

Handsworth Grammar School Newsletter



October 2006

A Word from the Headteacher:

The new School year has started and we are all trying to run to catch up - we need the half term break! Last year saw some excellent results from the students, but we are now looking to the future to help the current students achieve their best in their own exams—the past is behind us and we cannot linger there, whatever good things there may have been. The new academic year brings with it some new staff. Mr Mahmood joins the Science staff, Mr Bedi is the new Head of Chemistry, Ms Stott joins us in the English department and Ms Whelan joins us as the new Brass Teacher replacing Mr Culshaw who some will remember well from our regular concerts. Other new staff to be joining us soon include Mrs Sandhu who will be the new receptionist and Mrs Evans who will occupy a new administrative position including giving support to the organisation of Work Experience.

The new academic year offers new challenges, particularly as we try to make do without the Baker Street land, our main student playground, due to the building of the Sports Hall. We will be without the land until April 2007, at which time the Sports Hall will be built and we will start to equip it. For energetic young boys, the Baker Street land is hard to do without as it was where they played football at break and lunchtime, but I think the deprivation will be worth it in the long run.

R J Shephard

Staffing Changes

There have been a number of changes under recent staff restructuring, some of which are outlined below. Our Heads of Section are now classified as Key Stage Co-ordinators:

Mr S Campbell Key Stage 3, Mr A Campbell Key Stage 4
Mr J Woodcock Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form)

In addition three senior teachers have joined the leadership team of Mr R J Shephard (Headteacher), Mr P Blewitt (Deputy Headteacher: Curriculum) and Mr T Maw (Deputy Headteacher: Pastoral) and occupy the role of Assistant Headteacher. With their other duties, Mr R Fackrell embraces Key Stage 3 issues (Years 7, 8 and 9), Mr N King at Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and Mrs M Potter at Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13 – 6th Form).

In most cases your first port point of contact is likely to be your child's Form tutor, who is the fulcrum around which the system operates, but if you have any concerns it is useful to know the relevant colleague who may be able to help you.

A teacher all students will eventually encounter is Dr G Bowen, who is the Head of Continuing Education and was the Head of Careers. Continuing Education is a broad area that encompasses Careers, Citizenship (and Social Education), General Studies, work related learning and university applications. He is a very important man in the development of your child for moving on to higher education or work.

R J Shephard

Music for a Winter's Evening

This popular annual event takes place at the Adrian Boult Hall in the city centre on Wednesday, December 13, with a varied and entertaining programme featuring our talented musicians. As usual, the audience can also enjoy joining in the singing of seasonal favourites. Please put this date in your diaries; tickets will be on sale in November.

Student and Parent Surveys

As many of you will remember, during last term we asked students and parents to complete a survey about the school – most of the students did so and over 200 of the parents returned their survey forms. Your responses were sent off to the company ‘cocentra’ who looked at every one and reported back to us. Our timing was not good, because the questionnaires were given out late in the academic year, at a time when everyone is busy and often very tired. We were mindful that this could result in a more negative response, but we decided to go ahead anyway.

Parent Survey

The results of this survey were overwhelmingly positive – no weaknesses were identified! Your response reflected an understanding that we try hard for your sons and daughters and we are always seeking to improve what we do. There is no complacency here. In the educational world, those schools that are standing still end up falling behind – our extensive School Development Plan shows that standing still is not our way. Sometimes we do get things wrong, but we try to learn from our errors and move forward again. Your comments were an affirmation of all of that work and we thank you for it.

Pupil Survey

The responses from the students were mainly very positive, with almost everyone saying that the School had high expectation of them and sought to help them achieve their best. There were many other positive areas, including understanding expectations, relationships with peers, understanding the School’s rules, respecting those of different race and religion and the promotion of independent learning. The students were able to raise some important points which we have been and are in the process of addressing.

The first relates to the number of activities available to the students. The pages of the newsletter give testimony to how much goes on in School, much of which is in addition to the many sporting and musical activities and the regular Technology, Computing and Art access – with other activities that also take place. Possibly the problem is that the question was too specific in when the activities took place. We will need to explore this one with the students.

A second relates to the distraction some students can cause in class. It is vital that students can learn in a well ordered environment and we take note of the fact that a minority of students distract others at certain times. We take this very seriously and are modifying our systems to counteract any negative behaviour.

A third issue relates to whether the School encourages the students to eat and drink healthy things. We have always had healthy food available for the students and, slightly ahead of Government requirements, we removed the sugary drinks, chocolate and crisps. This shows that we have treated the issue seriously and hopefully resolved any concern. This relates to the response of older students about inadequate sex and relationships education. Our considerable input to this area, whilst programmed in, came after the survey was conducted. Hopefully there would be acknowledgement that this was dealt with last year and will be programmed again this year.

Inevitably there has been some disruption and untidiness as we try to improve the infrastructure of the School. Great strides have been made in classroom accommodation, not the least being in ICT equipment, and most recently in the building of a new Sports Hall, which will mark a significant enhancement of our facilities. Refurbishment continues to take place, but we implore the student body to respect the environment and help by trying to keep the place free from litter and unnecessary clutter. We acknowledge that the changes to the School fabric can be disruptive, but ask the students to do their part and we will try to ensure that paint work is improved and the general environment is as it should be.

Students do, of course, always like to be heard and we are determined to formalise the student voice with Year Councils feeding in to the School Council, which is led by senior students. Once again we

ask students to make constructive suggestions on how aspects of School life can be developed for the improvement of learning and personal development. We do not promise to agree with everything, but already students and their ideas have helped us to develop and so it must be in the future – that is part of education in its broadest sense.

The Student and Parent Surveys represent an important part of the School seeking to be responsive to the voice of its stakeholders. We thank you for all you have contributed and ask you to be patient with us as we ask you about more things in the future so that with your help we will make the School a better place.

T Maw and R J Shephard

Cashless Catering comes to HGS!

The future of catering at HGS is cashless and biometric. All parents should have received a letter from the School giving details about our move to a safer, cashless system for the Dining Hall at the end of October. If you have not received your letter, contact the School and we will give you another copy.

A McGoldrick

Sports Hall

It has taken a long time to get to a position where a new Sports hall for the School could become a reality, but we have achieved just. It was not an easy road, but our students deserved to have the best we could secure for them and that is what we brought about. The Sports Hall will be a ‘four-court Badminton hall’, but will be equipped, we hope, to enable the students to play much more than Badminton alone – more about that later. In building the Sports hall, which will cost well in excess of £1 million after the equipment has been installed, we have been aided by SRB6 (Single Regenerative Budget 6), the aim of which was to help regenerate part of the City that include parts of the Soho Road and therefore large parts of Handsworth. With their help, we have been able to start to turn a local eyesore into something that adds to the education of the students at our School and the community which we serve. The land upon which the Sports hall is being built belongs to the City, therefore this project represents a strong collaboration between the School, the City and SRB6.

Back in 2002, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) condemned our Gym as inadequate for National Curriculum PE and we have tried hard to attract funds that will help us to remedy that situation. There have been times when we thought we would fail in our aims, but we persevered and that that perseverance has paid off – the money was secured and the Sports hall is being built. Building this Sports hall also represents commitment to the community, because it has been our aim to give the community in which the School is situated access to the Sports Hall. It follows that of an evening and even at the weekends, if all goes well, the Sports Hall will be available to local groups and clubs for booking and even during the day we intend that primary schools and even some others will have some degree of access. That is how seriously we take our community dimension – we are a school that is part of the community and not just in the community.

So how can you help? We do not have enough money to be able to equip the Hall, we can build it and that is about all. We have our dreams of what will go inside it and you can help to make that a reality. Over the page you will see a list of some of what we need to put into it.

Can you help to turn this into a reality? Perhaps you, or your business if you are a business person, can sponsor a piece of equipment. If not, perhaps you can make a contribution towards the Equipment Fund for the Sports Hall. Contributions of over £25 will be marked by a brick in our ‘Wall of Friends’ in the entrance to the School, but any contribution will help us realise our dream. Tax payers can help to boost the money by completing the Gift Aid declaration attached. All cheques must be made payable to the “Friends of Handsworth Grammar School” – any amount will help and we thank you for it.

R J Shephard and E Lear (Chairman of the Governing Body)



Progress with the Sports Hall

It has been a long road to achieving a Sports Hall, but finally it is starting to take shape. Because the land was of a poor quality, after it was cleared of debris and vegetation, it was necessary to drive piles into the ground until they hit hard rock. Without the piles, the final building would have been in danger of falling down because the foundations would have been inadequate. Driving the piles in was almost a trial by torture, but finally they were all done and the base of the structure could be started. The piles were cut and capped and concrete poured into structures that would form the base of the building. Concrete 'rafters' were then put into place and the foundation for the steelwork was complete.

It was with a huge relief that we saw the steel starting to be added - finally we begin to see the shape of the Sports Hall and realise that perhaps it will be big enough after all. The picture above was taken on Monday 16 October. Hopefully for the next Newsletter a considerable amount more progress will have been made - perhaps the walls and the roof will be complete! We will see.

R J Shephard

What do we need for the Sports Hall?

The Sports Hall is costing roughly one million pounds, which does not leave us with much equipment. Perhaps you can help us. Here is a list just for starters:

Three sets of basketball side court rings	£6000
Basketball ceiling retractable goals	£7000
Scoreboard	£4000
Five-a-side goals	£445
Four sets of Badminton posts	£560
Four Badminton nets	£54

Volleyball posts	£114
Netball posts	£600
Handball posts	£770
Hockey goals	£915
Indoor Cricket nets	£8000
Division netting	£2000
Bowling machine	£2200
Ball feeder	£450
Portable Tennis posts and net	£500
Thirty aerobics mats	£150
Mat holder	£130

To afford such things by oneself would be daunting, but a contribution towards these costs would help a great deal. Finding the money to build the Sports Hall has been very hard work – help us to make sure that it is equipped to a high specification, giving the boys a high quality experience. If you feel you can make a contribution, please make your cheques payable to ‘Friends of Handsworth Grammar School’ and send it to Mrs Linley in the Finance Office. Don’t forget to Gift Aid it! Many thanks.

E Lear (Chairman of the Governing Body)

Haiku Success

Congratulations go to Jean-Paul Neveu of Year 9 for his success in a poetry competition run by the City. The poem, written, in the ancient Japanese style of haiku with just three lines of words and seventeen syllables, was selected from 350 entries by Birmingham school children. The winner was Jean-Paul of our School, who met up with Lord Mayor Councillor Mike Sharpe at the Council House to receive his prize. His winning entry was:

*Skin of the Bullring
Its silver discs of beauty
Shine in the night’s sky*

Well done Jean-Paul, with such an enigmatic entry you deserve your success.

T Maw

“Thank You and Farewell, Mr Culshaw”

The affection felt towards Mr Andy Culshaw was evident in the gifts (including an engraved flask from his brass students) with which we wished him a fond farewell at the end of the Summer Term. Mr Culshaw has shared his enthusiasm for music and his expertise as a performer and conductor for some fifteen years as Brass Tutor at HGS. Under his direction the Big Band and Brass Ensemble have entertained us over the years at the annual Adrian Boulton Hall Concert, Music Progress Evening and Summer Soiree, as well as representing the School at the Soundcity event. Although we shall miss him, we are pleased to have been able to appoint and to welcome Miss Angela Whelan to the Music Department team as Brass Tutor. Miss Whelan studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. She has established an international reputation as a solo trumpeter and member of the Fine Arts Brass Ensemble, as well as developing wide experience as a brass coach and tutor.

M Bernamont

Pianist’s Trip to Poland

Over the first weekend in October James Salmon, a Year 13 Music A level student, flew to Warsaw to put his talent as a pianist on the line. Professor M Schreiber of the Chopin Academy of Music agreed to hear James and to give him advice on his potential as a concert pianist. He prepared a programme that included music by Mozart (whose bicentenary is celebrated this year) and Chopin (Poland’s musical icon). James also had the chance to meet some of the students who come from all over the world to study at the Chopin Academy. He was accompanied on the trip by his father and our HGS Piano Tutor, Mr Czepiel, who himself had studied at the Academy in Warsaw.

M Bernamont

Physical Education

After a successful **cricket** season last summer 7 students have been given trials for Warwickshire. These are Amarkumar Rajgor, Kishan Mehta, and Marlon Wijendra in Year 10 and Ajesh Patel, Edward Mott, Anoup Singh Bassi and Pritpal Singh Grewal in Year 11.

The Year 9 **rugby** team entered the Birmingham, Dudley and Sandwell Emerging Schools Festival and were unlucky to be beaten by a 'golden try' in the semi-final after being unbeaten in their pool fixtures. Top try scorers were James Gilchrist + James Tomlin with 3 and Danny Hill + Tyrell Bailey with 2. We have joined a new Year 9 league with 4 other schools to try and get regular fixtures and hopefully with other year groups as well. Vijay Masaun through his club Old Halesonians had a successful trial to get into the County Squad.

The Yr 7 **football** team started their League season well beating Hamstead Hall 7-1. We also have Cup and 'B' team fixtures. Five Year 7 students, Taran Dhadda, Edward Martin, Frederick Porter, George O'Rafferty and Ali Sharif were chosen to attend the Aston U12 District Football Team Trial – ALL have been selected for the squad. Well done. The Yr 8 and 9 football teams have had matches cancelled and so are eager for their first match. They have trained hard and their skills have improved since last year.

The year 10 football team have had a good start to the season beating Holte 5-0, Cardinal Wiseman 4-0 and drawing with George Dixon 2-2. Joshua Berry seems to be on form netting 4 goals so far. The 1st XI have also had a good start to their league campaign with a 8-1 thumping of Joseph Chamberlain College with James Salmon scoring 5. They have drawn with Stourbridge College 2-2 and were knocked out of the Cup by Warwickshire College.

The Year 7 **Inter- Form** football took place on Saturday 23rd September with 60 boys taking part including two Year 12 A- level P.E. students, Dominic Cole and Andip Aujla who refereed the games. 7. A2 on the last game emerged as champions.

Following a successful family meeting with our **Sports Partnership** Primary schools we have already calendared football, badminton and dance festivals which start in November. We are currently working closely with St. Johns', Ladywood Reception Class.

Table tennis and **badminton** trials will be taking place shortly as matches start in the run up to Christmas.

D Nichols and D Griffiths

Smike! Comes to HGS

The new term has welcomed the start of the forthcoming production of *Smike* the musical. Over the past month talented students of all ages (from new Year 7s to members of the Sixth Form) have spent time after school learning songs and lyrics in preparation to start rehearsals after the half term break. Based on the Charles Dickens novel *Nicholas Nickelby*, *Smike* tells the story of a group of bored school children that, with the help of their new English teacher, re-enact the famous story with just a hint of Rock and Roll along the way! The production, which will star members of staff as well as students, takes place in February and already the standard promises to be very high; the dedicated students can look forward to being part of a really great show. The musical will also provide opportunities for students to be involved in set building, stage management and playing in the orchestra.

B Minchin, Director

Christmas Hamper items for Homestart

Homestart, one of the local charities we regularly support. They have asked if the students would be willing to provide hamper items that can be distributed to the needy over the Christmas period. Please make sure that any items that are brought has suitable use-by dates. Tins and good in packets are probably better than fresh goods. Please bring them to me at the School and I promise to make sure the items reach **Homestart**.

R Fackrell

Made at HGS and on display at Manchester Gallery

At the beginning of term a group of Year 13 students visited the Turnpike Gallery, Manchester where they saw their own creation on display. They had planned, designed and produced the artefact last term through a project organised with the Ikon Gallery. We took the School minibus – thanks to Mr Jones for driving – and made a day of it, with lunch in the city centre before a look around the Cornerhouse, another Manchester gallery. We plan to instal the students’ work at HGS later this term.

M Bernamont

The Maverick Crew’s Symphony Hall Job

Four of the original team who took part in last year’s Maverick TV project - Patrick Dale, Adam Goodkin, Ainsley Gordon-Martin and Charlie Kellie - were joined by Andrew Hunt and Richard Wright earlier in October for another video documentary assignment. Now in Year 11 and with their GCSEs a priority, this was to be their last job. It involved them shooting video of the dress rehearsal and main event at the end of a project run by the CBSO with a number of Birmingham schools. They also had to interview the professional composer who led the project. After just a two-hour preparation session with professional filmmaker Katy Connor, they carried out their responsibilities so well that other people at Symphony Hall for the event thought it was a professional crew that was shooting the video. This team of students has not only gained a wealth of experience through their Creative Partnerships opportunities, but has also represented HGS with a remarkable combination of skill, commitment and maturity.

M Bernamont

Friends of Handsworth Grammar School



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To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount we will claim in the tax year.

Diary dates:

23 Oct. - 27 Oct.	Half Term	4 Dec.	Y11 Work Experience starts
31 Oct.	HGSA meeting	5 Dec.	Hall Christmas decorations
1 Nov.	Ski Trip Information Evening	11 Dec.	Concert rehearsals
3 Nov.	Progress Reports Y7-13	13 Dec.	School Concert
7 Nov.	Y13 Parents Evening	15 Dec.	Y11 Work Experience ends
8 Nov.	Governors' Annual Meeting with Parents		Progress Reports Y7-10, 12-13
10 Nov.	Remembrance Assembly		Y13 BNFL trip
11 Nov.	Entrance Tests		School Christmas Fayre
15 Nov.	Student Review Day	20 Dec.	Last Day of term
20 Nov.	Y11 Mock Exams start	3 Jan.	Staff Training Day
25 Nov.	Y8 Inter-Form Football	4 Jan.	Students return to School
1 Dec.	Y11 Mock Exams end	5 Jan.	Prizegiving

Citizenship

The new term has started and all of the year groups are looking at topics that involve their ability to make decisions. The Year 7 students have been discussing what it's like to be new in a school and have looked at name calling and bullying. The Year 8 students have been studying conflict resolutions and some of their rights and responsibilities. While the Year 9 students have been looking at racism and how it develops and the devastating effect that it can have. The Year 10 students have discussed choices and the Year 11 have worked on issues such as poverty and social class.

Some of the forms have had their first careers session of this academic year and we hope that these will be beneficial in shaping their thoughts for the future.

The Year 7 students have some trips in the next few weeks to Aston Villa Football Stadium to be involved in a health day.

The School is currently working towards receiving the Healthy Schools Standard which is a prestigious award given to Schools that hit all the guidelines given by the Government. If any students or parents would like to be involved in the process please see Mr Griffiths.

D Griffiths

Help!

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed towards our Sports Hall appeal, helping us to equipment out new Sports Hall. Please consider completing the Gift Aid form and giving to this project - your children deserve it!

giftaid it

Please consider completing the Gift Aid form on the other side of this page. The form should then be sent to Handsworth Grammar School, with any cheque made payable to 'Friends of Handsworth Grammar School'.