

Bredon News



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Autumn Term 2006

Strengthening our academic performance

Principally Speaking by David Keyte

Bredon is well-known for being a friendly place where individuals matter - justifiably so in my opinion. That is something I am proud of; indeed I believe it is one of the cornerstones of our success.

However, for any school, being a friendly place is, on its own, not enough. We have a responsibility as educators to stretch children so that they make the most of their abilities and gain the qualifications they need for the next stage in life's journey.

For this reason, since her arrival at Bredon School in September 2004, our Vice Principal, Sue Webb, has been working progressively with the Senior Management Team to strengthen academic standards throughout the school. This has involved closer monitoring of children's performance at all ages - after all, you cannot really tell how a pupil has progressed unless you know that child's starting point. There have also been more targets set for individual children. And, as part of a focus on GCSE attainment, senior teachers now mentor certain Year 11 pupils to ensure they achieve the best grades possible. I am delighted to say that all this hard work is now definitely bearing fruit.

Our GCSE results improved sharply this summer: 41% of pupils achieved the benchmark five GCSE A*-C grades (or the non-GCSE equivalent) this summer, compared to 22% the previous year.

Looking at the breakdown of these figures, children with Special Educational Needs achieved 33% - a most encouraging set of results. GCSE results for the other children were just as impressive, with the proportion achieving five A*-C grades up from 32% in 2005 to 50% this year.

While it is wise not to attach too much importance to a single year's results, these are definitely an encouraging sign that the school is moving in the right direction and is now a more academically rigorous environment for all children, no matter what their abilities.

Following the successful inspection of our boarding arrangements earlier this year, 2007 will probably see our first academic inspection since our previous, positive report in 2002 from the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Partly as a result of the work done by Mrs Webb and the team, I am confident the inspectors will find that Bredon School has gone from strength to strength.



Year 6 have been learning about Picasso and cubism. Here are interpretations by Sam Livingston [left] and Alasdair Dron of a woman's face.

• See p3 for more junior news

Views from the Inside

Will Bowen

I'm Will Bowen. I am in Year 11 and am a full boarder with a study bedroom in Stable House. I've been at Bredon four years. Before I came here, I was in Kuwait and went to a big school - the equivalent of a state school in Britain - so I like it at Bredon because it's small and there are no faces you don't know.

I came to Bredon originally because I couldn't really keep up in a big class and I needed some more help, more one-on-one work. My parents found the school on the internet and I came for a taster.

I love sport and I have been in the school team for hockey. I also enjoy the activities at the weekend, when they do loads of football and indoor activities like cookery. I've got my bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award and am now doing silver. Last year, I took French GCSE a year early and got an A*. I used to live in Paris from the age of four to eight and I went to a French school, but doing the GCSE was a struggle because I had forgotten most of the spelling and grammar! This year, I am doing another six GCSEs.

Eventually, I would like to work in a outdoor activity centre.



Alice Pollard

My name is Alice Pollard and I'm 14-years-old and in Year 10. I came to Bredon because my last school only went up to 13.

I'm a weekly boarder, which means I get to stay with my friends in the week, and at weekends I go home to see my family in Elkington in Northamptonshire - so I've got the best of both worlds.

I've got a sister, Sarah, who goes to a day school, but I wouldn't want to go there because there's not much sport. I'm not brilliant at sport, but I really enjoy it. I'm in the first team for hockey.

It's easy to make friends here and I've got a lot in common with the other girls. We all like make-up and we've got similar personalities. When I go home at weekends, I miss everybody so we spend loads of time on the phone!

Spanish is my favourite subject. We don't just learn the language, but about the culture as well. We went on a trip during the half-term holiday to Candelario, where we spoke Spanish to local students and saw some cathedrals.

My favourite teacher is Miss Loveridge, who teaches me English. We're studying *Romeo and Juliet* and also writing a speech about something we feel strongly about. I'm writing about fox-hunting. It's been a way of life for many years and I sometimes go fox-hunting. My grandad's a farmer and some of his animals get killed by foxes.

When I leave school I want to be a lawyer. I know it means I'll have to work hard for my exams.

A home from home

Sixth-formers have been enjoying life in the comfortable surroundings of Spaniards Cottage this term. The cosy cottage is serving as a temporary base until completion of the new building, which will feature a purpose-built Sixth Form Centre.

With two lounges and a kitchen, it allows sixth-formers to relax and study together. It is fully furnished and features wireless internet access. Much of the work to adapt the building for Sixth Form use has been done by Head Girl Mel Hodgkins, Head Boy Jaivin Shah and fellow student Robert Kennedy.

"The Sixth Form is an important time for any student, so we felt it was important that our sixth-formers had good quality accommodation that they could call their own," said Principal Mr Keyte.

- Spaniards Cottage is named after a Spanish couple, Manolo and Maria, who worked at the school as factotums during the 1960s.



News in Brief

Bredon School pioneers new e-GCSE

Pupils at Bredon School have started studying towards the first-ever GCSE to be assessed and tested entirely online. Nine students in Year 10 are taking the two-year e-GCSE in Environmental and Land-based Science course, which is based at the school farm.

Farm Manager Charlie Slatter said: "Students will be able to include photos or video clips showing they have mastered practical skills, such as preparing animals for agricultural shows, growing plants or driving a tractor - so this is a sensible use of technology, not a gimmick." Such courses, which combine practical and academic skills, are ideal for many Bredon pupils, added Mr Slatter.

High fliers

The school this term received a certificate from the local Air Ambulance in recognition of the £413 raised earlier in the year by the annual sponsored basketball event organised by Head of Girls' Sport Conryn Abbott.

The signs are good for new Business Enterprise competition

Bredon School's new Business Enterprise competition gives sixth-formers the opportunity to learn essential business skills in an exciting way. Three teams are battling it out this school year to see who can succeed in a real business environment.

Each team has been given a budget to spend and must work together to design and sell products and, hopefully, to generate a profit.



Principal David Keyte, who is overseeing the competition, said: "It's good to learn about business in lessons - and Business Studies is a popular option in our Sixth Form - but it's even better if students can reinforce those lessons by actually running a business for themselves."

All the sixth-formers have been encouraged to get involved in Business Enterprise. "This competition will be

valuable even for students who are not taking Business Studies. It develops a whole range of skills, including leadership, teamwork, planning, attention to detail and financial responsibility," added Mr Keyte.

Early indications are that *Signs 4 U*, a team led by Head Boy Jaivin Shah (Managing Director) and Ben Foster-Smith (Production Manager) has got off to a flying start. The team are taking advantage of the school's new £17,000 CNC router [pictured] to produce wooden signs, which they plan to sell at local events and the school's May Fair. And in a truly entrepreneurial move, they persuaded workmen installing new fencing along the M50 motorway to give them the old oak posts, which they are selling as firewood.

The other teams, *Why Not?* and *Country and Urban*, are involved in projects including film nights and cake-selling



From poppies to Picasso

It has been an action-packed term for the juniors at Bredon School.

Pupil numbers for Years 3-6 have risen to 37, with so many children in Year 6 that two classes are being run for this age group.

Highlights of the term have included a visit to Avoncroft Museum of Historical Buildings at Bromsgrove, where pupils became time-travellers to a world before computers and mobile phones. Their task for the day was to build a timber-framed structure filled with wattle and daub in the style of a merchant's house.

Year 6 enjoyed studying cubism, giving their own interpretation of Picasso's face of a woman. Equally colourful were the art lessons spent producing 'stained glass' windows.

Halloween inspired some spooky food recipes - such as Year 6 boy Callum Short's starter of Devil'd Goats' Eyeballs. Class 3/4 took gentler inspiration, writing and illustrating funny verses about animals in the style of Spike Milligan and penning stories based on Jill Murphy's book, *A Quiet Night In*.

Remembrance Day was marked by children and staff making poppies and crosses marked with their own memories of loved ones no longer with us.

Head of Lower School Mrs Lorraine Pates said: "The juniors have worked hard and played hard this term. Our Christmas Festival was a fitting way to mark the end of a great 2006."



Teacher Profile - Mrs Jane Merchant



When Jane Merchant spotted an advertisement in her local paper for a post at Bredon, it seemed like fate. With the village school she was working in facing an uncertain future, she felt the job was meant for her.

Mrs Merchant has been teaching Years 3 and 4 at Bredon since September 2006. "It's very different from my old job," she explains. "At my previous school there were just 36 children and three staff. It's lovely being among so many more people, and everyone's been incredibly helpful."

When she first arrived she was struck by the good atmosphere. "All the way through Bredon there's a positive attitude. And the environment is every child's dream, with so many fields and so much space," she says.

Mrs Merchant has also taught at secondary and middle schools, but gets the most pleasure from her current role: "I enjoy the unpredictability of teaching the little ones. You're never sure what they will

say or do next. It's a challenge in so many different ways."

Her next ambition is to complete her Master's degree in Inclusive Education, which looks at bringing children with special needs into the same educational environment as other children - something she believes works very well at Bredon. "I began the Masters degree because my son, Paul, who's now 14, is dyslexic and I wanted to find out more," she says.

She has two other children, 17-year-old Kirsty and Gemma, 20, and is now finding more time to enjoy family life. "The work/life balance is much better than in my previous job - it's like a big family. My husband, Phil, says I smile a lot more!"

Point proven!

Old Bredonian Alastair Ralph [pictured in yellow silks] has enjoyed a hugely successful first year in point-to-point racing. Alastair (1996-2004), who was Head Boy in his final year at Bredon, took first place at the North Herefordshire Hunt meeting on Un-jour-à-Vassy and then went on to win five more races, four on Un-jour-à-Vassy and one on Spi Law. His record makes him the joint-third most successful novice rider nationally.

He is now preparing for the new season by gaining riding experience at the Somerset stables of top trainer Paul Nicholls.

• Bredon's horse-riding activity takes place at the farm owned by Alastair's parents in Leigh Sinton, near Malvern. "We have 200 acres, as well as an indoor and outdoor manège, so there is plenty of room for everyone," says Alastair's mother, Mrs Diana Ralph. Bredon's keen equestrians include Year 6 pupil Issy Williams, shown here with a selection of her trophies, won outside school.



News in Brief - OB and PA latest

Old Bredonians Online

Work is now underway on a new website for the Old Bredonians. The website, which will be at www.oldbredonians.org, will provide news of OB events and will keep former pupils up-to-date with developments at the school. It will also include a forum area, where former pupils can chat together. The site, which is being developed by the Old Bredonians committee with support from the school, is due to be completed during the Spring Term.

In the picture

Old Bredonian and entrepreneur Jonathan Merricks (1985-87) has offered to donate a valuable plasma screen television for the new Sixth Form Centre. Mr Merricks was the Guest of Honour at the 2005 Founder's Day and has achieved business success in various fields, ranging from interior design to IT.

Principal David Keyte said: "Jonathan is a good friend of Bredon School, which gave him a great deal of help with his dyslexia. We are very grateful for this generous gift."

PA news

Bredon School Parents' Association continues to provide strong support, funding the entertainer and disco at the Lower School's end-of-term event. Over the rest of this school year, the PA will be liaising with staff to decide on the best use of the £8,000 it has raised.