

Headteacher's Summer Newsletter



Welcome



It is unbelievable how quickly time passes! Just ask our Year 11's who are now halfway through their exams how quickly the year has gone. Indeed, our current Year 10 are only about 17 weeks away from sitting their Year 11 mock GCSEs.

I hope that over the course of this year you have seen your child grow in confidence, develop lots of new knowledge and skills and, most importantly, continued to grow in their journey to becoming young adults who will go out into the world and reflect Christ's love in the wider community as kind and responsible citizens. There can be nothing more important than educating our young people to be tolerant global citizens who seek resolution and cooperation where there is conflict and animosity.

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Over the course of this year we have had major sections of the roof in school replaced and from September, areas that have been cordoned off for health and safety, will be open for our use again after years of being out of use – most notably our Memorial Garden, which we hope to renovate and return as a place of calm and refuge for our students during lunchtime and breaks.

Over the summer we are having to have major work done on our school heating system. For years we have battled against new leaks appearing in our 100-year-old network of heating pipes. This battle is now lost and the leaks that we have are now in areas that are impossible to access and with a water bill in excess of £4,000p/m for water that is effectively being pumped into the foundations. We will be decommissioning most of the radiators and pipes for a new system of convection heaters at ceiling level in all areas that are being updated. This represents a huge investment by the school from our capital reserves that will cost 100s of thousands of pounds but has to happen or the risk is that the school might have had to close if the heating did not come back on in October.

Parents' Forums

This year we have launched our Parents' Forums which have met once per term in an open meeting in which we look at key areas of school life and policy. We have been able to act on a range of ideas and suggestions from parents and these have been incredibly helpful in making our communication better and in helping parents/carers to understand why some things happen in certain ways.

The topics that have been discussed this year have been:

- The Christian Life and Mission of the School
- Rewards
- School meals and lunchtimes
- Inclusion and SEND provision
- Transition
- Behaviour Curriculum
- Parents' Evenings
- School reports
- Trips and extra-curricular activities

The Parents' Forums are followed by our PTA meeting so anyone that attends is always welcome to stay for the PTA meeting (more details about our PTA below). Please look out for information about the next Parents' Forum which is likely to be the first Wednesday in October 2025.

PTA and Balfest

Our PTA has grown in number this year and is group of people linked to Balshaw's (not all are parents – at least not of current students!) who put on events and activities to foster the wider sense of Balshaw's community and to raise money for school enrichment. Last year they supported the purchase of a new school minibus. This year they have been raising funds to get the Balshaw's Climbing Wall reinstated.



If you aren't a member of the PTA, you can support them through attending events that they put on. This year we have had quiz nights, bingo evenings and we were also going to host a race night for which, unfortunately, there was not enough interest for it to go ahead.



One of the biggest events of the year is Balfest, our major community event with musical performances, exhibitions along with fun and games for all the family. One of the most popular exhibitions at the event was the incredible array of creatures on display from NorthWest Reptile Association where all visitors had the chance to hold exotic creatures from snakes to bearded dragons and to find out more about these

animals and their backgrounds.

If you would like to find out more about the PTA, they meet on the first Wednesday of every month (during term time) and you can also read more on their [Facebook page here](#) and read about it on the [school website here](#).

Governance

We are pleased to be welcoming two new governors to our Governing Body for the final Governing Body meeting of the year:

- Ms Kitty Ellison (Parent Governor)
- Mrs Georgina Jacobs (Local Authority Governor – and also a parent)

Many parents/carers who were Balshavians already know Mr Keith Woodcock, our Chair of Governors, as their old physics teacher, as well as former examinations officer at Balshaw's. Keith has a long association with Balshaw's as a teacher and as a governor for almost the last two decades. He has also been a parent of Balshavians. Keith has served as our Chair of Governors since 2017 and we were delighted that the years of dedicated service that he has shown to Balshaw's and its students was recognised by Lancashire County Council earlier this year when he was awarded for his services to education at County Hall in Preston. The award aims to recognise governors who have made a significant contribution to their schools beyond the call of duty.

If you want to learn more about governance and our governing body, [you can find out more here...](#)

Year 10 Work Experience

Year 10 will be going on Work Experience soon (2nd – 4th July) and we wish them well. Those who haven't yet secured places will need to work quickly to get all their paperwork onto Unifrog in order to take part.

For our current Year 9 students, they will be have a full week of Work Experience next year. It would be good to start to think about what they might do now as students have to secure their own work placement. They will need to use our online platform *Unifrog* to connect



with employers to get all the legal paperwork such as employers' liability insurance in place. Our students will be provided with full details of how to do this.

You cannot start this process too early as it always takes longer than you think that it will. If any students are unable to secure a work experience placement then they end up doing a virtual placement in school at a computer screen for the week, which is nowhere near as engaging, so it's good to be thinking about this now. Do you have friends of the family who work in areas that you are interested in? Would they be able to provide you with a week's placement? Try to get in early so that you are not competing for places against everyone else.

Lancashire Cup Success and Pride in Balshaw's Kit

Balshaw's students should be proud to wear their PE uniform as it links back to a long history of sporting success. If you follow our [school news pages](#), you will know that a number of our current students perform individually at national and international level. However, this year we have a number of successful teams from year groups across the school...

Year 7 Boys:

- **South Ribble cup winners** - became champions by beating Hutton Grammar 3-0 in the final.
- 2nd place in the South Ribble league.
- Runners up in the Lancashire cup.
- 7 a side B team runners up in the South Ribble B team tournament.

Year 7 Girls:

- Lancashire cup semi-finalists.
- South Ribble cup semi-finalists.

Year 9 Boys:

- 2nd place in the South Ribble league.

Year 8/9 Girls:

- South Ribble cup semi-finalists.
- Year 8 girls **7 a side South Ribble Champions** going **unbeaten** throughout the tournament.

- They drew the first 3 games 0-0 and thought they may have missed out on a top 3 finish. However, they won their remaining games 4-0, 1-0 and 1-0 again and we are delighted to share the news that they won the whole competition by a clear 2 points!



Year 11 Boys:

- South Ribble cup runners up, losing to Hutton Grammar 5-2 in a well-played final.

Year 10/11 Girls:

- **South Ribble Cup winners** - became champions by beating Penwortham Priory 9-4 in the final.
- **7 a side South Ribble Champions** going **unbeaten** throughout the tournament. They finished joint 1st place with All Hallows and Penwortham Priory.



School of Sanctuary

As part of the way that our Christian vision is lived out in school, we have been proud to have been part of the process to become a School of Sanctuary. Over the course of this year our students have met with families from the Windrush generation, they have enjoyed learning the range of first languages spoken by students across the school. They have enjoyed different themed food in our Restaurant and before Christmas we held a multi-faith Candlelight Memorial Vigil. In March we held a wonderful Iftar celebration earlier this year with families in school and from the Leyland Hotel.



As you know from our School of Sanctuary newsletters, we hope to be accredited with this status before the end of the year and we will be the first Church of England High School in the diocese to receive the award and one of only 8 high schools in Lancashire.

Our Values and Christian Mission

Our Christian values are the foundation for every decision that we make at Balshaw's, as we light the path to excellence through Christian vision and values.

Our focus on our values is what leads to excellent outcomes for students, but our ultimate aim is to create students whatever their faith or world view, to reflect Christ's love in the wider community as explained in our mission statement:

Lighting the path to excellence through Christian vision and values.

Gospel values of love, forgiveness, friendship, kindness, truth, patience, respect and humility are the foundation for decisions made in the Balshaw's family. Our aim is: to develop students whatever their faith or world view, who reflect Christ's love within the wider community.

If you want to know more about our Christian mission, then you can [read more here in the Headteacher's welcome on the school website.](#)

One of the big events of the year is our Lenten Charity fundraising which happens just before the Easter holiday. I would like to thank all of you for supporting your childrens' efforts to raise money for the causes identified by each house. In just two school weeks we

were able to raise over £4,300 for charity. One of the most popular events was the staff charity football match...



Eucharist Celebration:

All of our Key Stage 3 and our Year 10 GCSE students enjoyed taking part in a Eucharist Service hosted by Bishop Philip (Bishop of Blackburn) and Fr Paul Robinson (Vicar of St Ambrose and Vice Chair of Governors). It was a moving event to see our students either taking communion or being blessed and showing their respect for this important act of worship.



Holocaust Memorial Day:

As well as our choir singing at South Ribble Borough Council's Holocaust Memorial Event, we were also delighted to welcome Eva Paddock via Zoom from New York to speak to our students. Eva was one of the children who escaped the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia on the Kindertransport in 1939 aged just three-and-a-half and also amazingly came to Balshaw's after the war from 1947-1954. Her sister Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines was also on that Kindertransport aged 9 and still lives in Preston.



We are looking forward to Eva being the guest speaker at our Prizegiving Evening later this year in November.

Safety outside school

Although our students are very clear on our expectations of their behaviour in school, there are still some students who let down the reputation of all of our student body with some of their actions coming to and going home from school.

Recently we have had concerns from various members of the public about irresponsible cycling on pavements and even more worryingly, in traffic. It is important that we show respect for other road and pavement users. Also residents of some properties have experienced students damaging flowers and bushes in their gardens or littering. I know that this is not the way that you would want your children to behave, so if you could reinforce the message that we give them in school about respectful behaviour, that would be very much appreciated.

Year 11

We are very proud of our Year 11 who are now over halfway through their GCSE examinations. They are showing resilience and determination as they study and work hard to be the best that they can be. They know that they are not measured by a number on a piece of paper, but for the effort that they put in and the contribution that they make to society as they take our values on with them beyond the walls of Balshaw's, knowing that once you are a Balshavian, you are always a Balshavian.

We enjoyed shirt signing with them before half term and look forward to their prom later this month at Stanley House Hotel and Spa.



Duke of Edinburgh and other Extra-Curricular Activities

We are delighted to have been able to start the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme again after a break of about 15 years. Mr Smith, our Assistant Headteacher has reintroduced the scheme and has many years of experience of leading DoE. Our award participants have already undertaken their practice expedition and will shortly be heading out for the real thing.



It has been great to see the number of extra-curricular trips continue to grow since Covid. This year we have seen visits to the World Museum in Liverpool, various theatre visits, as well as bigger trips such as our Iceland Trip in February, a trip to Avila in Spain and forthcoming trips to visit the Battlefields in France and Belgium as well as a trip to Varsity in France. These come on top of a range of other trips and visits to deepen out students' knowledge and enthusiasm for learning such as at the Science Museum, Sustainability Conference, Lancashire Book of the Year, Fieldwork Visits, Blackpool Zoo and many more.

1 - Students on the Iceland Trip



Staff Changes

As always at the end of a school year there are staff that we say goodbye to because they are moving on.

This year we are wishing Mrs Vosper a happy retirement after spending the last 12 years of her career in our General Office answering calls to parents/carers, providing first aid and supporting the needs of staff and students are the obvious things that people think Mrs Vosper does. However, there is much, much more than that and she will be missed by all at Balshaw's.

Mr Shannon, our Head of History has been promoted to a senior role in STAR Academies, where he will oversee improvement in Teaching and Learning across Humanities for all STAR schools across Lancashire. We will miss his passion for History and the role he has played in implementing our Behaviour Curriculum.

Mr Turner is taking up a promoted role as Teacher in Charge of Chemistry at Archbishop Temple Church of England High School. We are very sorry to see him leave, but know that he will be brilliant in his new role.

Moving closer to her home, another of our Science teachers, Miss Kendall is moving to Broughton High School to continue teaching Science.

Other staff will be leaving us as colleagues return from maternity or contracts end so we will also be saying goodbye to Mrs Fitzsimmons (MFL), Mr Walsh (D&T), Mr Davies (Maths), Mr Baird (PE) and Mr Caddle (English). We thank them for their commitment to the school and wish them the very best of luck for their future.

And finally:

Our Public Speaking teams have enjoyed phenomenal success over the last few years and some of our most experienced orators will be finishing Year 11 this year. So many of their speeches have informed and moved audiences, either politically, socially, emotionally or intellectually. It is hard to pick from the speeches that they have delivered. However, I would like to share with you a speech that was given by Isabel Pearson based on the painting *Judith Beheading Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi:

“The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman”

Judith proclaimed to the Israelites as she described how she’d saved them from the Assyrians.

The Israelites had been left hopeless, dreading Assyrian conquest, led by General Holofernes. Judith, exasperated by her elders’ lack of conviction and faith, dressed in her finest clothes and approached Holofernes’ encampment, feigning desire for an alliance. Holofernes was so struck by her beauty, that he intended to bring her back to his tent to seduce her. Put more simply, Judith was a victim of attempted date rape. However, Holofernes was so drunk, he fell asleep.

The story is best picked up by the painting before you – Artemesia Gentileschi’s interpretation from 1620.

Judith, hastily seized a scimitar, plunging and hacking into the neck of Holofernes. Gentileschi spared none of the gory detail – Judith grasps Holofernes hair as blood spurts out, even on Judith’s breast, perhaps symbolising a stain on her societal virtue. Her face depicts a determination of doing what had to be done.

This Bible story is one of few which empowers women, showing their capability of heroism.



But it did not do so for long. By 1530, it had been removed from the Protestant Bible, claiming it a work of fiction. Could we imply Judith's story to have been airbrushed from history due to her seductive nature?

Could this be the reason for Gentileschi's painting of the scene? The story of the painting's creation is incredible – its creator was a young woman, who was forced to employ the help of a man to receive payment for it.

Like many stories of powerful women, Gentileschi's was suppressed.

Historians have speculated on her purpose. It was painted after Gentileschi's mentor, Agostino Tassi, was tried and convicted for her rape.

Mary Garrard once proposed the painting was a "cathartic expression of the artist's private, and perhaps repressed rage". Many have speculated that Gentileschi painted herself as Judith, and her mentor as Holofernes, a vengeful release of female rage. This was a intelligent method of revenge, for Gentileschi lived in a period that silenced women.

Like many stories of powerful women, Gentileschi's was suppressed. When her painting was sold in 1827, it was credited to Caravaggio, a male painter.

Many have taken Gentileschi's painting and the Bible story as early works of feminism. And yet both have been airbrushed from history.

Unfortunately, this story is still relevant today.

Gentileschi's own suffering is still experienced by women in this country; 1 in 4 women over the age of 16 have been raped or sexually assaulted.

This is harrowing, but what disgusts me is the fact that as a country we do not tackle violence against women and girls; 5 out of 6 women who are raped don't report it because they feel "embarrassed or humiliated" and 38% said they didn't report their rape because they didn't think the police would help and they weren't wrong. Only 2.7% of reported cases lead to a conviction.

Victim blaming is too common. Too often what women were wearing, their sexual past their behaviour, alcohol consumption; the list goes on ALL ABOUT THE WOMAN. THE VICTIM NOT THE PERPETRATOR AND THEIR ACTIONS, THEIR BEHAVIOURS OR THEIR CHOICES. They are abdicated of all responsibility.

However, I see a glimmer of hope. Oppression in Afghanistan and violation of women's rights in America has seen female rage re-ignited.

It is important that we cultivate this rage.

Because, if there's one lesson we can take away from this painting, it is something that Andrew Tate could do to learn: don't take a sword on a date and never underestimate a woman.

A Prayer

We finish with a prayer from our Chaplain, Luke Blakeley.

Lord God,

As we look back on the last year in Balshaw's it is right that we have mixed feelings. There has been much to celebrate and cherish, but we have also felt losses and sadness. Through it all, we thank you that you have been our ever-present rock, bringing comfort, as well as unity and peace.

As we cast our eyes forward into the summer term, we place our students, our staff and all who make up the wider Balshaw's community into Your caring hands, and ask that in your mercy you will bless us all through a season of work, exams, and change.

Please continue to grow us in our Christian values of kindness and love, of respect and truth, of humility and trust, of forgiveness and friendship, that we may honour you and make our school, our community, and our world a better place.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

