurse now located on the *ground floor* in East building. In readiness for the creation of a new reception area, the main East Building foyer is being freshened up and will become a new reception area for parents, carers and other adult visitors.

Over the Easter break, Mr Briggs will join Miss Clayton in vacating their bungalow classrooms and relocating into the East Building. This will enable our new library and resource centre to be up and running throughout the summer term – located where rooms 31 and 32 currently reside. More on the new library in my next newsletter.

## *Staffing updates...*

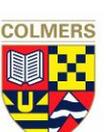
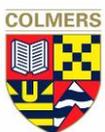
It has been a busy few months with regard to appointments at Colmers. Following a national advertisement, Mr Adams was appointed as permanent deputy headteacher, and will now continue to work closely with myself and the Senior Leadership Team in building further success at this school in the years to come. Mr Adams will take responsibility for the development of our curriculum and ensuring we continue to develop our self-evaluation and improvement culture at this school.

Mr Young, Teaching Assistant with us since 2002, begins his retirement at Easter, whilst Ms Herbert will be leaving us at the end of term to commence maternity leave. We wish them both great happiness and fulfilment in the weeks ahead.

Ms Walls will be joining the school after Easter and take responsibility for Mrs Fletcher's classes during her maternity leave. Also from April, we shall welcome another new colleague to our school. Mr Butter joins us as our Adolescent Therapist and will provide a range of support for individual and small groups of students. Mr Butter is a former teacher and is therefore both used to and familiar with school life. Nevertheless he left teaching to re-train, for six years, as a qualified therapist and will help us extend the range of support services we offer to our students and families. Mr Butter will introduce himself to students throughout the summer term.

## *Next generation...*

Since my last newsletter, we have been informed of the names of our newcomers for September 2012. We look forward to getting to know the new names, faces, families of our next generation of Colmers students throughout the summer term. As we continue to be heavily oversubscribed, we are unable to provide places for all students whose families are keen to send their children to Colmers.



## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

Much has changed in education in the last 20 or 30 years. These changes are partly due to changes of government and personalities of education ministers. The greatest wind of change has been the way that our society and our economy has changed in that time. When our parents and grandparents found employment in many industries after the Second World War, their character and commitment was deemed more important than their qualifications.

Today our economy and society has modernised, it is more technological and there is greater competition for jobs from workers across the region, across the country or across a continent. Far greater opportunities for all students exist to engage in careers that their grandparents could only dream about - but it comes at a price.



That price is an increasing and growing emphasis on formal qualifications – but particularly literacy and numeracy. This government has guaranteed funding for all young people to continue studying and achieving a good grade in English and Mathematics until... *until they get the grade they need!*

As the educators of your children, we are responsible for providing an education that sees your children through the 21<sup>st</sup> century - and not the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We have to prepare them for a world that looks less like ours looked when we were at school. We want to put the new world in their hands.

At the heart of that goal is the pursuit of *Achieving Excellence* in English, Mathematics and a range of relevant 21<sup>st</sup> century courses and qualifications. However, the continued importance of **TRICK** (**T**eam work, **R**eflectiveness, **I**ndependence, **C**reativity and a broad **eX**tra-curricular life) underlines the need of our children to leave school with both qualifications *and* the skills that employers are seeking in the 21st century.

The development of our bigger and better equipped library is a symbol of that increasing emphasis on literacy at Colmers. Literacy (which includes reading, writing, speaking and listening) is not only the key to success in English but also in every other subject. Mastering literacy helps mastery of all other courses and therefore literacy will become an increasingly important feature across the curriculum.

Similarly, numeracy (which includes number work, shape, space, measurement, statistics and algebra for instance) runs through every subject and almost every profession – therefore whilst Mathematics is the home of numeracy, it must also be applied and practised across all subject areas.

In recent months, Mr Adams has been leading on a review of our curriculum structure. Fortunately, Colmers' curriculum has always been fit for purpose but will now evolve as the world around us evolves.

- For next year's Year 10s, the two tiers that have been used successfully for many years will be removed to allow greater flexibility for students to more freely move within teaching groups. We hope this will encourage all students to work even harder and provide an incentive for all – removing any real or imagined glass ceilings!
- In Year 9, more subjects will have the option to set students within their own subjects; again creating greater flexibility and movement for students.
- The Key Stage Four options and curriculum structure will provide greater choice for all students, enabling more students, if they wish, to pursue an English Baccalaureate pathway, a vocational pathway or a mixture of both.
- For students that struggle to cope with the pace or breadth of the standard curriculum, we are developing nurture groups that benefit from smaller class sizes, more time with fewer teachers and a greater emphasis on the development of literacy, numeracy and key skills for employment and training.



## BELONGING TOGETHER

A core feature of Colmers' values and beliefs rests on the aspiration that every pupil should feel that they **B**elong to our school community.

Research shows that the success of a child is not directly linked to their postcode, their parents' education, how many books are in their house or whether or not the family owns a computer. These things can have an effect but they do not guarantee futures for every child. So then, what is the key that unlocks a child's potential?



**Firstly**, a young person's aspirations. Expressed more simply, a child who hopes and dreams of a future will be more successful than if they did not. If their 'eyes are on a prize' then they are much more likely to put in the required effort to be a success.

**Secondly**, it is also about whether a child feels that he or she 'belongs'. Many people feel a tingle down their spine singing along with fans at a football match, or when Gary Barlow sings *Back for Good* at Wembley. It seems to be a basic human desire to feel that we belong to something special. You can read more on this at: <http://www.sirc.org/publik/belonging.pdf>.

**Thirdly**, there is an understanding of the need to ensure a young person's basic needs are met before real learning can begin. If a student is frightened, anxious, hungry, cold or feeling unwanted or unloved, then he or she will struggle to concentrate on their learning and instead be occupied with getting through the here and now, rather than the future. If you are interested you can read more on this at: <http://www.maslowshierarchyofneeds.net/maslows-safety-needs/>



These beliefs exist across many schools who invest much time and energy in raising the aspirations of students and enhancing their sense of belonging. Sometimes this involves encouraging children to change the way they think of themselves, their future and the world around them. That is why our **Achieving Excellence by Belonging Together** and **Challenging Mind-sets** motto exists.

Below is a brief summary of how Colmers *tries* to enhance students' sense of **B**elonging together...

- Apply a behaviour policy that shows young people how to make good choices and understand others' needs and rights.
- Provide many, many different people that students can turn to if they have a worry or a fear - experts with experience and training to guide them successfully.
- Wear a uniform with pride and meaning - emphasising that on school days we are part of the Colmers family.
- Run as many clubs, activities and events as possible to create happy and nostalgic memories of what it is to be at Colmers School.
- Develop our curriculum so that every young person feels that the school can adapt to fit their needs.



## CHALLENGING MIND-SETS

In the last half term students have been busily involved in another very wide range of activities designed to broaden their horizons and build their confidence. A taste of this includes:

- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March - The Year 10 interview day involving 200 students and 30 professionals engaged in day long interviews that gave a taste of things to come!
- Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March – a year 10 Malvern Theatre trip to see “Blood Brothers”. According to the staff who accompanied the students, “The pupils were really stunned by the musical and we've seen clear impact on how they've approached the work since then, as they're studying it as part of their GCSE Drama.”
- Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March – Thirty students across years 7 to 10 took part in the All England Badminton Championships at the NIA.
- Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March – Year 10 students took part in their outdoor expedition to Upton Warren (see right).
- Week beginning 12<sup>th</sup> March – trips week activities included a Year 8 visit to the National Space Centre in Leicester (see above), Year 10s visiting the Morgan car plant and an *Around The World in 80 Foods* experience for Year 10 Catering students at Brindley Place.
- Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March – the Key Stage Four music showcase and I the Year 10 away day taster visits to Aston University, N.E.W. College and Halesowen College.
- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March – the Manifold Valley years 7 and 8 cycling trip.
- Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Day for Year 9s and a very long day trip to Boulogne as well (see below, right)!



These events enrich students' education and lives. The organisation and successful completion rests on the dedication and hard work of colleagues, whose efforts I wish to thank and praise publicly!

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

- Year 8 Parents' Evening -Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April.
- Remaining early closure Wednesdays: 2<sup>nd</sup> May and 13<sup>th</sup> June. Despite earlier information, *there will not be* an early closure on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July. This will be a normal school day.
- School closes for the Easter holidays on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March, reopening for all students on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April.
- School will be closed for the Whitsun half term between Monday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June.
- The final day of the summer term will be Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July. All students will be dismissed at 2.00pm.
- The first day of autumn term for all students will be Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012. School will begin as normal for all students at 8.45am.

“From the moment we met in West Car Park at 11.45 on Friday evening, to our return at 10pm on Friday, each and every one of the pupils was faultless, making for a rewarding, memorable and immensely satisfying experience for all concerned.

On each leg of the coach journey (outward and inward) they were calm, sensible and polite towards the coach drivers, and equally well behaved and respectful of members of the public at the service stations.

*A description of our Boulogne visit by a member of staff.*