

St mark's news

Issue 1

oct 2008

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome to the first 'St Mark's News'; our half termly newsletter to you, our parents.

This has been a busy but exciting half term for us all; full of hard work, action and developing the potential of our students.

We opened the year with a welcome service for our new Year 7 students led by Reverend Stephen Coulson. This was a lovely start to the school year.



All students lit their own peace candle representing each individual life and uniting us as a community. We are pleased to say that we are fully subscribed in Year 7 and now hold a waiting list for entry to St Mark's.

Involving parents

Our first coffee morning for parents took place on 25.09.08. A small number of parents joined us and it was a very useful and helpful morning offering the opportunity to get to meet the new leadership and other parents. We shared our ideas and asked parents for their input on two main issues:

1. How can we be the Academy you want us to be?
2. How can we involve you as parents?

There was an exciting discussion with a lot of input. The top 5 responses from parents for question one were:

- Ensure safety, wellbeing & discipline of children, with

particular emphasis on break and lunch and developing and anti-bullying policy

- More focus on encouraging children to respect each others differences
- Develop future good relationships between children, staff & home – giving contact points for parents

- Encourage each child's abilities to be the best they can be
- Strong, firm line to be taken on poor behaviour

The top 5 responses for question two were:

- Parents evenings that enable us to talk to all the teachers who teach our child not just one person
- Make coffee mornings a regular occurrence
- Parent workshops on 'how to help my child'. Keep parents informed by regular communication between school and home
- How do we know how well the school is doing?

Some of these issues are addressed in this Newsletter; other issues will be developed on over the next half term. If you have a view on anything to do with the Academy, or would just like to meet with other parents and hear what is going on, please join us at our next Coffee Morning on Wednesday 26th November at 9.30am.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visit St Mark's

On 23rd & 24th September St Mark's had an HMI monitoring Inspection. As an Academy we do not have Ofsted inspectors during the first 3 years, monitoring visit from HMI. This HMI visit was a follow up from the first Meeting in November 2007

The report identified the development areas and recognised that change is already occurring and that we are working together to raise standards for all our students. The key areas for work are To improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards across the Academy. Where good practice exists we will share it, where Practice needs to be strengthened we will put in immediate support. Last year the best practice was seen in Science with 61% gaining A* - C at GCSE, Art 89% and Music 93%

- To ensure that progress is monitored effectively with students being clear about their progress, the levels they are working at and how they can improve

- To ensure that the satisfactory and good behaviour demonstrated in lessons is carried over into corridor behaviour and that all students and staff take a responsibility for this

- To ensure that the Governing body challenges and supports the Academy in making these improvements.

Key areas where positive comments are made

- Students are articulate, confident and feel a sense of commitment to improving the Academy and its reputation in the local community. They have a clear understanding of what has improved and what needs to be done.

- The new Leadership has a clear understanding of the Academy's strengths and weaknesses and has the confidence of staff and students.

- The Academy has an accurate picture of teaching and learning and is taking steps to address any issues.

- The new leadership is forming a powerful and effective team that

will be working to impact on standards and achievements at all levels.

Change the Academy's Specialism

Thank you to all those parents who responded to our consultation to change the Academy's specialism to Science & Performing Arts. To date the responses have been overwhelmingly supportive. In our next issue of St Mark's News we will share with parents developments in this area.

Working together

We have held three specific events for parents this term aimed at raising achievement and working together to support your child.

- Year 10 parents were invited to share our expectations for GCSE's and to gain the parents resources and tools to help their child succeed at KS4.
- Year 11 parents attended an evening to involve them in working together with their child to plan for success in completing coursework and to understand the requirements for the GCSE exams next Summer. Parents left with a free pack of resources and tips on how to support their child.
- Year 7 parents came to a transition evening where they were shown the requirements for key Stage 3 and some of the ways in which parents could support their child. Parents had the opportunity to meet with the Form Tutor and Head Of Year and were given a free DVD on practical ways in which parents can support their child at secondary school.

Over 200 parents attended these events, thank all who supported us. The role of all our parents in supporting their child is vital; and Together we can work to see every child reach their potential. These events gave parents tools, tips and resources to share at home.

Coming Up

Thursday

- 20.11.08 Years 7 – 9 Information Evening on Internet safety

And finally

When we started this new Academic year the theme shared with all our students was 'Hope'. I believe there is amazing potential within all our students and that every child is a unique, valued and cherished individual. Together we make up the community of St Mark's.

I would like to close my message to parents with the verse we shared at the start of the Autumn term:

'for I know the thoughts that I think towards you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope' Jeremiah 29:11

St Mark's is moving forward and we have many hopes for the future, Every student is part of our community and together we believe our hopes will be realised and all our students will achieve their full potential.

PE Department

Boy's Rugby

The Year 9 rugby team has made a good start to their season with some eye catching wins. In the season's first tournament the team finished second overall after recording the following results:

V Sutton Grammar – won 10 – 0
V Harris Academy – won 17-0
V Carshalton Boys – won 19-0
V Cheam – lost 12 -7

A great start to the season lads – well done.

Girls Football

The Year 8 and 9 girls' football teams went to the first Raynes Park High School 7 a side

tournament. Both teams competed really well but just failed to reach their finals due to lack of goals. The girls learned a lot from their first set of games and will be much better prepared next time around. Well done.

Boys Football

The year 10 and 11 football teams have played their first league matches against local rivals Harris Academy. Both matches were played in a great spirit with neither side wanting to concede goals. After tense starts St Marks settled much better than Harris and opened the scoring in both games. At the final whistle the results were as followed:

Year 10 won 8 – 3
Year 11 won 6 – 2

A fantastic start to the season and well done to everyone that played.

Wimbledon Tennis

29 pupils from years 8 +9 were invited to go to Wimbledon for a day of coaching delivered by the LTA's senior coach. Pupils spent the morning learning about the basic skills needed to play competitive tennis and played lots of small games. After lunch the pupils were then treated to a VIP tour of the Wimbledon grounds going onto the number 1 court and watching the Austria team practice before their Davis Cup match against Britain. Things got even better when the pupils were taken Centre Court as the British team were practicing and as we were watching both Jamie and Andy Murray walked past and gave all pupils a 'high 5'. A great day was had by all many new skills were learned by the pupils.

Yours in Sport

Mr Cholewa

MFL



September got off to a racing start in MFL. On Friday 26th we staged a RANGE of events for the national 'Languages Day'. Over the summer holidays the staff invited in a number of guest speakers to talk to all our Year Groups. The day started with all Year 7s in the hall for a talk by two serving members of the British Army. They were given a hugely enthusiastic round of applause. What amazed the Year 7s was the fact that the soldiers had each learned to speak five languages fluently including Chinese and Arabic. And could they demonstrate? – yes they could! How did they learn these phenomenal skills? The soldiers told us that they learn languages for eight hours every day.....We also had a wonderful demonstration by pupils from Stanford Primary School. Year 7s had to guess which languages they were speaking. It was quite difficult recognising the Indian dialects! Lots of prizes were given out for the correct answers.

The day became more serious as Year 9 were given a presentation by Ed-Excel, one of the most important G.C.S.E examination Boards. Val Bennet, the Ed-excel Manager told Year 9s how useful an MFL G.C.S.E qualification can be for job prospects and how the new G.C.S.Es will be very different. Next year pupils will be able to take a G.C.S.E in a language which only has Speaking and Listening components – no writing or reading!

Other highlights included a talk by Monsieur Ouvradou who talked

about his travels in French-speaking countries and Atlas Translations, who gave us information about careers in translation and interpreting. Last but not least a number of pupils did some drama sketches in their native language. The 'A' Level German group stole the day with a sketch in fluent German. It was obviously a bank robbery but did any one catch what they were saying?!!

Moving ahead we are already starting to organise a Year 7 French trip for later in the year so watch this space!

Music Department

New Student Leadership Initiatives from the Music Department

6th Form Music students teaching Year 7 instrumental lessons
Last year, the four students in Year 12 taught instrumental lessons to Year 7s. The project was a great success particularly in building relationships across the school, and the Year 12s really developed their leadership, organisation and communication skills, while the Year 7s benefited from learning some new musical skills. The new Year 12 and 13 Music students will be carrying on this tuition with the new Year 7s. Any students who are interested should see Miss Douse. The 6th formers can offer lessons in electric/acoustic guitar, bass guitar, drum kit, voice, clarinet, saxophone and Beat-boxing.

Bronze Arts Award

Congratulations to all the students in Year 10 who were successful in passing their Bronze Arts Award at the end of Year 9! To obtain their Awards, all students had to take part in four different Arts activities across their Music and Drama lessons. The first involved sharing and teaching their Arts skills to other students, the second asked them to review live Arts events and share these reviews with their peers, they also had to research the Arts heroes and heroines and create a

project and lastly, each class had to take sole charge of organising their own class concert. Students said they had developed their self-confidence, teamwork, independent learning, communication skills and sense of responsibility by taking part.

Step into Dance

The Step into Dance project continues to run this year with our visiting dance teacher working on developing Street Dance routines with Year 11s and a Year 9 Enrichment group. If you are in Year 9 or Year 11 and interested in joining the Step into Dance programme, please see Miss Douse or Miss Nichols. Students are now preparing for a performance at the Christmas Concert.

Christmas Concert 2008

Preparations for the Expressive Arts' Christmas Concert are underway. We can look forward to performances from the Samba Band, Choir, House Band, Year 12 BTec Band, Gifted and Talented Drama Group, Step into Dance and lots of solo and ensemble musical and dramatic performances. Several of the Silver and Gold Arts Award groups will be stage-managing the event as part of their Arts challenge and we will be inviting members of the local community to come and see all the fantastic work that goes on in the Expressive Arts department.

By Miss O. Douse, Head of Expressive Arts

Get Ready to Rock!

Year 13 Music students are currently planning to promote their own gig as part of their BTEC National Certificate in Music course in mid-February 2009. The gig will include sets by Sometimes They Comeback, Last Enemy and Blood

Rebellion. The gig will be held in a local rock venue and as part of the BTEC course, students have to take on all of the business, organisational and leadership roles and hire the venue themselves. If you are interested in getting tickets for the event, please see either Terry, Adam, Marcus or Niall to enquire.



By Terry Dennison, Adam Humphreys, Marcus Kallmeier and Niall Morrissey.

HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT



On Friday 3rd of October

The history candidates of 2009 set off for a trip to the museum that holds the ultimate history of conflicts that shook the Eastern and Western worlds.

History students of year 11 visited the Imperial War Museum to support their learning on the topics that include; Britain in the Second World War, the Holocaust and the Cold War. The visit helped us to face the

reality of the events using the artefacts that were on exhibition, this was an opportunity we wouldn't get in class.

The Holocaust was the exhibition that took the hearts of most as the artefacts displayed were the ones used in the actual event, for example, one of the floorings in this section was made from one of the carriers used to transport the Jews to the concentration camps. Some of the other artefacts were the prisoners' uniforms from the concentrations camps where they were killed in gas chambers. Other artefacts included a young child's shoe which we were told to study as a way to help us to one would analyse other artefacts.

The Museum Educational Team was of help as we went through the different sections of the conflicts that have happened since 1945. We enhanced our learning of the events that led to Cold War at the end of World War Two; the reasons why the superpowers at the time, the USA and the USSR fell out after being allies during the war; how the events of the Cold War led to the Arms Race and the Space Race. We were able to learn more about the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for the Western countries (capitalists) and the Warsaw Pact for the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe (communists). In this section we saw which type of air crafts and automobiles they used.

This visit was educational but we were given time to explore the exhibitions on our own to reflect on how the civilians in that period would have felt, and what impact it has had on the world we live in today.

This is a journey worth taking for both educational and leisure purposes.

Dates for your diary

- 03.11.08 All students return at 8.30am
- 20.11.08 Information evening for parents of students in Years 7-9 'Internet Safety' 7.00-8.00pm
- 24.11.08 INSET DAY school closed for students
- 26.11.08 Coffee Morning with Miss Holland – 9.30am
- 27.11.08 - 10.12.08 yr 11 Mock exams
- 04.12.08 Year 8 Parents Evening. An opportunity to discuss progress with all subject staff who teach your child
- 11.12.08 Christmas Concert
- 15.12.08 - 17.12.08 Yr 9 Mock exams
- 19.12.08 Last day of Autumn Term
- 06.01.09 Spring Term starts for all students – 8.30am