

From the Headteacher

It's been a busy term. Following on from success in the summer with Highdown's best ever GCSE results, students and teachers are in great exam momentum. There has been an atmosphere of anticipation in the exam hall and classrooms as Year 11 students have sat external and PPE exams and Year 10 completed controlled assessments. Sixth Formers are revving up for PPE exams straight after Christmas.

Learning has been enriched with trips locally and abroad, author meetings and new relationships have been forged with international schools. Staff and students have been busy fundraising for various charities. The senior production of 'Them and Us' was outstanding.

Through a new careers initiative, doors opened to students on their journeys to employment and we welcomed Year 11 internal and external students to a successful Sixth Form Opening Evening.

Carols, bells and twinkly lights at the music concert heralded the arrival of the Christmas season with Sixth Formers organising a party for special pupils at Brookfield School and a Christmas jumper day.

I would like to thank all the staff for their hard work and to acknowledge the students for their outstanding efforts this term. Finally, I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a successful 2015.

Rachel Cave



Careers smart

With graduate employment rates on the rise for a second successive year and apprenticeships growing in popularity and range, the future looks brighter for young people entering the workforce.

While some Highdown students already have a clear idea of their future aspirations, many do not. The school can play an active part in helping students to explore different career options. Designed to inform and inspire, Highdown launched its first Careers Fair in November to conveniently bring together under one roof students, local businesses and educational establishments. The wide range of exhibitors were

**Careers Fair is a
resounding success
with over 800 people
visiting 33 stands**

well received by students and parents alike but the most appealing stand was definitely Network Rail's with their model railway.

The Careers Fair was organised to be the finale of an informative and inspiring day of Careers related presentations and activities for the whole school. Careers Insight Presentations were given to Year 9, 11 and Sixth Form students by representatives of many different employers such as the Army, BBC Monitoring, Clearswift, EY, Microsoft, Mitie, Orchard Day Nursery and Thames Valley Police.

"It was informative and pitched at a good level" Parent

Careers 'speed dating'

There was also a Careers Speed Dating session where volunteers from local employers such as Covea, Hewlett Packard and the NHS, together with parents from jobs as diverse as mechanical engineering, journalism and TV production had a series of "dates" with small groups of Year 10 students.

The generosity of the companies and individuals to give up their time to help Highdown students gave the whole day a feeling of the community working together for our young people's futures.

Visions of a rainforest



Newbury's Living Rainforest, home to 700 species of plants and animals, was an artistic sanctuary for Year 10 Art and Photography students' study of Natural Form.

Primary research explored the different habitats of the tropical greenhouses; plants and birds,

butterflies and roaming lizards that live naturally in the Rainforest. Students took photos and made sketches, recording skills through timed activities.

Amazing Adaptations

How both plants and animals have adapted and evolved in order to survive in the rainforest environment and the creation of 'Marvellous Medicines' was explained in a curriculum based educational tour.

The research that students produced on the trip will greatly impact on their coursework as well as them enjoying the experience of seeing the Centre first-hand. It was a very productive and inspirational day out.

Mrs Coleman, Art Curriculum Leader

Lest we forget



On Saturday 8 November, 42 students studying GCSE and A level History were up bright and early ready for a weekend visit to Ypres, Belgium, to commemorate the centenary year of World War One.

First stop Tyne Cot Cemetery was a chilling place filled with rows upon rows of white stone graves and a wall with over 11 000 names of soldiers who were never found. We stood in silence as Mr Bensley read out the famous 'In Flanders's Fields', before taking several minutes to explore the rest of the cemetery.

In the evening we watched The Last Post at Menin Gate. The crowd fell quiet as the trumpet began to play, followed by a five-minute reflective silence. We laid a wreath at the gate on behalf of the school.

On Sunday we visited Sanctuary Wood. We stepped into history itself as we explored trenches and tunnels preserved from the war. The experience allowed us to see exactly what life was like for the soldiers. The next stop was Langemark, a German cemetery. The atmosphere here was different – simple plaques embedded into the grass, each naming not one but several soldiers. Some of us were left tearful as we left, accompanied by the sounds of a bagpipe player who had also come to visit the graves.

Many thanks to the amazing staff and students who made it an unforgettable trip in so many ways.

Paige Mackie, Year 12 Student

Stagecoach
Theatre Arts Schools
Reading North

Offering Morning & Afternoon Schools

We are thrilled to announce that Stagecoach is opening at Highdown on Saturday 10th January 2015, providing drama, singing and dance lessons in a fun environment aimed at increasing confidence and social skills.

Please contact us for more details.

01189 111135 www.stagecoach.co.uk/readingnorth

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Teacher Profile

MEALWORMS, CRABS AND FISH GUTS was my first hit of Science at Peterhead Academy. My secondary school science teacher, Mr Ironside, was my inspiration. He made science real and fun. Every lesson was an application to real life. He used amazing resources to help with my analysis and understanding of Science. Mr Ironside also cared about the needs of the individual student by identifying their strengths thereby developing their self-esteem. I believe teaching gives students confidence by empowering their learning with curiosity, questioning and practical strategies. As Einstein said – the question is more important than the answer!

Why is there a shortage of women in Science?

Personally, I have never been aware of any gender difference. It is often a common perception in Science. Whilst researching for my Doctorate, the people in the labs were predominately women where their passion for Biology shone through. We are lucky at Highdown to have highly qualified female role models.

Historically, there has been an under-representation of women in the field. Did you know Rosalind Franklin did all the ground work for determining the structure of DNA? But, she wasn't honoured with the Noble Prize. Many argue she should have got more credit for the DNA discovery. If men dominate Science then all the problems, results and theories will have a male perspective. This limits Science. Women can offer a different angle. I see it as our job as Science teachers to help readdress the historical injustice.

What do you do in your role as a Professional Tutor?

I am responsible for systematic training and mentoring of PGCE and newly qualified teachers. Working with PGCE's from a range of universities from Oxford,



The Highdown Link catches up with reptile loving Dr Andy Love, Science.

Reading, Kings College, Institute of Education and Brighton – their development into the profession is one which we as a staff at Highdown take great pride in. I want new teachers to feel competent and effective. It is a privilege to be a part of students and colleagues' achievement and timeline.

What are your top revision tips?

Plan ahead. Revise in 40-50 mins blocks. For the first 5-10 mins of the next revision session, go over what you revised in the last block. Take a page of text and reduce it to a few paragraphs. Keep reducing down until you have key words. The process of repeated summarising gets the information into your head. Attach silly pictures to the text and leave them in prominent places so you build an association between place and learning.

Food for Thought



World Food Day was marked with a week of sessions and assemblies exploring food and hunger in developing countries, food waste, dealing with disasters and the explosion of food poverty in the UK.

Charity ReadiFood, presented that food poverty is not just a global issue, but one that is right on our doorstep. The need for emergency food aid has escalated in the town with the food bank helping five times as many families and individuals as two years ago.

The larders at ReadiFood received a welcome boost thanks to food-raising endeavours of the whole school. Donations from schools is the staple diet of the food bank.

'We are extremely grateful to the pupils of Highdown School for the food that they have so kindly collected for us'.

Malcolm Peirce, Director of ReadiFood

Taking the lead in Sports

Strengthening community relations, two groups of Year 10 PE students had an opportunity to deliver fun and successful lessons to local primary schools. In the classroom, they learnt how to organise and run coaching sessions in a safe and motivating manner. This included voice projection, how to organise and manage a class, and simple warm up exercises. Having planning practical activities, the students practised teaching each other. With improved confidence and new knowledge, the students led groups of younger children.

One group went into Caversham Park Primary School where they taught Year 1 students a number of Multi Sports Activities where they helped to develop basic skills such as hand-eye

coordination and space awareness. The last week included lots of fun relay races and each of the Sports Leaders being presented with individual cards, created by the Year 1 pupils, to say a massive thank you.

The other group went to St Anne's Primary School to teach Year 5 and 6 students. There they taught sessions on Football, Netball, Multi Sports Activities and Indoor Caving.

Both groups showed excellent leadership and all the session were thoroughly enjoyed by the students taking part. The Year 10 Sports Leaders were a really credit to the school and it was so great to see their leadership skill develop each week. Well done to all those Year 10s involved.

Miss Clark, PE Teacher



NEWS IN BRIEF

Cyber bullying on the rise

Cyber bullying is when someone or some people are abusive to you online. Last year people calling Child Line about cyber bullying rose by 87%. The charity Beat Bullying estimated that 1 in 3 young people in the UK are victims of cyber bullying. 3% of this number have attempted suicide. If you are a victim of cyber bullying you can block them and tell someone you trust.

Joe Beene, Year 7

If you have any concerns about cyber bullying or any other issues affecting you, you can email worried@highdown.reading.sch.uk

Shoebox appeal

Year 7 were set the task of collecting gift-filled shoeboxes to send off to developing countries. Students have been busy preparing the boxes to spread the Christmas spirit. One group even covered their tutor, the classroom and themselves with glitter in the process! The winning tutor group collected 11 boxes. It was a wonderful moment seeing all the boxes stacked up ready to bring joy to many children this Christmas. Year 7 students should feel proud of themselves as do we all.

Nicole Pattison, Year 12.

Dates for your diary

6 January	FIRST DAY OF TERM 3
6 - 16 January	Years 12 & 13 Internal Examinations
22 January	Year 7 Consultation Evening, 4:30 pm
26 January	Year 11 GCSE Music Coursework Performance
28 January	PSHCE DAY 2
29 January	Year 9 Parents' Evening
2 - 6 February	AS Geography Field Trip
3 February	AS/A2 Music Student Conference
5 February	Intermediate Maths Challenge (Years 9, 10, 11)
9 February	GCSE Music Student Conference
10 February	AS/A2 Music Technology Student Conference
10 February	Highdown Hairspray 6:00 -7:00 pm, Hall
11 - 12 February	Year 7 Trip to Warwick Castle
12 February	Sixth Form Art and Photography Trip Overseas
13 February	LAST DAY OF TERM
14 - 22 February	Ski Trip to USA

ABSENCE LINE

If your child is ill please contact Attendance on

0118 9015823 before 9.30 a.m.

