



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 11, APRIL 2008

MATHS CHALLENGE UPDATE

On 7 February the Intermediate Maths Challenge was held, which involved 72 of our top students from Years 9, 10 and 11. Special mention must go to Laurence Cook (Year 11), Nicholas Mulvey (Year 10) and Alex Medhurst (Year 9) who achieved the top scores in their respective year groups with Laurence getting best in School. Other gold winners were Paul Horgan, Fraser Elliott, Matthew Tedder, Joe Sumner, Simon Dewhurst, Liam Tedds (Year 11), Matthew Cheshire (Year 10) and Joe Kitchen (Year 9). As you can see this was an impressive haul of gold winners, our highest to date, and a testament to the breadth of mathematical talent in the School at the moment. I wish I could mention all the other certificate winners too but with 23 Silver awards and 18 Bronze awards, there are too many to mention. That is just over 70% of all participants getting an award of some description which is a fantastic achievement.

If that was not enough we have had our greatest number of pupils qualify for follow-on rounds of the challenge. Laurence's amazing score has qualified him for the Olympiad on the 13 March, a tough two hour challenge with no multiple choices, just written solutions to four problems. He is the first pupil to attempt this at TBSHS for many years as only a tiny percentage of pupils are eligible. On top of that Paul, Fraser, Matthew T, Nick, Matthew C, Alex and Joe all qualified for the Kangaroo Challenge (which is the next level down) on 24 April. We have only ever had 2 or 3 in one year do this, so to have 7 is truly remarkable—an update will follow on how these boys get on.

Mr P Dwyer

MATHS DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

Congratulations to the three half termly winners (Oliver Philcox, Zach Peters and Simon McConnell) who should be able to collect their prize money at the end of this week. Further congratulations to everyone who took part in the UKMC especially L Cook who has qualified for the highest honour and everyone else winning an award.

The Department would like to thank the Business Links Committee for their continued support of the challenges.

Mr N Chamberlain

MATHS / PHYSICS DAY GOES AIRBORNE

We are delighted to be able to announce that the Year 7 Gifted and Talented students will have the chance in mid-June to fly!! As part of our two day Maths / Physics work on airflow we will be taking students to Bedford to experience first hand (and first foot etc) a vertical wind-tunnel. In conjunction with Herts & Essex, Leventhorpe and Birchwood we will also be running workshops on Boomerangs and we hope to see students designing their own aerodynamic models (if anyone has seen the Teacher Recruitment advert, they stole the idea from us).

Mr N Chamberlain

MATHEMATICS AND GEOGRAPHY FIELD TRIP

The Maths and Geography Departments combine their considerable talents within both departments to provide a Year 7 programme that offers the students the opportunity to develop skills in planning an investigation, data collection, presentation and analysis.

The field trip to Loughton Brook, near Epping Forest, plays a central role in this programme by allowing us to teach and assess these skills whilst investigating the physical characteristics of a river environment. The Field Studies Centre provides excellent equipment and the expertise and experience of qualified field tutors.

This year we were blessed with mild weather on both days permitting the students to enjoy the exploration and gain the experience of measuring the flow of a river without getting too wet. The investigation focuses on identifying how the characteristics of Loughton Brook change with distance from its source.

My thanks go to Miss Moollan, Mr Cook, Mr Chamberlain, Mrs Cooper, Mr Dwyer, Mr Salt and Mrs Cameron-Mowat for their help and support in leading this venture.
Mr P Noble

MATHS EASTER REVISION

Congratulations to Year 11 for making a great start on their revision. Over half of Year 11s taking their GCSE Maths this year gave up two days over Easter to come into School for extra revision lessons. You could beat the School's record of over 86% A* - C at this rate. For those who did not come in - you had better start catching up!

Mr N Chamberlain

EYES IN THE BACK OF THEIR HEADS?

The Maths Department is trialing the use of Webcams in the classrooms. This is to highlight student work to the rest of the class. It has all the advantages of being immediate and obviously students sometimes find each others' work easier to understand than our (the teachers) own. The cliché of teachers having eyes behind their backs also becomes a little closer to reality!

Mr N Chamberlain

CONSORTIUM DAY

Thanks to the teachers of Birchwood, Leventhorpe, Herts & Essex and our own from TBSHS for making a great success of our consortium day. This was a joint Inset Day before half term and the Maths Departments were fortunate enough to secure great advice from both Sam Burns the County Adviser and Mark Dawes—an inspirational AST from Comberton Village College, near Cambridge. Feedback was tremendous and teachers across Bishop's Stortford are now all in a much better position to both prepare students for exams and further develop interesting teaching / learning methods. Hopefully Hockerill and St Marys will choose to join us for future events.

Mr N Chamberlain



PRIMARY MOODLE PARTNERSHIP

As a Specialist School in Maths and Computing we are continually trying to forge links with our partner primary schools in the areas of Maths and ICT. In Maths, our staff have been going into partner primary schools and teaching enrichment lessons. In ICT our technicians have been helping the primary schools with technical support issues.

In response to the Government's initiative stating that all students should have access to an online learning space by 2008, we have been working with our partner primary schools to provide them with a Virtual Learning Environment similar to our own using Moodle. This will allow students access to resources over the Internet anytime of the day or night from anywhere in the world (as long as there is the internet connection!). Work has started on designing their Moodle sites and uploading them onto our dedicated servers. During the Summer Term we will be providing the staff in the primary schools with training to help them use Moodle effectively and efficiently. This is an exciting venture and could lead to possibilities like podcasting, Primary School Radio or even Primary School TV as well as the less exciting but still essential elements of allowing students access to revision materials for their KS2 SATs!

At present we are designing sites for nine primary schools and hope to increase this over the next few years.

Mr G Gunn

ICT TRAINING

There have been developments in the School's Moodle VLE. We have been working with Hertfordshire University students over the last two terms trying to make the user interface more user friendly as well as to provide a number of online training 'videos' for different user groups. Progress has been such that by the middle of next term we hope to go live on Moodle Version 2. In addition thanks to the great efforts of Paul Ingrey, Faculty Support Assistants have received training in the use of Moodle, the hope is that they will be able to support teachers in providing valuable resources online in readiness for students' study leave revision activities. In addition to this the School is still able to offer free access to the SAM learning VLE platform. This system has been upgraded and seems to be more user friendly than before. The use of these systems is strongly encouraged as we head into the Easter revision period.

Over the last term we have hosted a successful Strategic Use of ICT course for the Cambridge Consortium. The delegates spent the day looking at how TBSHS has developed its ICT provision, the day included tours of the School, technical discussions on hardware, infrastructure and insights into the approaches used in leading change. The highlight for the delegates was to hear from practicing teachers on how they use ICT in the classroom. Thanks to Paul Ingrey, Tony Lupton, Mark Brunner, Peter Stone for their help here. The next event is a half day training course being run by Tony Lupton on behalf of SSAT on 24 April entitled "The use of Media across the curriculum". We are also looking forward to supporting the SSAT as we plan for an Eastern Region Moodle course, this will be held at the end of next term, provisionally 10 July. We are hoping to invite the Moodle community to a conference to share progress in the development of their learning platforms.

Mr A Hood

ICT PRIMARY SUPPORT

Our Technicians are now supporting five local primary schools together with St Elizabeths School. The support varies from help and advice for general computer maintenance, installing networks, repairing faulty units and providing quotes. Some primary schools have a regular weekly slot of two hours while some prefer on-call support.

The service has proved to be extremely popular with the primary schools and without exception all state they would like more support time.

Mr T Hawksbee

ADULT LEARNING WEEK, 19—23 May

On Monday 19 May, 7.00 p.m.—9.00 p.m., the School plan to run ‘taster’ sessions in the following subjects:

Fusion—an adult theatre experience

Photoshop—a course which can be tailored to individual needs

Basic Computing—including Word, Excel, Powerpoint etc (again, can be tailored to suit individual needs).

The School hopes to start these courses after the May half term.

Please telephone the School to register an interest in any of the above courses or to acquire more information.

Mr R Meredith

STOP PRESS

We are delighted to announce that our local consortia have been awarded the opportunity to deliver a Diploma in ICT at Levels 1, 2 and 3 from 2009. The Diploma is an exciting new 14-19 qualification that will bring an innovative approach to learning. It will enable students to gain knowledge, understanding and hands-on experience of sectors that they are interested in, while putting new skills into practice.

For example, as part of a Diploma in ICT, learners will have the opportunity to study ICT and have direct involvement with how ICT is applied in the workplace through a project in a local ICT company. We have teamed up with local employers and Hertfordshire University to develop high quality content for the new qualification.

As the Maths and Computing Specialist College we will be taking a lead role in the development and delivery of this new qualification for the benefit of all students in the area.

Mr P Noble