

CASTLE NEWNHAM



NEWS

Christmas 2021

Meet the Pupil & Family Welfare Team

*Focus on
Design
Technology*

Our front cover is one of many of the fabulous pieces produced by our former GCSE Art students.

WELCOME - RUTH WILKES

I'm sure I speak for the whole community when I say how lovely it has been this term to have some sort of return to normality in school. In spite of a few 'outbreaks' of COVID 19 and the return of some sensible precautions we have managed to be open and thriving every day since the return in September. Our parents have been magnificent in their support and the pupils have given such joy in their enthusiasm for learning, for extra-curricular activities and for being able once again to mix with each other in productive ways. We had missed so many things, from school trips and visits, to music and drama productions, to sports fixtures and even the good old assembly and it's been great to have them back.



Talking of good things coming back, Miss Vandewyer will be returning from maternity leave in January – we are looking forward to having her back in the MFL department.

We were also delighted to have been able to hold events for transition – a Saturday morning open event for parents considering a place for their child in Reception in 2022 and an Open Evening for parents looking at what we offer from Year 7 onwards. From the many comments we had from visitors to both events, the key takeaway for me is that school is about the people in it; their warmth, their care and their ambition for our children. I continue to be so proud of the staff in our school across the federation and so impressed by the children and their sense of belonging to our community. One of our own Year 6 parents sent me the following after her visit to Open Evening:

The range of activities that both of our children got to try out, from the maths quizzes, the French activity on the whiteboard, some map-reading in geography, watching the year 11s play Nirvana in the performing arts space, trying out some crafting in the outdoor learning space, enjoying hot chocolate, cakes and lemon meringue pies – were superb, and were a wonderful way of bringing each subject to life. The conversations we had with various students – a young lady who did an incredible job of selling the skiing trip to us, two young ladies in the art room who talked us through their very impressive portfolios, and a fabulous student in the French classroom who encouraged our daughter to complete the task on the whiteboard – were a credit to the school.'

Whenever I think back to my own schooldays (and I'm sure I'm not alone in this), my lasting memories are of the teachers who inspired me, the characters in the school, the warmth of lasting friendships rather than some of the more superficial things that can seem attractive in a glossy brochure. This, along with the excellent outcomes that follow when children are happy and thriving and well taught and supported, is what we also strive for each day for our children here at Castle Newnham. We feel that this is amply in evidence as our legacy to our pupils since feedback from our Post-16 partners is universally positive about the well-rounded and well-educated young people who leave us at the end of Year 11.

DOE Update

It has been a busy start to the school year for our Duke of Edinburgh Award pupils. We have held two separate Bronze qualifying expeditions for our Year 10s and 11s and across the two weekends we had over 60 pupils taking part. The expeditions were very successful with all of the groups having passed their expedition section.

We are now just waiting for the participants to complete their other three sections. We are very pleased that a few pupils have already completed everything for their Bronze award and we are awaiting approval from the DofE so that we can award them their Bronze certificate and badge. We are thrilled to have 51 Year 9s undertaking their Bronze award this year. Their training has started and we are looking forward to them completing their

award in the summer term. Our Year 10 Silver award will start in January. This is a timely reminder to please respond to the ParentMail Form if your child is interested in taking part.



FOCUS ON...Thomas Barwood - new Chair of Governors

It was with some trepidation that I took on the role of Chair of Governors. It is a job that carries quite some responsibility (especially when Ofsted come to call) but has no really clear job description or line manager and it is unpaid! Somewhat like the Queen there are certain circumstances in which as Chair we are invested with specific powers but day on day the job is to lead the Governing body, act as critical friend to the head/school and hold the school and head to account over the ways in which funds are spent; but these issues are ones of strategy and we leave the 'operational' to those on the ground. However, it is also a truly fascinating and exciting role for those with an interest in education – of which I am certainly one. I have been involved with the Castle Newnham Federation since its inception and as a result of a lot of hard work to deliver what we promised to our community we are now really making progress and I see it as a very bright and exciting time ahead.

The pandemic obviously forcibly pressed the 'pause' button for a while on some of our strategic plans. I know we are not out of the woods yet but as we slowly get back to normal (whatever you take that to be!) then our bold ambitions for our unique school can become real again.

I have two children in the school who have been right though since Reception and I am excited for what the school has been able to provide to enhance their futures. I hope it is the same for you and your children. I feel privileged to lead our very well qualified and dynamic governing body and to be able to positively influence the school and its future direction.



VIRTUAL LIBRARY



I am excited to share with you news of our new secondary library provision, which will be up and running in the new year. We have adopted the use of the Reading Cloud library management system, which will give pupils online access to all of our library stock, and will give them a much more intuitive way to browse for books.

Pupils will have regular lessons with the Chromebooks where they can order, renew and explore the books we have in school, which will then be delivered to them during tutor times.

This application will also allow parents to see the books that their children are taking out, and allow pupils to order and renew books at home using the Reading Cloud app, as well as reviewing and recommending books to their peers.

I have included a link to an information leaflet about the system and how it works, but if you have any questions about the library then please get in touch with Mrs M Sturge, the Head of English.

<https://www.datooms-assets.com/7307/1538647624-introduction-to-the-reading-cloud.pdf>

SECONDARY CURRICULUM FOCUS

We are delighted to have introduced film studies to our GCSE options this year for our Year 10 pupils.

We also have a number of our Year 11 pupils completing GCSE qualifications in classical civilisation and religious studies for the first time.

The clear proof that our curriculum is constructed to best support pupils in their future choices is that the vast majority of our leavers last year are currently in sixth form/college providers of their choice and studying the courses of their choice. We are delighted by the success of all our pupils, including those who attained a set of qualifications at the highest grades, and look forward to being able to share university and career destinations with you this time next year when our first cohort completes the final stage of compulsory education.

Pupils use Chromebooks and other IT applications across many of their lessons, using them in a variety of ways from independent research to creating stencil templates from photographs for street art work inspired by Banksy. The new MacBooks in the studio area are much enjoyed and valued by those taking a variety of performing arts courses and film studies.

PRIMARY UPDATE

It has been such a pleasure to have all of the children back with us in what I would describe as 'a more normal environment' when of course we know we are not there quite yet! Having been a teacher for a number of years (!) I cannot remember a time when I have been more proud of pupils with whom I have been associated. From Nursery and Reception upwards, the independence and resilience demonstrated from our children is absolutely fantastic. This is only ever achievable if the parents/carers work in partnership with us, so thank you to all adults involved. Some restrictions remain in the primary phase, which is entirely correct, with the vast majority of children responding very well, with support in place for those who need it from our vital Pupil and Family support team. You will know that some year groups have been greatly affected by positive Covid-19 cases, and I'd like to thank all parents who have supported us.

In terms of curriculum development, we continue to develop our provision around performing arts and I'm pleased to see the enhanced opportunities coming through from this team in particular, working in partnership with the Bedford Music Hub. We are making very good use of our new performing arts practice room on the South site, and look forward to sharing when we can. PE remains a focus for us, and we hope to further develop this area in the spring term, if restrictions allow, with more opportunities for inter-school competitions and festivals.

When we planned opportunities to share celebrations with parents/carers this term we were very conscious of trying to 'future proof' our Christmas activities. This is usually such a special time of year with all sorts of performances taking place throughout the primary phase. With current infection rates the last thing we wanted was a repeat of last year where many things were cancelled. This is why we have gone for our outdoor performances this December. Hopefully you have been able to attend and enjoy! It has been a great pleasure and privilege to have seen the enjoyment of pupils and parents at these events.

I know that the Primary PTA continues to work hard behind the scenes. We made the very difficult decision not to have a Christmas Fair this year as we felt the risks to families, so close to Christmas, were too great. I know the PTA have further fund raisers in the pipeline, and hope that you can support as much as you are able to. Look out for more details on our weekly 'Primary Post' newsletter. Have a great Christmas break.

Stay safe and best wishes,

Jim Balmbra
Primary Headteacher

MEET... Jack Dixon the
Deputy Head of Primary



I grew up in the South West and moved to Newport Pagnell in 2010. I graduated from St Mary's University in Twickenham and went on to study my PGCE at Northampton University. I have taught in Milton Keynes and most recently at Wootton Lower School.

I have always enjoyed watching children learn and develop into the best they could possibly be.

When I was younger, scouting was a large part of my life. I moved through cubs and scouts myself and then became a leader at the age of 18. From there I went on to run my own scout group and became a Group Scout Leader when I moved to Milton Keynes. I am no longer involved in scouting (although my parents are still heavily involved back home). That experience most definitely inspired me to work with young people. When at university I had to make the choice of working in Primary or Secondary and after a placement in a Primary School I decided this was where my heart was.

I started at Castle Newnham in September. One of the biggest challenges so far has been trying to learn all the children's names and personalities is the hardest part. With more than 600 children, it's not an easy task. As there is only one of me, they learn my name really quickly so I have some catching up to do! I've loved learning about the school's ethos and seeing the things that matter to the children. Recently a child informed me he'd have to leave my lesson early as he had a DJing lesson. I couldn't help but think how much I'd have loved that opportunity as a child. The extra-curricular sports and performing arts opportunities are second to none. I can't wait to be able to watch the shows and the sports teams play and join in their achievements.

I think the most important thing we can teach children is to never stop asking questions – not to take things as given and to always be inquisitive about how and why things happen. My parents and my brother have influenced me the most. They are the kindest people I know and extremely generous with their time. More recently, my daughter inspires me on a daily basis. Her thirst for knowledge and eagerness to question the world is mind blowing and something I hope she never loses. Outside of work and family life I run. A lot. Next year, I have two marathons booked (MK Marathon in May and Berlin Marathon in September). I also like to travel as much as I can and spend the majority of my time outside.

Pupil & Family Welfare (North Site) Meet the Team

An integral part of our successful return to school has undoubtedly been down to some of the amazing work that takes place within our Pupil and Family Welfare Team. Consisting of six members of non-teaching staff, this provision is geared towards supporting pupils as fully as possible, using a variety of means, suited to the individual and specific needs of our pupils - be it support with friendship issues, personal circumstances, anxiety/stress as well as mental health and well-being.



Mrs Watts – Pupil and Family Welfare Manager

Mrs Watts has worked at the school within the pastoral support team for a number of years, and has specific responsibility for any work that pupils undertake with the team. She handles day to day safeguarding issues, as well as the coordination of meetings involving other professionals from outside the school.

Mrs Behan – Pupil and Family Welfare Deputy Manager

Mrs Behan joined the pastoral team after working at the school as a teaching assistant.

As well as working with pupils in small groups and 1:1, she supports Mrs Watts in ensuring pupils are given the correct support and intervention.



Mrs Holmes

Mrs Holmes originally worked within the school's administrative team, but has now joined the team to offer administrative support for the team, whilst also working closely with a number of pupils and their families.

'Chef' Wesley

'Chef' originally joined the school in the capacity of exactly as his title suggests! However, an experienced and practical skillset, particularly with construction and the great outdoors, has led to the development of our environmental area in which pupils can work to help develop and improve – more on this further below!



Mrs Togara

Originally working with the school on the South Site with our younger pupils, Mrs Togara now specialises in offering pupils support in small group sessions or on a 1:1 basis. She also oversees the school's support for pupils who act as young carers.

Miss Walker

The newest member of the team, Miss Walker joins the team with a specific focus on supporting pupils with mental health and wellbeing – this takes the place in whatever is suited to the needs of the individual pupils!



Over time, a specific focus for the team has been the development of the outdoor and environmental area, with pupils working diligently to develop a space that can be enjoyed by many, even in the colder, winter months! Children of all ages are taught a range of outdoor skills, including how to handle various tools, to work collaboratively and even in the construction of a large wooden outbuilding (the term 'shed' does not do it justice!). To check in on some of the amazing work our pupils and teams are undertaking, I'd strongly advise visiting @CN_garden on Twitter.

Look out for the Spring edition when you will meet the South Site Team!

Focus on Design Technology

We are delighted to be jointly running the newly created 'Creative Design & Technical Arts' department. We are committed to providing all KS3 pupils with a carousel of fortnightly, two hour lessons in our creative arts subjects. These include, Design Technology, Food Technology & Textiles. Art is taught in one hour lessons on a weekly basis, all year round. At KS4, we offer Level ½ Award in Hospitality & Catering, GCSE in Design Technology & GCSE Fine Art.

Food technology is also delivered to our Unicorn provision by Tina Leeson, our learning support assistant. Tina teaches engaging practical cooking lessons to all unicorn pupils, providing them with the essential life skill of cooking. Tina delivers a BTEC in Home Cooking Skills to our older Unicorns, providing them with a fantastic qualification to take with them to college.

At the North Site, we also have a new classroom dedicated to Art and DT for our Year 5 and 6 pupils. Louise Haddon and Glen Mulkerrins, our primary subject specialists, are teaching weekly practical lessons in these areas. Pupils thrive in these lessons, which are excellent preparation for our pupils to be able to seamlessly transition into secondary school life.

Over this term, we have taken our Year 11 pupils to visit the BBC Good Food Show at the NEC in Birmingham. Pupils enjoyed the ultimate festive foodie day out, packed full of fantastic shopping, recipe inspiration and live chef demonstrations! Our Unicorn provision has also visited Johnstone Family Butchers in Bedford for a sausage making experience. In the new year, we plan to take our KS4 pupils to MK college to explore the possibility of studying catering for post 16 qualifications. We also hope to provide pupils with experiences at high quality hospitality venues like The Luton Hoo and The Bedford Swan Hotel.

Adjustments to the facilities within Design and Technology have started with extra power added to the workshop above work benches, additional hand tools have been procured and workshop equipment and resources repaired and serviced. A range of further changes are planned including the setting up of a material preparation area and store, workbench facelift and an investment in CAD and CAM technology.

The curriculum for KS3 design and technology have been developed with pupils undertaking practical's across a range of material groups, Year 7 students have been introduced to the making processes of vacuum forming and the Pillar drill; Year 8 students have explored the Memphis design movement to create original designs for Acrylic clocks.

KS4 design and technology has seen Year 10 pupils experiment with materials and discover their physical and working properties, whilst Year 11 have worked hard on the non-examined assessment designing exciting solutions to their design problems and have developed prototype models leading into final design ideas. The spring term will see Year 10 start looking at the work of designers and the world of design taking into account the needs of others. Year 11 pupils are aiming for a February half term NEA hand in and will then focus on content for examination preparation with materials, design and manufacturing.

As a whole department, we assess pupils through four main points, independence, creativity, skill set and responsibility. Pupils are supported to think creatively and we embrace pupils' ideas and originality within the creation of art pieces, products and culinary outcomes.



CAREERS OVERVIEW

Our Year 11 pupils are currently applying for their Post 16 places and it is exciting to hear them talk about their aspirations for the future. Each Year 11 pupil is supported with a one to one interview with our careers coach, Romana Tomei, to discuss their plans. Pupils have access to Unifrog, an online careers platform, and this is a useful source of information. We launched Unifrog to our Year 7 pupils and parents this month and in January we will focus on careers as this is traditionally our 'Bright Futures Month'.

Fifteen Year 11 pupils recently enjoyed a visit to Wadham College, Oxford, for a university taster day. The pupils were treated to an access all areas tour, lunch and two fabulous thought provoking lectures (picture right).



Having missed opportunities to perform at Castle Newnham for 620 days, we returned with a bang. Our 'Songs from the stage' performance was a great success, the primary and secondary pupils performing showcased their talent and put on a wonderful show for the audience.

Pupils in Year 11 drama did a stellar job performing their devised pieces to an audience as part of their GCSE exam. Each performance was created entirely by the pupils; the script, costume, lighting and sound design. We were very impressed with their efforts!

Pupils took part in many festive performances, in primary each year held their own 'Songs on the Playground' event – it was a fantastic event for our primary pupils to perform in front of an audience again. Our secondary musicians and singers performed a selection of festive classics at the Christmas Concert on Wednesday 8th December.

We were delighted to take the whole of primary on a Christmas Panto trip to Northampton Theatre to see Dick Whittington last week. The staff and pupils thoroughly enjoyed the event (oh yes they did!), even Mr Balmbra who was thoroughly picked on by the Dame!

After Christmas we will be looking forward to primary and secondary musicians evenings, the 'encore' dance showcase and our three full scale 4SIXTEEN productions – Legally Blonde, Cinderella and Matilda. Keep an eye out for ticket information because these are not shows that you will want to miss!

CHRISTMAS EVENTS



PE NEWS

It has been fantastic getting back to competitive fixtures against other schools this Autumn term, as well as being able to offer an abundance of co-curricular opportunities; including table tennis, netball, hockey and dodgeball.

This year, we have been fortunate enough to expand our specialist teaching into not only Year 5 and 6 but also into some Year 4 lessons – continuing to develop our all through vision.

Next term, 6EK will begin their swimming lessons whilst the rest of Year 5 and 6 continue with their winter sports, including rugby, netball, football and lacrosse.

Due to GCSE mocks taking place, our secondary curriculum will be adapted and pupils will be studying first aid during their core PE lessons, before returning to their traditional curriculum for the latter half of the term. Our Year 9 options cohort have got really stuck in with the theory side of PE, whilst our Year 10 and 11 GCSE pupils have continued positively with their journey towards their examinations.

Pupils on the South site have enjoyed participating in gymnastics clubs on Tuesday and Thursday lunch times this term through Falcons. These clubs will be continuing in the Spring term. There will also be further clubs for the South site starting after Christmas, so please take a look if you feel that your child would like to take part.