



## Getting the Balance Right

*Principally Speaking by David Keyte*

I firmly believe that one of the keys to Bredon School's success is our emphasis on getting the balance right.

We try to bring balance into every area of school life, because we recognise that, like all of us, children are complex human beings who need a balanced approach to help them succeed.

Our teachers will, on the one hand, gently encourage children who may be lacking confidence and, on the other, give a firm push to pupils who show signs of being lazy and failing to fulfil their potential. Of course, part of the professional skill of teachers is to understand children as individuals and to know which approach is the right one for a child at any given time.

Even when the school was founded back in 1962, our founder, Lt-Col Sharp, intuitively understood that balance was essential. Faced with many children who had previously struggled at other schools, the Founder and his colleagues did not focus on what these children could not achieve. Instead they found out what they were good at, whether that was academic lessons, sport or practical subjects. They thus rapidly re-built self-esteem in children who had been badly damaged by past discouragements.

Much has changed in the intervening years. We now have a greater understanding of the reasons *why* some children struggle, with the recognition of Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia being one good example of this. Nevertheless, Lt-Col Sharp's balanced, holistic approach remains a fundamental element in what makes Bredon School so special.

### A balanced community

Balance is not just about individuals. Bredon is not merely a collection of buildings, students and staff: we are a community. As such, we have to be careful to maintain the community's balance.

We have always welcomed overseas children: their presence broadens the horizons of British pupils, helping them to learn to respect and value other cultures. Indeed, I would presently like to see a slight increase in the proportion of overseas pupils on our school roll. But, as some independent schools have found out to their cost, there is a danger in having too many overseas students. Cliques can form, which can easily cause tension among the pupils.

Similarly, schools with no day pupils can easily become inward-looking and arrogant, while those with no boarders tend to miss out on opportunities because they are too parochial. Bredon's status as both a day and boarding school helps ensure ours is a balanced community.

### Avoiding others' mistakes

A few years ago, many independent schools made the mistake of thinking that the key to future success was simply to plough money into creating an ever-increasing list of facilities. Unfortunately, the result was that fees became unaffordable for many families.

At Bredon, we resisted this trend because we realised that what parents were really interested in was knowing that their child was happy and achieving all that he or she could. Of course, we have continued to invest in facilities: our new building currently under

construction is a clear example of that. But ultimately we believe that children are more important than facilities.

Finally, one of the areas that makes Bredon School very unusual is our balance between children with Special Educational Needs and those without. We are not a Special School, but neither are we just a typical independent school paying mere lip-service to helping children with dyslexia and other needs.

Under the leadership of our Vice Principal, Sue Webb, our Access Centre staff provide genuinely expert help and guidance for a substantial minority of our pupils. Yet at the same time, other pupils - including the brothers and sisters of children with Specific Learning Difficulties - can enjoy a full curriculum and all the opportunities they would have at other schools.

It is all too easy for schools to get out of kilter, but at Bredon School, we understand the importance of getting the balance right and are committed to achieving this.



*Conservation: Will Bowen, Matt Griffin, James Pine, Tom Howells and Daniel Hughes beneath two new bird boxes in Bredon School's newly-developed 'Eco Area'. Turn to p3*

## Views from the Inside



### Abi Sylvester-Kilroy

I'm Tabitha Sylvester-Kilroy, but I like to be known as Abi. I'm 10 years old and in Year 6. I've been here for two terms as a weekly boarder, which is fine because I still like to go home for weekends. Before I came to Bredon, I went to Holme Court in Bedfordshire, which specialises in dyslexia.

I chose Bredon because I like the grounds and the landscapes. My favourite subject is Art, and when I'm older I'd like

to study Art History. Since I've been here, we've been doing mirror-drawing, studying Picasso and we made patches for the Pied Piper coat for the catwalk, which was great fun. I like all the teachers; Mr McKerr is really funny and Mrs Pates is very enthusiastic and encouraging.

I share a room with five other girls; we all get on well and bedtime is about the same as at home, so that's all right. I was worried I'd have to go to bed much earlier!

### Leon Li

My name's Leon Li, I'm 18 years old and live in Hong Kong, where my mother is a policewoman. I'm in Year 12 and have been at Bredon for two terms.

Before I came here, I was at Wycliffe College [near Stroud, Gloucestershire], but I didn't really get on with one of the Housemasters and felt I was ready for a change. I chose Bredon because I could do the courses I wanted and for the wide choice of sport. I feel that here I get more respect, because Mr Birbeck and Mr Allison treat me more like an adult than a child. I've found it very easy to make friends at Bredon; the atmosphere is quite relaxed and friendly.

I'm in the basketball team. We've lost two games and won one - I scored the last point that won us the game, and that was a *really* good feeling.

I go home at Christmas and in the summer. I spend all my other holidays with my sister Pappi - she's 21 and at university in Sheffield.

I'm taking Business Studies, Art and General Science and a Maths GCSE, and I would like to go on to university in the UK to do Business Management and Media Studies.



## Strutting Their Stuff



This term's Catwalk Show was very successful, with children enjoying both the preparation and the event itself. The show was well supported by parents, who enjoyed a feast of creations, ranging from elaborate hats to the centrepiece carnival-themed dress. The juniors had great fun designing and making patches, which were combined to make a Pied Piper coat.



## News in Brief

### Fun in Learning

Year 6 students have been developing their own giant board games as part of a module on *Writing to Instruct and Explain*. "The children were very enthusiastic about the project and went to Mr Davies to ask for words they could include in the spelling game," said class teacher Liz Dunne. They



also had to use their Design Technology and ICT skills, thus covering a wide range of disciplines while also having fun. As part of the evaluation, they tried the games out on some of the Year 5 pupils.

### Giving Something Back

The Sixth Form Dinner was notable this year for the presence of three Old Bredonians. Sam Oldfield, Jonathan Bishop and Leila Tooley all returned to share their experiences with current students. All three mentioned how useful the school's annual *Interview Exercise* had been in helping them prepare for the world of work.

### Lunar Eclipse

Nearly 40 boarders and boarding staff braved the cold to witness the rare phenomenon of a lunar eclipse. Hot chocolate was provided to keep everyone warm - and apart from a couple of students who sneaked back inside! - everyone got a great view of the red moon.



Binoculars were provided and several students took photographs - this image was provided by James Pine from Year 11.

### Dates for your Diary

In a change from previous years, Bredon School's Summer Term Open Day will NOT be held on the same day as the May Fete this year. The Fete, with a wide range of stalls and other attractions, will take place on Monday 7 May from 1 pm. The Open Day is on Saturday 19 May between 10 am and 12. The traditional highlight of the summer term, Founder's Day, has been arranged for Thursday 5 July.

## Conservation and Education hand-in-hand at Bredon

As the Government looks at ways of introducing more 'outdoor education' in schools across the UK\*, Bredon School is at the forefront of developments. In fact, ever since it opened nearly 45 years ago, the school has continually looked for opportunities to make the most of its 84-acre grounds and working farm.

With society's enthusiasm for conservation on the increase, Bredon has this year set aside part of the grounds for a group of students to develop an 'Eco Area' as they work towards the John Muir Award, an international environmental award.

"I've been very impressed with how hard the youngsters have worked, and how much they have enjoyed the project," said Principal David Keyte. "We have long recognised the educational, health and social benefits of outdoor education. This seemed an ideal opportunity to combine that with our students' very real concern for the environment."

The John Muir Award is a scheme focused on wild places, which encourages the discovery and conservation of natural habitats. There are three levels of the award. At Bredon, students in Year 9 are currently working towards Level 1, while five members of Year 11 are nearing completion of Levels 2 and 3. Under the guidance of Houseparent Simon Birbeck, Year 11 pupils Will Bowen, Matt Griffin, James Pine, Tom Howells and Daniel Hughes have been clearing paths, helping to erect reed fences, establishing a pond area and putting up bird boxes and feeders.

They have developed a 'mini-beasts' paradise, which includes logs for woodlice and a ladybird hibernation box (pictured with Daniel Hughes).

"We're only at the beginning," said James Pine. "At the moment it



looks quite bare, especially round the pond, but conservation is about the long term: you've just got to have the imagination to see how it will be in a year or 10 years' time. In the future, the plan is to expand this Eco Area and have longer walks to encourage the younger children at Bredon to discover and enjoy a wild space."

\* Last winter, Education Secretary Alan Johnson launched the Government's *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* at the Natural History Museum in London. The Minister urged all schools to use the wealth of educational opportunities available both on their doorsteps and further afield to inspire and motivate every pupil. The manifesto introduced a package of measures, including the creation of an independent *Council for Learning outside the Classroom* to provide a single voice for all organisations involved in out-of-classroom education.

## Double the fun on Bredon School Farm

Bredon School is celebrating after the unusual arrival of two sets of twin South Devon calves on its farm.

Naturally enough, Spring is always a busy time on the farm, but this year, things have been a little different. "Normally we expect to be inundated with twin lambs, but it's been a funny season for us," said Farm Manager Charlie Slatter. "We've had a surprisingly high number of singleton lambs, but two sets of twin calves. You might get one set of twin calves in 10 births, but this is a first for us - nearly half our calves this Spring are twins."

In line with its status as a working farm, the school farm will keep all the heifers but make a decision about the bulls only when their quality can be seen. "Unless the bulls look particularly good for showing, we will send them off for meat," explained Mr Slatter. Bredon students exhibited animals at about a dozen agricultural shows last year and picked up several prizes. "We're hoping to add one or two more shows to the schedule this year, with our main focus on the Three Counties Show and the Royal Show at Stoneleigh."

Although lambing has been quieter this year than last, these animals have been a great source of enjoyment - particularly to the juniors who have been involved in their care. Vicky Guiding, aged eight, who comes from a farming background, said: "I feel really sorry for the lamb that was rejected by its mother. It's quite sad, but they're trying to get another sheep to adopt it, so I hope that works out."

The new polytunnel has proved a real asset this winter, especially for the students in Year 10 studying for their innovative e-GCSE course in Environmental and Land-based Science.



## Staff Profile - Mrs Louise Wood

Mrs Louise Wood, who joined the staff at Bredon School three years ago, has a huge and infectious enthusiasm for Learning Support.

She divides her hours between working with small groups of children with special educational needs and providing ICT support and help for any pupil at the school. "It's great! I'm in the privileged position of knowing every child at the school. I work quite closely with some of them; with others it's just a case of getting them on to the computer network here or helping them set up new laptops or install software."

Born in the Forest of Dean, Mrs Wood has always worked locally, originally in food research at Beechams before moving into ICT and teaching. She worked at Tewkesbury School in Learning Support for seven years before moving to Bredon. "In terms of hardware there's not much difference, but on the software side of things, we're tremendously well off at Bredon," she says. "It's largely down to Mr

Keyte's vision for the school, but we've also benefited immensely from the generosity of the Parents' Association which has

purchased state-of-the-art speech recognition software for pupils here. Being realistic, our students may not end up the best spellers in the world, but when they go into the workplace, they will know exactly how to use technology to help them overcome this."

She feels that another advantage of Bredon School is its ability to provide a flexible approach. "The emphasis here is always on the individual and identifying their needs and providing a tailored service," she added.

- Mrs Wood has been married to Fred for 27 years. He works at Chipping Campden Food Research Association, where a group of Bredon's A Level students recently visited to see how science is applied in the workplace. She has two sons: 21-year-old Dan is a policeman and Sam, aged 17, is studying for his A Levels.



Mrs Wood helps Harry Bailey solve an IT problem

## Old Bredonians - Online and On Track

Following this term's launch of the new Old Bredonians Association website at [www.ldbredonians.org](http://www.ldbredonians.org), Bredon News asked the OBA's Secretary and Website Co-ordinator, Russell Reed, about the latest developments.

**Bredon News:** What were your aims in launching the new website?

**Russell:** Essentially, the OBA exists to encourage friendships between Old Bredonians and to maintain links with the school. The website's discussion forum, news areas and photo galleries are all

designed to help that to happen.

Also, over time we have lost touch with some of our members as they have moved house or changed email addresses and telephone numbers. The website makes it easy for members to contact us and update their details.

**Bredon News:** What's next for the OBA?

**Russell:** We're looking gradually to increase the number of events we run. Resurrecting the annual cricket match next summer or restarting OBA Christmas

dinners are two possible ideas, but we really want to hear what members think, so we are hoping the website will stir up some discussion.

**Bredon News:** And are OBA events always held at the school?

**Russell:** They don't have to be. As word spreads about the website, we could see Old Bredonians using it to arrange meetings closer to where they live - perhaps a London reunion, or even one abroad.

## Active, Tired but Very Happy!

Teacher Jane Goodey's produced this diary of the Juniors' adventures on one of Bredon's popular Curriculum Enhancement Days.

"The CE Day in March found the Junior Department carrying out a variety of activities. Year 5 were presenting their English Speaking Board talks for the examiner. The rest of the Juniors spent the morning on the climbing wall and the assault course, along with a game of commandos. At morning break, some of Year 6 went to prepare for the rugby tournament that was due to start

after lunch. The rest of the group collected sticks, lit a fire and cooked their own sausages.

With the day warming up, Year 5 joined the group and they all set off on an orienteering exercise, which covered the whole school grounds. The day ended with a very tired bunch of children who had thoroughly enjoyed themselves. This included the Rugby team, who didn't win but played some of their best games this year in a three-way tournament against Berkhamstead School and St Edward's, both in Cheltenham."

