



NUMBER 120 - February 2009

Westcliff Newsletter

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Chair of Governors: Mr M Foster
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The Westcliff Newsletter is online at: www.whsg.info

FUTURE DATES FOR DIARY

Saturday 14 - Sunday 22 February

Monday 16 - Friday 20 February

Wednesday 25 February

Thursday 26 February

Friday 27 February

Sunday 1 March

Tuesday 3 March

Wednesday 4 March

Thursday 5 March

Friday 6 March

Sunday 8 March

Tuesday 10 March

Wednesday 11 March

Thursday 12 March

Friday 13 March

Saturday 14 March

Thursday 19 March

Thursday 26 March

Friday 27 March

Monday 23 March - Friday 3 April

Wednesday 1 April

Friday 3 April

Ski Trip to Folgaria Italy

HALF TERM

Year 10 PDT Booster

Woodwind Ensemble Recording - Main Hall - 2.30 - 6.00 pm

Year 9 Reports to Parents

West Side Story rehearsals - 10.00 am - 3.00 pm

Year 9 Options Parents' Evening - 7.00 - 9.00 pm

2010 Morocco World Challenge Trip launch - 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Year 11 English "An Inspector Calls" - Norwich - 11.00 am 7.30 pm

PTA Ladies' Pampering Night - WHSB Main Hall - 7.30 pm

Science & Engineering Week begins

Year 9 History Trip - Imperial War Museum - Duxford

Year 10 CSI Workshop

Governors Day - visiting Year 10 CSI Workshop

Year 11 (select students) - Civic Centre - Children's Workforce Development Council

Business Enterprise Disco

PTA Boot Sale

West Side Story rehearsals - 10.00 am - 3.00 pm

Year 11 & 13 Leavers' Photographs

West Side Story - 7.30 pm - Main Hall

Year 12 Full Reports to Parents

West Side Story - 7.30 pm - Main Hall

Year 13 Full Reports to Parents

West Side Story - 7.30 pm - Main Hall

PTA Quiz Night

Year 9 Parents' Consultation Evening - 4.00 - 6.30 pm

Year 8 Parents' Consultation Evening 4.00 - 6.30 pm

Years 7-9 Pupil Tracking (2) Reports to Parents

Year 10 Examination Period

Year 7 Parents' Evening - 4.00 - 6.30 pm

Year 8 HPV Injection No 3

TERM ENDS - RETURN MONDAY 20 APRIL 2009



TERM DATES

SPRING TERM 2009	Monday 5 January 2009 - Friday 3 April 2009 <i>Half Term Monday 16 February - Friday 20 February 2009</i>
SUMMER TERM 2009	Monday 20 April 2009 - Monday 20 July 2009 <i>Half Term Monday 25 May - Friday 29 May 2009</i>

INSET DATES

FRIDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2009

MONDAY 20 JULY 2009



STAFF CHANGES

Mr C Gilson

Mr Gilson, who was our Head of Religious Studies for the past 11 years, left us at the end of last term to take up a role with the General Teaching Council for England and Wales. We wish Mr Gilson every success in this new post, where he will be dealing with the awards and accreditation of TLAs (Teacher Learning Academy).

Mr T Morgan

Following Mr Gilson's departure, I am very pleased that Mr Morgan has agreed to take on responsibility for the Religious Studies department and look forward to working with him in this role.

Mrs C Getting

We are very pleased to welcome Mrs Getting as a new member of our Science Technician team, with particular responsibility for Chemistry. We wish her well as a member of our staff.



RECORD ENGLISH GCSE RESULTS

We are really pleased to be able to report that our Year 11 early entry to GCSE English has produced outstanding results.

All girls in Year 11 were prepared so they could take the GCSE English Language examination in November 2008. The staff of the English Department have worked very hard to ensure the girls were ready for the examination - and the girls have delivered the best results we have ever seen for this subject at GCSE:

- ❖ All 150 girls passed with a grade C or above
- ❖ 77% of all the results were at A* or A grades
- ❖ 99 girls gained an A*

Our congratulations go to all the girls and staff involved in achieving such excellent results and we very much look forward to the girls building on these results in the summer GCSE examinations.



NEW BUILDING PROGRESS



We are pleased to report that the new building is currently on schedule with no significant delays or cost over-runs reported.

Despite the wet weather with heavy clay underfoot the workers have been making good progress.

During the past 6 weeks the steel structure has been erected and the floors are now being installed.



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

For some time now we have been looking ways to learn more about the views of parents, pupils and staff so we can identify areas to develop further as a school and have decided to use Kirkland Rowell (a specialist in this field) to prepare a survey for us.

All parents will have recently received a questionnaire (through pupil post) and returns were requested by Tuesday 10 February 2009. All responses will be confidential.

We very much hope to share an analysis of these surveys with you in a future Newsletter and thank you very much for taking the time to take part in this activity.



THE END OF NATIONAL KEY STAGE 3 TESTS

As a school we have invested heavily in developing our Key Stage 3 curriculum allocating staff time to develop schemes of work and new resources to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum and in particular to ensure pupils are ready for the Key Stage 3 Tests.

We were very surprised that the Secretary of State decided that the difficulties met in the marking of this year's English tests should lead to his abandonment of the national testing programme at this level and have yet to receive a convincing explanation for this change.

We have been offered the opportunity to take part in optional tests but have decided (along with most schools) not to take part in this process - but instead to use this new found freedom to develop our curriculum so that our pupils are prepared for GCSEs at the end of Year 11 without the shackles of a programme of study that is not always in the best interests of our pupils.

We shall continue with our new curriculum with the current Year 7 completing their Key Stage 3 studies at the end of Year 8, whilst the current Year 9 will benefit from moving more quickly onto their GCSE studies in Mathematics and Science (having already started their study for GCSE English and Religious Studies).



A MOVE TO CASHLESS CATERING?

We are currently investigating the possibility of moving to a cashless catering system for canteen purchases.

The key aim of a cashless catering system is to make lunch time more efficient for the students and to remove the need for them to carry money. There are also further benefits for our school.

There are two widely used systems:

- a) Pupils have a swipe card which registers with the computer to check their identity, which then allows a deduction from their account.
- b) Pupils use their fingerprint which registers with the computer to check their identity, which then allows a deduction from their account.

At the point of payment the student either swipes their card or places their finger on the fingertip scanner and once successfully verified by the Catering Point of Sale Operator, their account is debited.

The main benefits for both the student and the school are:

- ❖ It will enable the students to be served more efficiently and quickly and keep queues to a minimum.
- ❖ It will ensure complete confidentiality for students entitled to free school meals.
- ❖ It will help to prevent bullying, by ensuring that students no longer need to carry cash to school.
- ❖ It will ensure that money provided by parents to pay for schools meals is used in the canteen.
- ❖ It will cut down the administrative burden that schools face by reducing the finance department's workload.

Payment by parents would be through ParentPay with a wall mounted coin and note loader as a back-up.

If we were to use the fingerprint method there are some further advantages:

- ❖ It is a unique verification. No one else can use the student's fingertip, so no one else can use the credit on your account.
- ❖ If you lose a payment card the student has to pay for a replacement.

For parents there are some further benefits of a change to cashless catering. The tills will be linked to the school computer and a record maintained of what the pupils buy. Next year all schools will be obliged to introduce nutritional reporting so parents can see the types of food being purchased and this system will allow parents to have a regular report on this. Parents will also be able to set a daily spend limit so that the amount of money spent in the canteen is not excessive.

We know that some parents may object if we were to invest in the fingerprint recognition method. We understand the technology involved does not store a pupil's fingerprint, but encodes it as a 13 or 15 digit number. This can only be used internally and is of no use whatsoever to the Police.

Since we also know that systems are not infallible, if there should be a catastrophic failure of the computer system during the lunch period, we would ensure that a back-up system is available so pupils can obtain food.

If any parents have particular issues to raise with a potential move to cashless catering, I would welcome your written comments by the end of February 2009.



BAD WEATHER PROCEDURES

I would like to thank all those pupils (and the support of their parents) who made it to school on Monday 2 February 2009. I would like to also express my appreciation to our staff for making every effort to get here to teach and support the running of the School. For those pupils unable to get in, we were pleased that many of their parents rang us to explain their absence and thank them for ensuring we were informed.

I know that some pupils were unable to get in as the buses did not run, and some pupils particularly in the Chelmsford and outer London areas had roads that were impassable. We do not expect pupils to come to school if it is not reasonable to do so and in this case absences are marked as authorized absence (though it is still necessary for an absence note to be sent in by parents). Quite often the weather improves as the day progresses; should this mean that transport becomes possible we do expect pupils will then come to school late, ensuring they miss as few lessons as possible.

There may be occasions when it is necessary to close the school on grounds of health and safety; such a situation can occur if a large number of staff are unable to get in making the supervision of pupils impossible, or when roads and paths around the school are too dangerous to use. We also take account of whether pupils can travel safely to and from school and are guided in this by the Local Authority and the Police.

As a general rule we always try to open the school despite predicted bad weather. Firstly we have a duty to try and open the school and provide education to our pupils, but we also know that closing the school creates child care problems for many parents; also, by the time a school closure is decided, many pupils and staff are already travelling to school and we need to ensure they are catered for. Secondly, the weather predictions for this area of the country can change almost hourly, making it hard to use them as the basis of decision making; however, we do pay attention to them and respond to them as appropriate. Finally, we are determined not to gain a reputation as a school that regularly closes as we know that schools in this situation have pupils who miss school simply because 'they think the school will be closed'.

Should it be necessary for the school to close we will notify parents, pupils and staff using our school website (www.whsg.info) and through the local radio stations. If we have not been identified as closed in these media, parents, pupils and staff must assume we are open.



ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AFL)

Our whole school focus this year is to develop outstanding Assessment for Learning. But what does this mean? Surely teachers assess learning all the time? Well, this is true, however, Assessment for Learning has an underlying principle that all stakeholders in the learning, pupils, teachers, parents - have an understanding of **where pupils are; what their potential is**, and most importantly of all, **how to reach that potential**.

Over the past year or so, you will have received more regular assessment data. At Key Stage 3 this is now in the form of a fine level, and targets have been set for pupils in all year groups so that progress can be monitored closely by all stakeholders. The idea is that pupils should make at least two levels of progress within a particular Key Stage and any improvement on that indicates that "value has been added" to a student.

At classroom level, our aim is to allow students to experience assessment activities which result not only in understanding their current achievement, but also giving insight into how to progress to the next level. To help this process we have developed an AfL toolkit containing a range of resources for implementing activities. This toolkit can be found in every classroom in order that teachers have the chance to use AfL whenever it is appropriate. These tool kits enable engagement by all pupils, promoting a range of learning activities in our lessons.

What's in the Toolkit?

Tool	How Used
32 Mini Whiteboards 32 Mini Whiteboard pens 32 Sponge Erasers	For generating ideas or for formulating quick whole class / peer and self assessments.
Sponge Ball	Basketball Questioning - ensures engagement by all - pass the ball on to the next person who will contribute/ answer the next question.
A set of Playing Cards	For randomising groups.
Index cards / Post its	For use as Exit Passes - can be used as a starting point for next lesson based on pupil understanding / misconceptions ascertained by the responses on the cards.
Voting Tools	Again, full engagement of the group, all vote, teacher can immediately assess understanding and challenge pupils for explanations of their views.
Red and Green Cards	To use to demonstrate understanding - keep the green side up while you understand, red when you don't. The teacher could ask a 'green' pupil to explain to a 'red' pupil to ensure pupils are honest and really thinking about their own learning.

Of course, if these tools are not used in the right way, then the impact on learning might not be significant. We are in the process of collecting pupil views on the AfL techniques they experience, alerting them to the reasons why we are adopting such approaches and for them to think about whether it has a positive impact on their learning.

As stakeholders in learning, it is important to realise that Assessment for Learning is not just about using tools in a classroom. Giving pupils access to assessment criteria is important - if we don't know where the goal posts are, how are we expected to score? Peer and Self Assessment are valuable - enabling pupils to critique their own performance and that of others and more importantly, what can they take from that feedback to improve their own work? Oral and written feedback is essential too - the temptation is to 'look at the mark' - "what did you get, what did you get?", but the feedback on how to improve is even more important.

And how do we know it is happening? At whole school level we have devoted development time for staff to work on embedding Assessment for Learning. We meet in teams at least every half term to discuss our successes and those we have observed in colleagues; we are now collecting pupil views and we are sharing our good practice with other schools at Local Authority level. We are even encouraging some colleagues to record their exemplary lessons.

A great deal of hard work by staff has been put into making Assessment for Learning a success at WHSG. We still have a way to go. Please encourage your daughters to recognise and expect good practice in Assessment for Learning from us as we strive to ensure that the learning and teaching your daughter receives is outstanding.

Mrs Bamber
Assistant Headteacher



THE TIMES - BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS

We have signed up for a great new collection scheme that could provide us with hundreds of new books for the school library and we would like your help.

From 11 January 2009, Books for Schools tokens will appear every day in The Times and The Sunday Times. We can exchange these tokens for free books of our choice from a catalogue of 170 titles.

There will be 12 tokens printed every week and with books starting at only 10 tokens, you don't have to be a regular Times reader to really make a difference to our collection.

Please collect as many tokens as you can and give them to your child to bring to school. Tokens can be deposited in our special collection boxes, or given to a member of staff. Please would you also ask your employer or other local businesses to collect on the school's behalf as well?

We will be placing our first book order at the end of the spring term, so please make sure we have all your tokens before the Easter holidays begin.

With your help we can make a real difference to our School library, ensuring that they have access to some of the very best titles available to encourage them to read and improve their literacy.

Many thanks in advance for your help.

Dr Paul Hayman
Headteacher



SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING WEEK ACTIVITIES - 2009



At Westcliff High School for Girls we are proud to regularly host enrichment activities that promote our specialist ethos as a Science and Engineering school. We have decided to split up the activities this year into a Science Week and a Design Technology /Engineering Week in order to minimise disruption prior to examinations.

National Science Week runs from 6th to 13th March, however, the Drama Production is also scheduled to run during that week. We have organised one Science enrichment activity only for each of Years 7 to 10 that will take place around this time.

Activities arranged for Science Week:

Date	Year Group	Activity
Friday 6 March 2009	10	CSI Workshop
Tuesday 17 March 2009	9	The Enigma Project
Wednesday 18 March 2009	7	Trip to Colchester Zoo
Friday 20 March 2009	8	Starchasers Rocket and Cosmic Chemistry
Friday 20 March 2009	Primary Schools	Primary Science Fair
Saturday 21 March 2009	Parents and Local Community	Starchasers Rocket and Cosmic Chemistry

Year 13 Biologists will also undertake an enrichment activity on Tuesday 10 March 2009.

We will also be hosting a Community Event on the morning of Saturday 21 March 2009 - Starchasers Rocket - and we would welcome your support by bringing along friends and family to this event. We will have a real rocket on site, along with a Propulsion Lab talk. Our Year 8 girls loved this event last year, so now it's your chance to experience some 'big boys' toys'! Please contact Maria Shaw at the school on 01702 476026 or st-maria.shaw@whsg.info to book. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis so call now.

We will also be organising an Engineering Week during National Design Technology Week which occurs in June (from 22nd to 26th), further details to follow.

Mrs Bamber
Assistant Headteacher



Dear Parents and Students

Each year we are required to contact parents and students of the school to let you know the way in which data provided to the school is then shared with the Local Authorities, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and to agencies that are prescribed by law such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Learning and Skills Council and also the way in which data is provided to Connexions services providers.

Earlier this term a document explaining this called "The Fair Processing Notice" was sent out to parents and students; it is also on the school's website under the section "FP Notice".

I am sure that the vast majority of pupils and their parents will have no concerns about the data which is held but both parents and students have the right under the Data Protection Act to access any personal data held on them. Should it be necessary, the Fair Processing Notice provides information on how you can access this personal data to ensure it is correct.

Dr Paul Hayman
Headteacher



THE CHINESE SPEAKING COMPETITION FINAL

Anika Patel, who is in Year 10, took part in the preliminary stages of the Chinese speaking competition sponsored by the British Council and HSBC in London last December. Because of her exceptional performance, she has been selected by the judges on the panel to participate in the competition final on Thursday 26 February 2009. We wish her every success at this event.

From: Mr Tsang



VIDEO CONFERENCING



In December last year, a large number of Year 9 students took part in three separate video conferences with Reed Middle School and Dowagiac Middle School in Michigan, in the United States.

Our students split into groups and prepared presentations on the topics of carbon emissions and water.

They also took the opportunity to show their US colleagues pictures of the school, the town and the school uniform which was a particular point of curiosity for the American students.



As a finale our students gave a rousing rendition of "God Save the Queen" which was replied to in good spirit by the American national anthem. We agreed to stay in touch and will endeavour to organise such video conferences at more regular intervals in the future.

From: Mr E Tsang



Getting to grips with IT

Whether you are thinking of a career move or just want to move ahead with the times, this course is for YOU.



Come along to Westcliff High School for Girls and be part of a friendly group, where we will nurture your I.T. skills. A variety of skills will be developed, tailored to your needs and confidence levels.

For example:

- Use a spreadsheet to manage your finances;
- Learn desk top publishing skills and impress your friends with cards and posters;
- Produce a presentation;
- Use email and picture editing packages;
- Embarrass the kids ... get your own Facebook profile.

We only ask for a small commitment fee of £10.00.

The course will begin on Thursday 16 April 2009 and will run for 12 weeks (excluding half term) from 4.00 pm until 5.30 pm.

Unsure? We will run a short taster session on Thursday 2 April from 4.00 pm until 5.30 pm.

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To enroll, please complete and return the following slip to:

Maria Shaw
 Science and Engineering Administrator
 Westcliff High School for Girls
 Kenilworth Gardens
 Westcliff On Sea
 Essex
 SS0 OBS

Name

Address

.....

Contact Telephone Number

Please tick the boxes that best fit what you would like to learn:



Word Processing (Basic)		Word Processing (Intermediate)	
Spreadsheets (Basic)		Spreadsheets (Intermediate)	
Mouse and keyboard skills		Surfing the Internet	
Using email systems		Social Networking e.g. Facebook	
Managing your digital photos		Making montage videos with music	
Presentation Skills		Desk Top Publishing	

FORTHCOMING COMMUNITY EVENT – BOOK NOW!

Blast off!



In March WHSG will again be hosting a Starchaser event.

Starchaser is Britain's only commercial rocket R&D Company, working towards the creation of a totally reusable rocket system that can be used to safely launch tourists into space. Along the way, they aim to 'enthuse and inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers and astronauts'.

In 1996 the team launched a 6 metre rocket called Starchaser 2, which made international headlines as it soared into the record books. In 2001, the company launched its Nova 1 rocket which, at 11 metres in length qualified as the biggest rocket ever flown from the UK mainland.

In 2009 Starchaser will go one step further with the launch of NOVA 2, an astronaut rated rocket that will be the biggest of its kind ever built and flown in Europe.

The Starchaser Educational Outreach Programme is recognised as a truly unique and inspirational programme and their visit last year was such a hit with our students that we have decided to extend an invitation to include the whole family. From 10.00 on Saturday 21st March the rocket will be available to view at the front of the school and you will have the opportunity to talk with a Starchaser team member.



We are also able to offer 60 places for the Propulsion Lab show; with demonstrations, videos and activities on the theme of propulsion. Places will be available on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Please contact Mrs. Maria Shaw at the school (ext 249; e-mail: st-maria.shaw@whsg.info) to indicate your interest and leave your contact details.

WHSG PTA NEWS

For more details see www.whsg.info/pta.html



Every 2nd Sunday in Month

Next dates:

Sunday 8th February 6.30am - Noon

Sunday 8th March 6.30am - Noon

Sunday 12th April 6.30am - Noon

Cars £6 and Vans £8.
No pre-booking required.

WHSG PTA 100 CLUB

PLEASE RENEW

or

JOIN NOW

Enter 12 monthly prize draws with a chance to win one of three money prizes. So why not try your luck - pay £20 per year per number and you might be the next winner.

Pay on www.parentpay.com. For more info go to www.whsg.info/pta.html

All profits go to the WHSG PTA funds.

Future Dates



Quiz Night	14 March
Summer Ball	4 July
Flava Disco	12 July
Summer Lunch	15 July

We are always looking for new ideas for our fundraising and raffle prizes for our events.

Please contact petra.bromfield@talk21.com

And last but not least:
All proceeds go to the PTA funds. Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!

WHSG PTA IS LAISING WITH WHSB PA Ladies' Pampering Night / Craft Fair
5th March 2009, 7.30pm, WHSB Main Hall

Ticket price £8 includes £5 voucher, raffle ticket & complimentary drink.

Tickets available from WHSB Finance Dept. or email petra.bromfield@talk21.com or buy on the Night.

This Newsletter is intended for the sole use of students and parents of Westcliff High School for Girls. We very much hope that others will enjoy the opportunity to read it and learn about the activities at our school, but it may not be further distributed or reproduced in whole or in part in any way without the permission of the Headteacher.