



Happy New Year

Welcome back

I sincerely hope that as many of you as possible managed to avoid being ill over Christmas and were able to spend time with family and friends.

School is a great place for new starts - we get the chance to start afresh in September and then again in the new year. 2024 will be a big year for our Year 11s who completed their mock GCSEs before Christmas and are preparing for the real things which are only around 13 school weeks away!

This term there are a lot of parents' evenings coming up, so please make a note in your diaries for the following:

- Year 10 Parents' Evening: Thursday 18th January 4.00 - 7.00pm
- Year 11 Parents' Evening: Thursday 25th January 4.00 - 7.00pm
- Year 9 Parents' Evening: Thursday 14th March 4.00 - 7.00pm

All parents' evenings are face-to-face, but you will receive an email with a link to book your appointments online. If you haven't attended one of our parents evenings since Covid, we have tried to keep the elements that parents liked from online with the benefits of being face-to-face. The main element is sticking rigidly to time slots - you will not have to queue for your appointment as there will be an on-screen timer running for each five minute slot so all appointments will be kept on time.

Please note that if you are not able to attend parents' evenings, staff are not able to schedule additional meetings or provide further feedback because parents did not attend a parents' evening.

Diary Date:

Note that school will close to students at 2.00pm on Wednesday 24th January for staff training.

VOLUNTEER



Volunteering seems to be a bit of a trend for people's new year's resolutions this year. Here are some ideas:

Balshaw's PTA (Parent Teacher Association):

Our PTA have already run a number of events this year (Quizmas, Silent Discos) and have provided funds for a range of extra-curricular opportunities. We have a Race Night coming up as well as our big ticket event: #Balfest. The PTA always welcome new members and the ideas that they can bring and the support for these events. Visit the Balshaw's PTA Facebook page for more information or come to the next meeting on Wednesday 7th February - 7.30pm at school.

What is a governor and what does being a governor involve?

Governors are the largest group of volunteers in the UK and they play a vital role in the oversight of every school in the country. At Balshaw's we have a strong governing body, but that is not the case for all schools. Below is an article from Balckburn Diocesan Board of Education about school governance...

"What are your goals for 2024?"

Have you been talking or thinking about this since the new year began?

This is the time of year that many of us think about what we want to achieve in the year ahead, with many goals focused on personal and professional development – how to work better, do better, be better. Inspiring Governance, the charity programme that matches skilled volunteers with school governor roles, report a spike in interest in volunteering opportunities throughout January which can offer so many benefits that align with these goals. So what are the reasons you should go beyond the search stage and take action to find out more about volunteering in the world of education this year?

1. Volunteering is good for your mental health and wellbeing

Almost 80% of participants of a recent survey by the NCVO said they felt their mental health and wellbeing had improved as a result of volunteering. Not only that, 74% said it had given them more confidence – win-win!

2. Volunteering expands your social circle

Volunteer Justin puts it perfectly: "Volunteering as a school governor has enabled me to meet some amazing people - people who are passionate about how education can help children, parents and the community that they live in".

3. Volunteering can support your career progression goals

Volunteer governors report that the board level experience they gain helps them learn or sharpen skills that have a direct impact on their professional life, which can help to achieve those 2024 career goals.

Interested in finding out more? Join a free webinar hosted by the charity **Inspiring Governance** on **Thursday 18th January 12.30-13.15** to learn more about the role and hear from a panel of current school governors sharing their own experiences of volunteering in the role. Sign up below to join us:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/5817047285657/WN_wjuAw2mITUGdDdCfafUAiA

Know a good lawyer?

Although we have a strong governing body, one skill set that we are always looking for is legal expertise. If you work in law or know someone in law who would like to be involved as a volunteer with educational governance, please ask them to speak to Mr Haycocks if they would like to explore this idea further.



Sleep Hygiene



It's easy to let our regular sleep patterns slip during a holiday - especially at Christmas which might explain why some of our students are looking so tired this week. Some have even admitted to becoming nocturnal by the end of the holiday!

It's important to ensure that we all get good sleep hygiene - research is starting to show that sleep could be a huge factor in reducing risk of diabetes, mental health issues and a range of other illnesses. It's especially important to a young person who is both growing and learning: they really do need good sleep.

Between the ages of 13 and 18 it is recommended to get 8 - 10 hours of sleep per night.

For more information, please see these resources:

- [Information about young people and sleep from Great Ormond Street.](#)
- [Dr Michael Mosley's BBC Just One Thing podcast and top tips for good sleep.](#)
- [20 Sleep hygiene tips for teenagers from Positive Psychology.](#)

Year 10 Work Experience



Mr Holland has already spoken to Year 10 about their forthcoming Work Experience which takes place on 2nd - 4th July this year. Students need to identify and apply for a work experience placement. It may seem like a long way off, but having helped my own daughter in Year 10 secure a work experience placement before Christmas I can tell you that it is not easy and the earlier you start to help your child secure a work placement, the better.

Personal Hygiene



The media is documenting a very sharp rise in cases of scabies in the UK and problems with sourcing medicine because of global conflicts. See this Guardian article for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/01/doctors-report-nightmare-surge-in-scabies-across-uk>

Articles like this lead to rumours of outbreaks and fear. Scabies is spread through prolonged periods of skin-to-skin contact with an infected person, or through sexual contact. It's also possible – but rare – for scabies to be passed on by sharing clothing, towels and bedding with someone who's infected.

At Balshaw's our "Respect Each Other's Personal Space" rule which we have in school means that students are not allowed to hug, hold hands, kiss or have any other intimate contact in school. Consequently, basic hygiene such as washing hands and maintaining personal hygiene will ensure that the risk of catching scabies is very low in these conditions.

If you want to know more about the condition and how to recognise it, you can find out more here:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/skin-hair-and-nails/scabies/#:~:text=The%20scabies%20rash%20consists%20of,seen%20with%20a%20magnifying%20glass.>

Future Leaders...



We have a hugely talented group of young people who meet each week to debate, discuss current affairs and develop their public speaking skills. Coached by Dr Breen who is our school Librarian, Archivist and has responsibility for oracy and literacy across and beyond the curriculum, they have had tremendous success so far this year.

We have got four public speaking teams across the school and so far this year they have won:

- Lancashire County Council Great Debate.
- Rotary Club Regional Finalists
- ESU Regional Finalists

If they have further success in the regional finals then they will compete in national finals.

We are tremendously proud of them, holding off excellent competition from other schools including a range of highly selective schools and private schools.





That could never be my child!

The vision of Balshaw's is to send students of faith and no faith beyond the school to reflect Christ's love in the wider community. The vast majority of our students do this. Every now and again though we get complaints about behaviour of a small number of students on their way to or from school.

Recently there have been students who have damaged property in people's gardens and students who have tried to unpick locks on cars and doors. In some cases students have damaged cars.

We have dealt with these students when they have been identified. Nevertheless, it damages the reputation of all our students when a small number engage in anti-social behaviour like this. Please reinforce with your son/daughter that they should let staff in school know if they see poor behaviour like this outside of the school. Your child will not be identified, but we can then deal with any students who are damaging the reputation of our otherwise kind, socially responsible and caring young people.



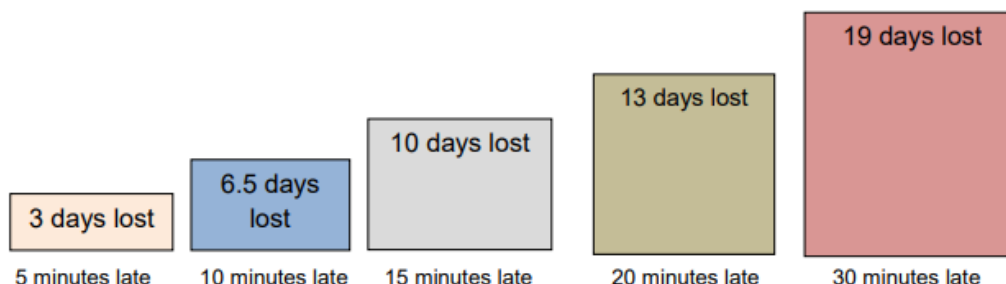
Attendance Matters

It will not have escaped your notice that attendance has become a huge national focus recently as attendance at schools has dropped nationally since Covid. Although some parents state that following Covid they do not see attendance at school being as important as they once did, attendance matters hugely to a young person's success.

- [DfE Article about why attendance matters.](#)

*17 days absence in a school year leads to a whole grade drop across **all** school subjects.*

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days	Equivalent Sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	2 Weeks	54 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	4 Weeks	114 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	6 Weeks	174 Lessons
80%	38 Days	72 Sessions	8 Weeks	228 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	10 Weeks	288 Lessons
70%	57 Days	114 Sessions	11.5 Weeks	342 Lessons
65%	67 Days	134 Sessions	13.5 Weeks	402 Lessons



Keep up with school news...

In The NEWS

There are far too many things happening in school to cover in our newsletter, so keep up to date with events and the achievements of our students in an out of school by visiting the news pages of the school website. Find out about our internationally successful gymnasts, cyclists and more.

If your child has an achievement outside school which you think we should know about, please get in touch.



Visit the Balshaw's newpage: <https://www.balshaws.org.uk/news>