



Balfour Newsletter Easter 2017



Dear Parents and Carers

School funding

It is unprecedented that I write to you regarding school funding, but sadly, it has become such an overriding concern that I feel I must. You may well be aware from press and news reports that this issue is currently regularly debated. Indeed the Government is committed to addressing the long-standing historical inequalities which see a school like ours receiving approximately £1 million less per year than a similar school in other parts of the country. According to the estimates put forward, in the new Fairer Funding proposal, we will receive a slight increase in funding, but it will in no way match the increased costs we face, which include NI and pensions contributions, over which we have no choice. Our Trustees and Governors are, like me, determined to do all we can to maintain our very high standards, our broad curriculum and extra-curricular offer, but there is considerable pressure on our school budget now, and in the coming months and years. Many other schools around the country are making very difficult decisions to reduce and restrict GCSE and A Level courses, increase class sizes and reduce the amount of support available to children whose progress depends upon it. Due to the very careful stewardship of our budget over the years, we have a small reserve which will help us avoid going down this route for the next academic year, but after that, we will be in the same position as many other poorly funded schools.

It is on this basis that I ask you to support our school and your child or children, by writing to Jeremy Lefroy, Stafford's MP, and urging him to maintain pressure on the Government to deliver a school settlement that really will be fair, ensuring the same level of funding per child, no matter where they live in the country.

I will be extremely grateful for your support in this matter. If you require any more information on this, and the possible impacts of the current unfair funding, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Parents driving on to site at school start and end

A plea! Please avoid driving on to the school site before or after school. School buses find it very difficult to navigate the narrow drive with so much traffic, which puts our children at risk. If you have to drive your child to school, please arrange an alternative, near-by area to drop them off, therein safeguarding everyone. Many thanks for your help with this.

Canteen, Lunchtime passes and safeguarding

I am concerned at the number of our students leaving the site at lunchtime. I understand that many of them wish to buy alternative offerings from the local chip shop etc, but my chief concern lies in the fact that I cannot guarantee their safeguarding when off site, especially if they are not going home. To this end, we are undertaking a review of our on-site catering offer, in order to try to persuade more students to stay on site. A sizeable number of students have filled in a questionnaire and have recently taken part in samples testing. We are also looking at moving to a cashless system (happily at the expense of the catering suppliers) in order to simplify payments and allow more students through the tills more quickly. As part of this, we would also have a pre-order system, ensuring that students can have the food of their choice, no matter what time they

go into the canteen over break and lunchtime. As ever, I will keep you informed of our progress in these matters.

Payments

As I am sure most of you are aware we have an on-line payments facility called Tucasi which enables you to pay for school trips and activities using a credit or debit card and provides you with access to your personal account and details of payments, amounts due etc. Whilst we do still accept cash and cheques we are strongly advised by our Auditors that these payments should be kept to a minimum or completely eradicated if possible. Please can I ask you, therefore, to use Tucasi as your preferred payment method. If you do send cash or cheque payments these should be given in to the Finance Office in clearly labelled envelopes and not handed in to other members of school staff. Receipts will be given for the sums handed in.

Parent communication, social media

We are currently reviewing the ways we keep you informed of your child's progress, school news and events. The website is updated regularly but we are also looking into the use of parent-centred Apps and also social media. I will keep you informed of the progress we make and the decisions we take on this.

Uniform

We are very much looking forward to September and the introduction of our smart new uniform. Many thanks for your feedback earlier this year, which showed a considerable majority of you in favour of the proposed changes. On our two face-to-face consultation evenings, we saw in excess of 100 families; it was very pleasing to receive your feedback and praise for ensuring that the new uniform was not only smart, but also affordable, with a wide choice of suppliers.

And finally..

As we approach the onset of the GCSE and A level exams I want to thank you for your never-ending support and forbearance (!) with helping your children stay organised and prepared for the everyday challenges of school. For those of you with children in Year 11, you will be the first to see your children achieving grades between 1 and 9 for English and Maths, but A*-G grades in the rest of their subjects. By 2019 all exams will be graded on the new 1-9 system (with 9 being the highest grade possible). The latest news we have is that a 4 will be classed as a 'standard' pass, with 5 being a 'strong' pass. What this will mean in reality to future employers, universities and colleges is still unclear; as soon as there is some clarity, I will let you know.

We wish all our students facing these challenging, undoubtedly stressful public exams all the luck in the world. They have been well taught and well guided in their revision – these last few weeks, including the Easter holiday, are vital in ensuring our young people are fully ready for this testing time – their summer holidays will start very early and therefore, the sacrifice now will be well worth while.

With all best wishes for a peaceful Easter break

Lesley Beck

Headteacher

6th Form Coffee Morning

On Tuesday 14th March our 6th Form students organised a coffee morning in aid of McMillan Cancer Support. As well as providing refreshments, on offer was a selection of homemade cakes all provided by the students. In total over £300.00 was raised in aid of the charity.

Careers Fair

Our annual Careers Fair took place on Futures Day 2 - Wednesday 18th January 2017. Nearly 30 exhibitors attended and the fair was visited throughout the morning by Years 9, 10, 11 and 6th Form students. The feedback from everyone was extremely positive with exhibitors praising the politeness and attitude of the students. Our students said "it was informative, there was a good selection, there was something for everything and the staff were very approachable".



Debate Competition

On the 30th March 2017 Mrs March and four Sixth Form students were given the opportunity to visit The Houses of Parliament and take part in a debating competition with another 6 Stafford schools. The competition was arranged by Stafford Conservative MP Jeremy Lefroy along with Councillor Carolyn Trowbridge and with support from The Stafford Rotary Clubs and The University of Wolverhampton.

Our team consisted of Isaac R (Proposer), Katie H (Main Speaker) and Oliver P (Summariser). Tiegan H also joined us for the day due to her interest in politics.



The team had been meeting every Friday lunchtime since January to work on their speeches and had put a huge amount of work into their written presentation, as well as the skills needed to present in front of others.

We debated in a very prestigious room, with the view of Westminster Bridge and the Thames from the window. The topic of our debate was *'This House believes that the rise of social media is having a positive impact on society'*.

We were drawn as the second team to talk and the team did an outstanding job, as did all of the other schools in the competition. We were the only team out of all 7 who chose to oppose the statement.

The winning overall team was King Edward VI High School; however, we were very pleased as the best overall speaker was given to our very own Katie! A fantastic achievement as she presented an amazing and very convincing argument.

After the debate, we got to watch a live debate in the House of Commons, which was also very interesting to see.

Following on from this we headed back to the coach for Stafford; it was a fantastic day to be part of and we are already looking forward to next year's debate, in the hope of bringing home another trophy!

District Parliament

The Stafford Secondary Schools District School Council is a historical group that was formed over 6 years ago. Despite being very active during its initial years, unfortunately the meetings began to fade away. Two years ago, the current Sir Graham Balfour Parliament students suggested reforming the group, but it has taken until now to really see this come into effect. The ultimate aim is to recreate a regular gathering of students, from each of the 7 schools in the local area, to share good practice and exchange ideas.



The initial meeting on Wednesday 25th January was highly successful with discussions ranging from comparisons between each of the 5 schools who attended, to planning joint ventures and fundraising ideas. The feedback has been extremely positive and all of the students involved felt it was a fantastic opportunity to meet new people from the other schools in Stafford.

A second meeting has since taken place at Sir Graham Balfour with discussions regarding the possibility of an interschool bike ride, student led joint enrichment days and also a School News Quiz with teams participating from all of the 7 schools. The next meeting is due to take place at the end of June. Thank you to all of the schools who attended and also for the positive feedback.

“We were welcomed warmly by Sir Graham Balfour staff and students and a lovely breakfast offered to us too!” Weston Road Academy.

Duke of Edinburgh



A huge congratulations to Pippa S from Year 13 on achieving her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Well done Pippa.

Eco News

Green Club

Green Club has been thriving since Christmas. We have been doing various activities such as preparing our exhibition for "There's No Plant B" in February half term. The exhibition from Sir Graham Balfour was high commended.

Also, we have been planting violas in compostable cups in preparation for Mother's Day. After Easter the students will be getting involved with Forest School. Forest School is a holistic educational process that aims to raise self-awareness and self-esteem in an outdoor, non-classroom environment. Students participate in small achievable tasks, connecting them with the environment and encouraging free exploration.

Mrs D Hill.





No Planet B

The annual No Planet B Exhibition took place this year during February half term (18th – 25th) at St Chads Church in the centre of Stafford. This popular 'Green Arts Festival' attracts hundreds of visitors, exhibits and performers throughout the week.

The event encourages people of all ages and abilities to exhibit artwork of any form that inspires concern and respect for our planet. Artwork might include paintings, collages, models, sculptures, photographs, mobiles and ceramics, posters and poems all helping us show the world how much we care for our precious, one and only, planet earth.

This year pieces for the exhibition were submitted by both Mrs Hill and Green Club, along with Miss Fisher and House Group S5. The school received a number of awards for individual pieces along with a highly commended certificate for the group display which included a cheque for £30.00.



French Trip

1st day – Travelling

On Saturday 25th March a very excited group of 24 students in Years 8 and 9 and 3 staff packed their bags onto the coach, left Sir Graham Balfour and headed south to Normandy in France. We arrived at our hotel late at night and headed straight for bed after a tiring journey and a bumpy ferry ride!

2nd day – Visit to Arromanches, World War II sites and Bayeux.

Our first stop of the trip was the seaside town of Arromanches-sur-mer. After seeing the remains of the artificial port, we experienced a powerful and thought-provoking representation of the events of June 6th 1944 at the 360 degree cinema. We then took a walk down to Arromanches where the students enjoyed having some free time to practise their French and sample the local food.



The next visit of the day was to the American war cemetery which everyone found immensely thought-provoking. The students were extremely respectful while visiting the cemetery and got a realisation of the scale of the losses incurred during the war.

We finished the day by visiting the town of Bayeux. The students enjoyed visiting the impressive Cathedral before spending some free time roaming the streets and the local artisan shops.

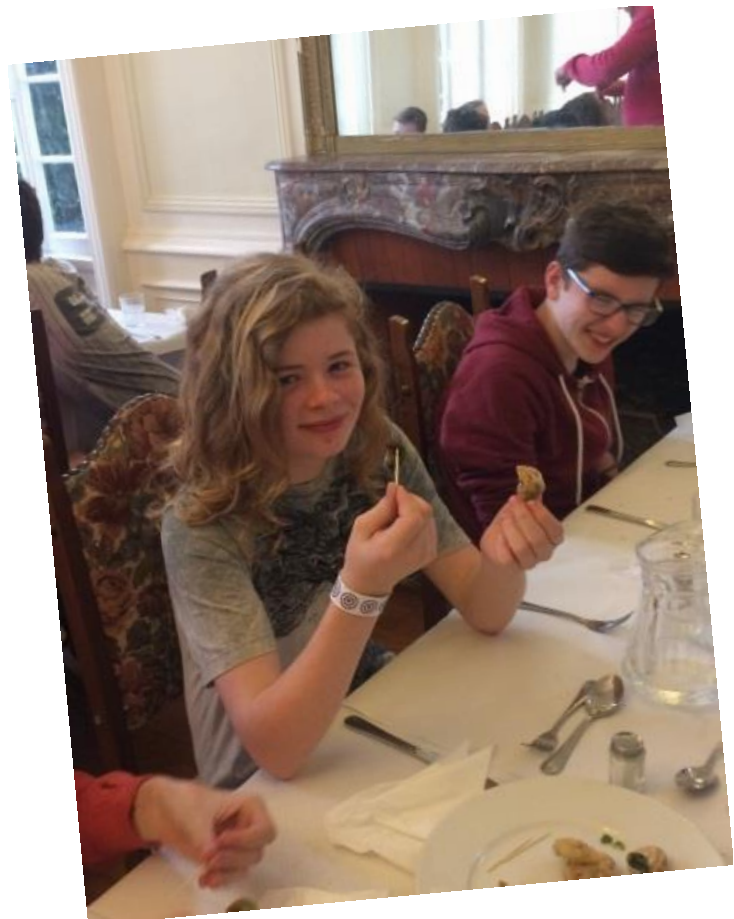


3rd day – Visit to a Normandy biscuit factory & Cité de la Mer

After breakfast we headed to a family run biscuit factory, which has been making traditional Normandy biscuits for over 200 years. The students were taught in French about how the biscuits are made, and had the chance to make their own.

The main visit of the day was to Cité de la Mer in Cherbourg, where the students enjoyed visiting a large aquarium and got the chance to get up close and personal with sharks and sting rays. We then navigated our way along the narrow corridors of a nuclear submarine before ending the day on a high, with students grabbing the headlines by becoming explorers of the deep blue!

Another highlight of the trip came that evening at dinner, where the students got the chance to taste traditional French snails and frogs legs. Every student got stuck in, with some going back for more!



Good Food Show Stafford College

On Friday 17th March Year 11 GCSE Food Students participated in the Stafford College Good Food Show. This involved students getting an insight into some aspects of the Hospitality and Catering Industry. They participated in front of house activities including a formal dinner service competition and preparing non-alcoholic cocktails. Students then worked in the Catering Kitchens alongside Chefs decorating cakes and making stir fry. They were an absolute credit to Sir Graham Balfour School. Mrs J Hales – Food Technology Teacher



House of Bread

The Reverse Advent Calendar - Final Hamper Collections for House of Bread

Mr William Morris founder of The House of Bread came into school on Friday 16th December to collect the 4 House Group Hampers. The response had been phenomenal, thank you to everyone for their generosity and community spirit. Pictured above are the mini-Christmas cakes baked by C3 – Miss Hales' House Group, and our House Heads with the hampers.



News from the English Department

To celebrate World Book Day the English Department decided to have a specific focus on reading. As well as Miss Allright and Mr Gilroy delivering assemblies to each House focussing on how to improve reading and accessing materials, students were informed about a reading initiative 'Readathon' which encourages students to complete a sponsored read for charity.

The charity in question is a worthy cause: any monies raised would be spent on providing storytellers and books for sick children in hospital. Many students took up the challenge to read: with some reading up to four books in two days.

In addition to this there were various activities in the DAC centre, all focussed on promoting reading. At various points during the week there were up to sixty-five students taking part in activities on each day. The week culminated in the inter-house quiz: this involved lots of eating of chocolate for each team!

News from the Modern Foreign Languages Department

Funny, smart and inspiring. Three words to describe the Modern and Foreign Language plays of 2017.

Recently Year 9 and GCSE students at Sir Graham Balfour have been invited to attend 2 language plays (3rd one pending) in both German and French. Over the course of the year big leaps will be made in MFL as the Year 11s will be working hard to achieve their desired grade and Year 9's make the switch to a GCSE course. Having the 3 plays come in really puts into perspective how useful and in demand the Modern Languages really are. Though very fast, upbeat and realistic, they were both very clear to all students, with lots of signals to follow along to.

Before Christmas a theatrical company from France came to the school to perform a show, for all Year 9 students, to understand the importance of learning a language. Set in a Café the 2 actors

had a range of different characters and situations and portrayed an 'interesting and hectic life' of 1 waitress. They made it fun and engaging for all the students not just those taking French. With a range of interaction and scenarios I can say that the whole year had a great hour.



More recently on the 14th March it was a German play that was quite literally in the spotlight. Only this time set on a campsite, not everything was quite thought out by the character Sonia, as she failed to grasp the concept of camping and how it doesn't come with a socket for her hair dryer.

Both plays were very original and funny and I'm sure the Spanish one will be too. As a Spanish student I am really looking forward to seeing a new and creative way to interest more students into taking MFL.

Au revoir, Auf Wiedersehen, Adios, Bye!

By Kathryn D

News from the Music Department

Choir Visit to Greenhall Community Special School– Friday 16th December

Our last community visit of 2016 was to Greenhall Community Special School on the last day of term. The school is a lovely facility that is host to children who suffer with a range of disabilities. Not only did our visit make it all the more worthwhile to see the reaction and participation of the children at Greenhall but also the conduct and maturity of our students throughout the visit was extremely touching.

A fitting performance to celebrate the festive season which is a time to show goodwill to those around us and those in need.

Thank you to all of the students who volunteer their time to be part of our school choir and the orchestra. Some of our community visits can be quite thought provoking and even upsetting but our students are an absolute credit to both the school and themselves. Thank you especially to Miss Braverman, Head of Music for her dedication to the choir and orchestra and supporting our visits in the community.



African Drumming

On Monday 13th February students across all year groups took part in an African Drumming workshop where they learned about the context of drumming in Africa and played on real djembe drums which culminated in creating a piece to perform.



Royal Air Force Cadets Air Experience



On Wednesday 29th March five students from Sir Graham Balfour were given the fantastic opportunity to experience flying with 8 Air Experience Flight at RAF Cosford.



As members of the Stafford Unit of the Girls Venture Corps; Leanne A, Laura G, Taylor L, Lacey P and Mia S were privileged to be selected to participate. This opportunity is only available occasionally to groups which have an RAF Recognised Certificate awarded for meeting the high standards required when inspected by an Officer from RAF Cranwell.

On the day the weather was not too kind but the cadets did get up in the aircraft and had a go at flying the plane, did landing and take offs and experienced G Force.

Rotary Young Artist



Rotary Young Artist of the Year 2017

February saw the return of the annual 'Rotary Young Artist of the Year' competition. It promised to be another exciting event, with more entries submitted than ever before. With five high schools

entering and over 100 entries we knew it was going to be a tough competition. There were three age categories in the competition 11-14, 14-16 and 16-19 and all work entered was showcased in a fantastic exhibition at the Northfield Centre.

There was a huge turnout for the prize ceremony and our students were awarded a selection of the winning prizes.



11-14 category

3rd Place awarded to Josiah M, James C, Luca C, Harrison S, and Jake E for their mixed media autumn leaves collage.

Highly Commended awarded to Demi G for her watercolour hand painting inspired by the work of Hundertwasser.



14-16

Highly Commended awarded to Faith L for her brilliant 'Marine Life' mixed media final piece.

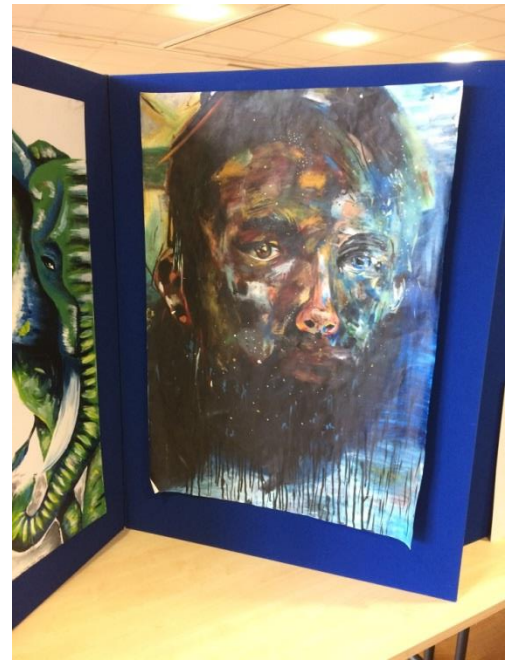


16-19

2nd Place awarded to Kirsty W for her duo of bird canvases showing her ability to work in both pencil crayon and ink.



3rd Place awarded to Eve I for her hugely impressive biro study of St Paul's Cathedral.



Highly Commended awarded to Morgan P for her striking animal paintings.

Gallery Prize awarded to Anya E whose work stunned the judges.

A huge well done to all students who had their work shortlisted for the competition and to all the deserving winners. All this is just reward for all of the hard work that they have put in. Thank you to all parents that supported us and attended the exhibition. Winning entries are currently being shortlisted further by Gallery 12 to appear in their summer exhibition

Spinathon

As a school we are fully aware of the generosity and community ethos our students, staff and parents. This is phenomenally evident at our annual fundraiser Spinathon.

Organised by a team led by Miss Poole, Assistant Headteacher, this event sees the whole school come together to support others who are not as fortunate as ourselves.

This year all proceeds raised from the seven hour Spinning Challenge along with non-uniform, cake and merchandise sales will be split between Katharine House Hospice, Red Nose Day and SGB Cambodia. Thank you to everyone who took part, everyone who helped on the day, to both Year 6 classes from Tillington and Parkside Primaries who came along and joined in and also to The Worshipful the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Geoff Collier and Mrs Cathy Collier who officially opened the event.



In total we raised £5840.65!



News from the PE Department

As you will appreciate it is very busy for the PE department at this time of year with fixtures and moderation. Therefore, Mr Johnson will be penning a full report of all of our sporting achievements at the end of the academic year for the Summer Edition of the Balfour News.

However, in the interim in my role as School and Community Liaison which includes producing the Balfour News I have decided to write an article on behalf of the PE department instead.



English Schools' Football Association County Cup Final

On Monday 3rd April our Year 11 Boys Football Team, through hard work, skill and the coaching of a very proud Mr Johnson played in the English Schools' Football Association County Cup Final against Sir Thomas Boughy School, Stoke on Trent. Held at Stafford Town FC on Riverway, kick off was 6.45 pm and staff had been invited to come along and support the boys. As a mother of two girls, football has never really been a focus within our household however, on this occasion my husband, youngest daughter and myself, decided to take time out of our usual Monday evening routine and go along and support the boys.

What a match!

Upon arrival it was evident I was not alone in supporting our school, by the sheer number of staff who had also arrived to cheer the team on, not to mention the amount of students also there to support their friends. The actual match was absolutely brilliant, with all of the spectators on the edge of their seats throughout the whole time. The game was fast paced and the energy of our boys never waned throughout the whole evening.

By full time the score was 1 – 1. No going home for us yet; there was extra time to contend with, 10 minutes each way. It was not until half way through the second part of extra time that SGB went into the lead and scored, the crowd was absolutely ecstatic! Waiting for that final whistle to blow I thought we had the cup in our sights; it was not until one minute before the final whistle the opposition put the ball in our net! No going home for us yet, there were penalties to contend with!

It was absolutely nerve-racking, at one point I caught Miss Chapman, Head of PE with her head down unable to watch. Sadly, we were not to be champions. The opposition blocked two of our penalties, Sir Thomas Boughy were the victors.

The disappointment of our team was painful, they had played absolutely fantastically and to lose on penalties was the ultimate punishment. However, in my eyes they were winners, their performance that night and most likely throughout the whole tournament was incredible, an absolute credit to our school. Well done boys and well done to Mr Johnson and the PE department.

Mrs Gannon – School and Community Liaison





Visiting Author

On Tuesday 4th April a number of our Year 9 English students were very fortunate to attend a workshop run by visiting children's author Barbara Mitchelhill.



Quotes from the students:

James T 8S4

We have read of Barbara Mitchelhill's 'A Twist of Fortune' and 'Run Rabbit Run'. They were really good books. It was interesting and it was hard to put down the book.

My favourite book out of the 2 books was a 'Twist of Fortune'. It is really tense how everything goes. I like how it goes good, then it goes bad and it is happy ever after at the end. I like how it works.

One of the questions we asked Barbara Mitchelhill was: How much money is it when you make a book and sell it?

Barbara Mitchelhill was nice and answered lots of questions for us.

Miles R 8S6

What books did you read?

We read two of Barbara Mitchelhill books called 'A Twist of Fortune' and 'Run Rabbit Run'. I actually didn't have a favourite I liked them both the same.

Questions you asked/and answers you got?

First question I asked was when was Run Rabbit Run made? Answer 2011. Then I asked what was your first book ever published? And the answer was she did four little books for kids on BBC.

What did you think of the visit from Barbara Mitchelhill?

She was one fantastic woman. She was kind and spoke very formally but there were so many questions asked about books we didn't learn much about her.

Thank you for coming in Barbara Mitchelhill.

Future Events

Sunday 9 th April	Iceland Trip
Wednesday 26 th April	Year 5 Weekly Taster Sessions Commence
Week Commencing Tuesday 2 nd May	Celebration Assemblies
Tuesday 2 nd May	Y9 Spanish Play
Wednesday 3 rd May	Y8 Parents Evening
Wednesday 10 th May	University Information Evening (6.00 pm)
Friday 12 th May	Y11 Leavers Celebration Day
Saturday 20 th May	Stafford in the World Event – Stafford Market Square
Friday 26 th May	Spanish Trip
Monday 29 th – Friday 2 nd June	Half Term
Friday 16 th June	Y11 Last Academic Day
Wednesday 21 st June	Summer Music Concert
Wednesday 28 th June	KS3 Celebration Evening
Friday 30 th June	Sainsbury's Active Kids Voucher Collection Deadline
Monday 3 rd July	Y11 Prom
Monday 10 th – Friday 14 th July	Y10 Work Experience
Monday 10 th and Tuesday 11 th July	Y6 Full Day Visits
Thursday 13 th July	Y5 Day Visit
Thursday 13 th July	Big Walk for Cambodia – Non Uniform Day
Friday 14 th July	Sports Day
Tuesday 18 th July	Y13 Prom
Wednesday 19 th and Thursday 20 th July	Activity Days
Monday 24 th July	Summer Break

**Have a fabulous Easter
and we look forward to
welcoming students
back in school on
Monday 24th April 2017!**