

PRISM
The John of Gaunt School
A Science, Maths & Computing College
NEWSLETTER



No. 40

Feb2010

School website address www.johnofgaunt.wilts.sch.uk

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Wed 10 Feb—Yrs 12/13 Subject consultations 3.30-6.30 pm
Thurs 11 & Fri 12 Feb—A level Art residential trip

END OF TERM 3 HOLIDAY
15TH FEB—19TH FEB INCLUSIVE

Thurs 25 Feb—Yr 7 Subject consultations 3.30—6.30 pm
Mon 1 Mar—Yr9 English exam am
Yr11 GCSE Maths Revision Day
Tues 2 Mar—GCSE Maths module 3 P1&2, module 1 P5
Wed 3 Mar—Yr10 GCSE Science modules P1

Thurs 4 Mar—Yr9 Maths exam—am

Fri 5 Mar—Yr9 Science exam—am

Tues 9 Mar—Yr13 HE Evening 7pm

Sat 13th Mar—Music for Youth competition 10 am onwards

Wed 17 Mar—As Perf Studies Community Project exam—7pm

Thurs 18 Mar—Yr11 Subject consultation 3.30-6.30 pm

Wed 24 Mar—Yr8 Subject consultation 3.30-6.30 pm

Fri 26 Mar—JOGMUSS payments due
Community Charity Music Concert

Mon 29 Mar—Inter-House sports this week

END OF SPRING TERM 4 HOLIDAY
2 APRIL—16 APRIL INCLUSIVE

SPRING ALREADY!

Well perhaps not quite yet, but time has simply flown since Christmas and in the blink of an eye my favourite season will begin.

On the horizon we have our Ofsted inspection. We don't know exactly when it will be but anticipate a visit in March or April. Parents and carers will be asked to fill in a questionnaire and a large return to the Inspectors would be great.

As with all of our newsletters, this edition gives you a glimpse into the exciting school that your child attends and, as ever, if you have any concerns please contact us, the details of who to contact were on our last newsletter.

Thank you for all of your support.

Mr Packer
Headteacher

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN—BEYOND THE SCHOOL!

Whilst we do everything in our power to ensure children are cared for in school, we have far less control in the community beyond school.

Parents and carers please be sure that you know where your children are in the evenings and at weekends. This will help to keep them out of harm's way.

INTERNET SAFETY

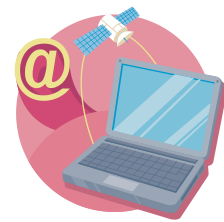
Latest national research shows that an average teenager spends 7 hours a day outside school time looking at screens—do you know what your child does while online? Are they doing their homework and extra independent study.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARENTS

With the increased number of families having internet access, we are looking to increase, and update, our Parentmail accounts. Parentmail sends regular emails to parents and carers keeping you up to date on school events and deadlines.

This is a great way of avoiding those situations where you find a letter in the bottom of your son/daughter's bag 2 weeks after it has gone out!

All we need from you is your consent and your email address, letters went out to parents over the last week and returns are to come into Wingfield Office for the attention of Mrs Pyper. If you have not received this letter(!) please contact the school and we will resend.



ACCESS TO STUDENT ACADEMIC DATA VIA THE INTERNET

We were one of the first schools in the country to offer parents and carers access to student academic information via the internet. We have been successfully running this system for nearly two years and many parents find it an extremely useful tool; but for those students and parents who have recently joined the school, or who are experiencing difficulty getting online for any reason please contact me and I will be pleased to help.

Mrs C Shipton
Project Leader - Student Tracking
cshipton@johnofgaunt.wilts.sch.uk
01225 762637 Ext 217

THE AMAZING LIFE OF THOMAS HELLIKER

Bravo!

Well done to everyone involved in this joyful production. To see students from Year 7 to Year 13 having such a brilliant time and to know that Mrs Johnson wrote the play filled me with pride.

Mr Packer
Headteacher

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX NEWS

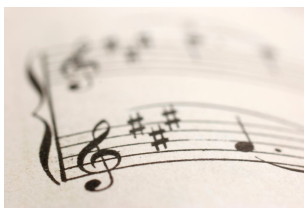
The Shoebox project for 2009 has been a great success with the fantastic figure of 33,883 shoeboxes passing through the Melksham warehouse.

Among those shoeboxes were 158 prepared and given by students and staff together with many large bags of gifts to make up other shoeboxes. This was a wonderful response to the September appeal. The shoeboxes went to very needy children in Liberia, Serbia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Thank you to all who contributed in any way and for bringing smiles to children at Christmas.

Mrs M Stubbs

MUSIC FOR YOUTH



Once again the regional festival of Music for Youth will be held in Gloucester Hall on Saturday 13th March. This will highlight the many talented young musicians from The John Of Gaunt School and the South West. The opportunity to perform at the National Festival in July awaits some of these talented musicians.

Starting at 10am, this is a free event and it would be great to see as many supporters as possible. If you require any more details please contact Mr McIntyre in the music department.

LEGS BUMS & TUMS

Tuesdays
5pm-6pm & 6pm-7pm
Small Gym

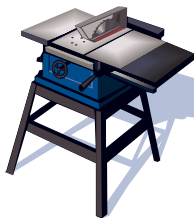


Tone Up, Have Fun, Burn Calories!

Students from Yr 10 & 11, 6th Form, Staff, and Parents welcome.
Students £2.00 Others £3.00

Email caroline.newman@kingdown.wilts.sch.uk or phone 07734207650
for more information

Or contact Mr Wylie PE Dept



RESISTANT MATERIALS

Every Thursday after school I am holding a GCSE catch-up for my resistant materials group. If you need additional time, I am also able to stay after school on Fridays.

I will be holding these sessions until coursework is finished.

Mrs Key
Design & Business

CONGRATULATIONS GO ...

to the following for winning their tournaments in the Inter-House Sports:

Year 7 Footballers;

Year 8 Rugby players;

Year 9 Basketball players.

A special well done to Year 11 who won all three of the tournaments (Netball, Volleyball and Hockey).

To Mrs King's group for having the best attendance.

To everyone in the House for gaining more House points than any other House last term.

To everyone in the House for winning the Inter-House Quiz the last three weeks in a row!

Keep being the best that you can be!

M. Davison - Head of Franklin

HOMEWORK - SCHOOL AND FAMILIES WORKING TOGETHER

The benefits of completing homework for students are vast. At John of Gaunt we aim to provide well designed homework that helps students to learn. Homework should provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate progress made in lessons, explore new concepts by extending their thinking and interact with teachers with regards to current levels or grades.

A major benefit of homework, that is sometimes overlooked, is the opportunity it provides for collaboration between students, families and teachers. Parents or carers who get involved with homework develop a greater understanding of their child's learning, have regular conversations about progress in school and liaise more frequently with teachers.

How can you get more involved with homework?

- Check and sign homework planners on a weekly basis.
- Ensure you are aware about the amount of homework your child should be receiving. Homework timetables should be written in the front of the planners.
- Create homework routines at home. Have a consistent time of day when homework is completed.
- Nominate somewhere at home where homework is completed. This should be a calm and quiet place away from distractions like the

television.

- Ask your child to explain the homework task and how it follows on from what they have been studying in lessons.
- Help your child to become an independent learner. Explain how to look up information or find a word in a dictionary rather than simply giving an answer in order to get the task finished.
- Regularly read comments that staff have written in exercise books and talk through areas for improvement with your child. Likewise, writing notes in exercise books is a good way to communicate with teachers.
- Be positive about your child's attempts. If you have concerns about their progress, get in touch with the teacher as soon as possible.

Meeting deadlines is a lifelong habit. Your encouragement and support of the importance of completing homework on time will benefit your child both in and beyond school life.

We strive to create a lifelong love of learning and developing independent learning skills through homework is central to this aim. There is no doubt that students learn best when they have the support of both school and their families.

If you have any questions regarding homework then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Mr Gunston
Assistant Headteacher
mgunston@johnofgaunt.wilts.sch.uk

NEWS FROM THE SIXTH FORM

We have had a busy few weeks since Christmas. This year 75% of our Year 13 students have applied to university. Many have been attending interviews for Higher Education courses and the offers are rolling in. We're all now working hard to achieve those predicted grades. In January we held our Year 13 Higher Education Finance Evening for parents and students, presented by Doug Jennings from Bristol University. It was a very informative evening to help us all navigate through the finances involved for university. There has been a lot in the press about student money not arriving in time at the start of the last academic year so I would encourage all to start applying via the www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance website. The system is now open.

Following the January exams, we are now in the process of starting our Higher Education information with Year 12 students. We will be launching this in our PSHE session on March 16th

with the help of Rhiannon Staley from Cardiff University.

On February 4th some of our students attended The Wiltshire College Careers Fair. This will be followed by a chance to attend a Careers Fair at UWE (University of the West of England) in March.

If you are in Year 11 and would like to come into the Sixth Form in September, we would like to receive your application by February 12th. Once you have handed in your form you will receive a letter from us confirming we have your application. We will then invite you for an interview in June with your Sixth Form Tutor. At this interview we will talk through the subjects you would like to take, any career plans you have and answer any questions. Please note, your place in the Sixth Form is not dependent on this interview, it's all down to the results you achieve in August.

The Sixth Form Team

NEWS FROM THE DESIGN & BUSINESS FACULTY

The Design and Business Faculty hosted the first ever Innovation Challenge which was part of the GCSE Product Design course. The students had 6 hours to design and make a product under the theme of 'Novelty Gifts.' The 60 students that took part in the exam all behaved impeccably and produced high quality products using a range of different materials, from cardboard to foam, all of the staff in the faculty would like to congratulate the students on all of the effort that they put in.

There are a variety of coursework improvement sessions arranged for the Y10 Product Design students that all are welcome to attend to help them improve their first piece of coursework. These sessions will run on Tuesday's and Thursday's between 3 - 4.30pm in C29, up to the Easter Holidays. The deadline for the second piece of coursework is Monday 29th March, after which we will start to concentrate on preparation for the exam which is in late June.

NEWS FROM THE ENGLISH FACULTY

Year 13 Lang/Lit students have had a very cultural couple of months!

On the 9th December, they made their own way into Bath to watch a performance of Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' at the Theatre Royal. Not only did this help some of them out with their coursework, but it also gave them a taste of a more high-brow form of entertainment. One of the students was overheard saying: "It is truth universally acknowledged that a sixth former who attends the theatre is an intellectual indeed."

With the routine established, the same group of students insisted on going again. So, on the 28th January, they went to see Alan Bennett's most popular play, 'The History Boys' – a tragi-comic tale of sixth form students applying for places at Oxford University. The reviews were unanimously good and, you never know, they may have been inspired to reach for similar academic goals themselves.

On the whole, two highly original, entertaining and rewarding afternoons.

Year 11 are off to see some live poetry!

On the 24th February, 25 students will be attending a Poetry Conference at the Forum in Bath. This annual event provides a fantastic opportunity for students to see the poets from their GCSE Anthology perform and discuss their own poems. One of these will be Britain's first female poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy. In addition, one of the Chief GCSE Examiners will be there to provide invaluable advice on achieving exam success. It should be a great day.

GIFTED AND TALENTED CONFERENCE 'WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME'

This will now take place June 29th from 6.30-8.30 in the Mackereth Building. There will be a visiting speaker from Cambridge University and also an opportunity to talk to a number of ex students who are either undergraduates or employed.

The subjects that our previous students have taken include:

English, Mathematics, Medicine, Law, Engineering, History and Media.

Further information to follow.

Ms Asplin

MUSIC AND LEARNING FROM THE SUNDAY TIMES



Forget the Mozart effect. Damon Albarn may be better for stretching a child's intellect, researchers have found.

The study found that children's brainpower is boosted more by music they like than by apparently more complex classical music.

Susan Hallam, of London University's Institute of Education, and Glenn Schellenberg of Toronto University tested 8,000 10-11 year old children by playing them 10 minutes each of Albarn's band Blur, Mozart and Hallam's voice.

The children then performed spatial reasoning tests. Hallam and Schellenberg concluded there was no scientific basis for the so-called "Mozart effect" and that the pupils performed slightly better after listening to Blur's songs. Hallam's voice was the least beneficial.

Proponents of the Mozart effect, first identified in a study in 1993, claim that music by classical composers can improve children's cognitive skills because of its complexity.

Hallam said: "I don't think there is a Mozart effect, it's completely untenable. It's nothing to do with Mozart, it's totally to do with your arousal levels and how much you concentrate".

An update of the academic research by Hallam and Schellenberg appears in a new book investigating the effect of music on the brain.

The Music Instinct: How Music Works and Why We Can't Do Without It, by Philip Ball, argues that music is central to education because it boosts IQ by cultivating logic and reason.

Lesley Garrett, singer of both classical and pop music, brought her children up on a combination of music types, believing this would benefit them academically as well as socially.



She said: "Pop music has its strengths in rhythm—it's more instantly viscerally exciting and the energy that children get out of pop music is more immediate.

"I was played all kinds of music from a very early age and performed it too. Every kind of music that I've been exposed to and every kind that my children have been exposed to has had an enormously beneficial effect. Music is the glue that holds other academic subjects together".

The Mozart effect was first claimed in a study by University of Wisconsin academics, published in Nature magazine in 1993. This went on to spawn a popular movement including a best-seller by Don Campbell called The Mozart Effect and Disney Baby Mozart DVDs.

Parent Support Advisor

Parent Support Advisor

The John of Gaunt School

PARENTS DROP IN SESSIONS

Confused by the Free Time Subsidy?

Help with official forms

Child unhappy?

**Worried about how your child
is coping with school work?**

**Just need to chat to someone or not sure where to get
some extra advice or support?**

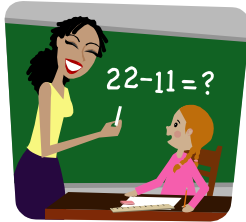
Our Parent Support Adviser is: Ebtissam Boutarfas

**We are running a drop in session for parents
Every Monday
from 8:30am-10am**

**The Extended Services Hub – To the right of the main
entrance to the school on Wingfield Road.**

NEWS FROM THE MATHS FACULTY

With John of Gaunt having a specialism in mathematics, we offer events to our own students, as well as others countywide. We will be hosting maths enrichment sessions for Year 7 and 8 students, as well as taking students from Years 9 and 10 to other such events. This way, students in all years get the opportunity to extend their mathematical experience and expertise. Further, through Cambridge University's Video-Conferencing sessions, over sixty students from both Years 7 and 8 have worked with students both nationally and internationally. Our A-level Mechanics students will soon benefit from this experience too.



We are continuing to support our Year 10 and 11 students with their GCSE Maths. As well as allowing them the opportunity to boost grades through re-sit opportunities (where students cannot lose marks!), we have again offered (and will continue to offer) intensive revision days, as well as after school sessions. Years 12 and 13 also have extra drop-in clinics, as well as additional timetabled sessions, in order to further support their studies. They also have an intensive revision day later this year.

This year, for the first time, we have students entered for the 'Additional Extension Award', which is intended for the top 10% of the Nation's A-Level mathematicians.

Since the start of the year, the Maths Department has established links with the majority of local Primary schools. As well as visiting to enrich/support students of all abilities, we have provided Continued Professional Development opportunities for teachers. The latter encompasses our work with the "National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics" and our Specialist School status.

Finally, as a consequence of the success of last year's Year 9 maths rewards trip to Thorpe Park (which sold out within a day!), the current Year 9 will soon have the opportunity to go and experience maths in context, before enjoying the rides.

This issue's maths puzzle is:

On Monday Adam bought a guitar for £10

On Tuesday he sold it for £23

On Wednesday he bought it back for £26

On Thursday he needed money for a football match so he again sold his guitar, this time for £42. Overall, did Adam make or lose money?

(The solution to the previous Maths puzzle: the perimeter of the original sheet was 60cm.)

Library and Learning Resources Centre *reading experience.*

World Book Day (Thursday 4 March):

Remember the 'dragon' from last year? Let's make this an even better, brighter and more colourful event this year. There will be various activities in the Library during break and lunch on the day. Mr Packer has again kindly agreed that any student wishing to come to school dressed as their favourite book character may do so. Judging for the best costume will take place in the Library towards the end of the lunch break and prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. Also, come along and join in with our annual favourite, 'Book Title Charades' – we always have fun with the amazing mimes the students never fail to produce! Prizes will also be awarded for 'best mime' and 'person with the most correct guesses'. We hope to see you there.

Booked Up Scheme:

Year 7's free books have arrived and will be distributed in the Library during a timetabled English lesson after half-term. Although the distribution of the books is a little later than anticipated, I am sure it will be well worth the wait. Thank you all for your patience.

After-school Reading Group:

The 'All-stars' reading group resumes after half-term. We meet in the Library every Monday from 3pm to 3.45pm. Some students are already reading from the Carnegie Longlist in preparation for Carnegie Shadowing which commences in April. You can access our school web page from www.ckg.org.uk and follow our 'blog' from last year's event. ***Everyone is welcome to join our reading group - it doesn't matter what books you are 'into', just come along and enjoy the***

Scholastic Book Club:

Orders from this month's catalogue must reach me by Friday, 12th February. There are some wonderful books on offer this month, all below publisher prices, so do take advantage of this exciting reading opportunity.

Sixth Form Study Area:

I am hoping to increase the space in the area as more students continue to arrive for private study. Please do take advantage of this opportunity for quiet time to work and also to take advantage of the core texts in your chosen AS/A Level subjects. You will find these housed in the 'Sixth Form Reference Collection'.

'Issues Online':

The school subscribes to 'Issues Online'. This website contains a wide range of current information, including magazine articles, statistics and government reports, lobby-group literature, and much more. Login details are displayed in the Library but do ask me if you need guidance. The subscription includes the book version which can be found in the Reference area of the Library, arranged numerically by year.

Manga Wall:

I have a stunning collection of Manga drawings created by students during our lunchtime Manga Club. We plan to construct a 'Manga Wall' - we are not quite sure of the form it will take but students are already keen with suggestions so, watch this space!

A J Carter

LEARNING RESOURCES MANAGER