

Newsletter

January 2014

Blairgowrie High School



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Headteacher's Message

Happy New Year everyone. I trust you have all had a good festive break.

Last term was a very busy one and our pupils benefitted from many excursions and events to all sorts of places – from Poland to Glasgow to Perth! More information about some of these events, and others, can be found inside this newsletter. The run up to the end of term was extremely busy and our pupils displayed exemplary behaviour and organisational skills at the Senior Citizens Tea Dance; the Christmas Concert; and the Senior Winter Ball.



Pupils took a lead role as speakers and front of house staff at the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People annual event.



Santa at the Senior Citizen's Tea Dance

Staffing

There are a number of staffing changes. We are sad to see the departure, albeit on a temporary basis, of Mr Devine, DHT and Head of Stormont House. Mr Devine has successfully secured the post of Quality Improvement Officer and will work from Pullar House for the next 23 months. Mr Devine has made a very positive contribution to the success of Blairgowrie High School and he will be missed. But as one door closes, another opens and we welcome Mrs Ross as Acting DHT from 6 January. We are currently recruiting a replacement Acting Principal Teacher of Art & Design. Miss Lawrence of the English Department and Mr Simpson of the PE department are also off to pastures new and we wish them well in their new endeavours.

Education Scotland

As you are aware, as part of the school inspection in 2013, Education Scotland colleagues were due to return to Blairgowrie High School. We have now been informed that this return visit will not happen this session but will happen in session 2014-15. Mr McAvoy, Head of Secondary Education and Inclusion, states "When a new Headteacher is appointed, it is not unusual for Education Scotland to allow a settling in period. I have been impressed by the way in which staff have responded to the changes required, so far. The improvements will need to continue at pace, but I am confident that the school has the capacity and the leadership to ensure that this will happen." Blairgowrie High School staff continue to engage with Education Scotland colleagues and we have benefitted from 3 support visits with more planned for the remainder of the session.

Examinations

To our young people sitting examinations this session, this term is particularly important as you prepare for the examinations in May/June. This term you will sit prelims which, as you know, allow you to experience the rigour of the external examination. Please prepare for these examinations with the same commitment as the final exams. If you have any doubts about your readiness for your exams I would encourage you to ask your teachers for help.

Uniform

In Blairgowrie High School we have a high standard of school uniform. This adds greatly to the working atmosphere and the positive ethos of the school. In the wider community it allows our pupils to have a sense of identity. We are grateful to parents/carers for their support in providing pupils with appropriate uniform.

Recently, a number of pupils and the Parent Council, approached Guidance staff and the Headteacher and asked if we would consider reintroducing school blazers as part of the uniform code. Pupils who had attended several events out of school reported back that they felt self-conscious that they were the only school pupils not to be wearing blazers.

In response, we consulted with all pupils via assembly. Every pupil was given the opportunity to vote, as were staff. Of the 756 votes cast, 65% voted in favour of introducing blazers to our uniform.

They then cast a further vote regarding colour. 90% of pupils voted for black with blue braid (shown here – note this is not the BHS badge). We are currently sourcing the best supplier of blazers. The blazers are washable and functional with pockets for mobile phones, pens, pencils etc. It is hoped that the price will be in the region of £30. Blazers will therefore become part of uniform from August 2014.



We have also taken the opportunity to clarify some aspects of our existing uniform code. As from August 2014 our uniform code will be:

- *School Blazer (supplier details to follow).*
- *School tie (available at Doig's, Blairgowrie).*
- *Black trousers (school trousers, no leggings, jeggings, drainpipes or denim) or skirt, both of which should be at least knee-length.*
- *White shirt or blouse (these should have buttons to the collar and not be V necked).*
- *Plain black sweatshirt or jersey, no hooded or non-uniform tops will be permitted in class or assembly.*
- *Black shoes. Where trainers are worn these should be plain black.*
- *An outdoor coat should be carried at all times.*

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring that Blairgowrie High School pupils follow our uniform code.

Health and Wellbeing – Anti-Bullying focus week

During the week beginning the 18th November National Anti-Bullying week was a focus in Blairgowrie High School. The topic was tackled by a "you tube" clip (Take a Stand – Anti Bullying Video, lasts about 4.03) being shown during extended tutor group time on Wednesday 20th November. The purpose of this was to raise the awareness of issues of bullying. In the pupil's Personal and Social Education lesson following that, the topic was discussed around scenarios shown, and related to situations that pupil's had either experienced or witnessed.

The discussions in class were lively and enlightening, some solutions to bullying were offered. There is an Anti-Bullying Support Strategy in Perth and Kinross Schools which relates to issues of bullying whether it is, physical, verbal, emotional, and prejudice-based or cyber and the staff in school are encouraged to use restorative approaches which help to build, maintain and repair healthy relationships when they have broken down.

For further information, advice and guidance these are websites that may be of interest –

www.respectme.org.uk

www.chidline.org.uk

www.parentlinescotland.org.uk

www.ceops.gov.uk

Laying Down the Law

Higher and Advanced Higher English students who are, or might be, interested in Law were invited to the school library to meet four Law readers from Dundee University and a representative from the REACH project; an organisation which helps prospective students get into University courses such as Law or Medicine. Approximately thirty people packed themselves into the Learning Resource Centre and were split into four groups. One for each Law student. All the readers had decided to bring to us either a topic of interest to us, such as the presence of Law in our everyday lives, and what life is like as a law student or an activity in which we were presented with real world court cases and asked for our verdicts and why.

After the readers presentations the reach projects representative spoke to us all about her organisation and asked those of us who are interested to come to a further Law course where there will be workshops which will do everything from giving us a clearer image of the law to helping us tailor our UCAS personal statements for entry into Law school. An evening which I am thoroughly looking forward to and which promises to be extremely helpful.

Debate

At 12.30 pm on Wednesday 4 December Blairgowrie High school and Auchterarder High school came head to head in a Senior English Speaking Union Debate with the topic 'This house believes that the views of Radical Muslims should not be broadcasted by British Media outlets'. After many a heated argument eventually our team, Liam Bowe S6 and Sean Thomson S5, won over the opposition and have progressed through to the next round in 2014.

Christian Union

This year we've been discussing topics from the bible in alphabetical order (words beginning with letters A-Z). We start at around 1:00 and finish around 1:40, and you can bring your lunch or eat then come along. We start with a game and then discuss the bible topics. On special occasions we bring in lots of food and have a bit of a party. Anybody is welcome whether you're Christian or not, it's great fun, we always have a laugh and learn a lot. Why don't you come along and give it a try? The more the merrier! Where? D1

When? Tuesday 1pm – 1.40pm

Kay Henderson and Isobel Milford GB6

Auschwitz Trip (Sebastian Currie)

The "Lessons From Auschwitz" project is a government funded educational trip that aims to educate two pupils, from most schools across the UK, about the horrors that occurred during the holocaust. The project consists of 4 stages: The opening seminar (what to expect), the one day trip to Poland, the follow up seminar, and then completing the "next steps" for the LFA project. During the open seminar we had the opportunity to meet and listen to Kitty Hart Moxon, a Jewish Auschwitz survivor. We were struck by her to-the-point attitude towards the horrific ordeal she suffered. We were very thankful to her for sharing her story with us. The next stage of our journey began at three o'clock in the morning, with an early morning drive to Edinburgh airport, with a 3 hour flight to Krakow airport to follow. It was then a one hour bus journey to Oswiecim (Polish spelling of Auschwitz). On the way we thought mainly on what we would experience in Poland. The first stop we made in Poland was at a Jewish cemetery in Oswiecim. The cemetery had been destroyed by the Nazis in World War 2, however it was restored after the war by two Jewish survivors who made a memorial out of broken bits of gravestone, and re-erected the remaining gravestones. From here it was a 10 minute bus ride to Auschwitz I, which is now a museum. The large numbers of people visiting create a tourist like atmosphere, which undoubtedly dampens the effect of the surroundings. The exhibitions on show made up for this though, as they were as shocking as they were vast. For example the exhibitions of victims' hair, shoes, and suitcases were all on display.



The most heart-wrenching, and truly sickening part of the trip was walking through a gas chamber and crematorium at Auschwitz I. To walk through this hellish structure where so many were brutally and mercilessly murdered, is an experience beyond explanation. On the way out of Auschwitz I, we saw the famous gates, which reads "*Arbeit macht frei*", meaning "work will set you free". The prisoners saw this gate every day, coming in and out of work, often carrying their friends' dead bodies, killed by the exertions of labour. The irony of the message on the gate is striking, and must have seemed like a sick joke to the prisoners. From Auschwitz I it's a 2 minute journey to Auschwitz II - Birkenau - our last stop.

The sheer scale of the death camp (400+ acres) was incredible, and to think that the camp was still expanding is beyond belief. We visited the bed houses where prisoners stayed. Some of these were old horse stables, built for 52 horses; The Nazis had over 400 prisoners in a single stable. It is difficult to comprehend the conditions they suffered - we were freezing, in mid-September, with several layers on. We then walked down the train tracks that cut through the center of the camp to the third and fourth gas chambers. The Nazis had destroyed these so they couldn't be used as evidence. We were also shown around large pits where victims' ashes had been dumped. The grass and foliage grows greener in these pits than anywhere else on site. Once our tour finished, all 200 students gathered at the memorial building where the victims' pictures are on display, to show a happy time in their lives - our final memory of them. Everyone then congregated at a memorial at the top of the camp. Here we were part of a memorial ceremony carried out by Rabbi Marcus, which was very poignant. It was especially powerful when the rabbi sung in Hebrew, in this bleak place of Nazi oppression.

"KTO NIE PAMIĘTA HISTORII SKAZANY
JEST NA JEJ PONOWNE PRZEŻYCIE"

GEORGE SANTAYANA

"THE ONE WHO DOES NOT REMEMBER
HISTORY IS BOUND TO LIVE THROUGH IT
AGAIN"

GEORGE SANTAYANA

Supported Study Timetable

Times	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
During Lunch	Maths RE Technical Art	Maths RE Technical Art Music - Theory	Maths RE Technical Art History (I2 & H) Physics Admin	Maths RE Technical Art English (Int2) Admin	RE Technical Art English Spanish Admin
After School		Modern Studies Int 2 Business Chemistry History (Higher) Music - Practical	English English Int 2 Business English (Int2) Biology Music - Listening	German Modern Studies Higher Business Physics Biology Art French	PE (I2 & H) Higher Business
LRC Open to 4.45pm					

Computing, Chemistry and Geography available by arrangement.

Commonwealth Games

As Scotland prepares to host the Commonwealth Games –Blairgowrie High school will be supporting in at least two events.

Queen's Baton Bearer

Pupils were given an opportunity to apply to represent the school -26 pupils were then invited for an interview It was an honour to interview so many talented, supportive and caring pupils who are a real credit to their families and the school and we are pleased to announce that Jodie Smith is our successful Baton Bearer. In an emergency, should Jodie be unable to fulfil her role, this will be undertaken by Robbie Shepherd who was the runner up after the interview stage.

Coracle Update

You will be aware of the very successful Coracle project undertaken last year-now one of our Coracles will feature as part of the Scottish exhibit in the international flower display to be staged in Glasgow in the weeks leading up to the Commonwealth Games.

One of the Coracles designed and built by pupils is on display at the Scottish Fisheries Museum in Anstruther, Fife and another is going on permanent display at the Coracle Society Museum in York. Two have been raffled to boost funds for a Coracle and Kayaking club.



School Terms and In-Service Days

Monday 6 th January 2014	Term begins
Wednesday 19 th February 2014	INSET DAY
Thursday 20 th and Friday 21 st February 2014	Holidays

Reports, Parents' Evenings and Exams

7 th February 2014	S3 reports issued
3 rd to 14 th February 2014	S4/5/6 prelims
Wednesday 26 th February 2014	S3 contact evening
7 th March 2014	S2 reports issued with option form
Wednesday 12 th March 2014	S2 contact evening
Wednesday 26 th March 2014	S1 contact evening
4 th April 2014	S4/5/6 prelim report issued

Playing Fields

On a bitterly cold day in December, a group of S3 pupils led by Logan Coutts, volunteered to clear up the litter that had gathered on the playing fields. It is hoped that in the future we will be able to purchase new goals and nets and to smarten up the playing fields.

Thank you to the 'litter squad'. You made a big difference to the field.



Please Remember

It is important that we are able to keep in contact with you.

If any of your contact details change, please let the office or your child's house tutor or guidance teacher know.

You can email, phone or send a letter with your child.

Thank you.

Kinship Care

We aim to make as many families as possible aware of our service which provides support to young people and their carers living in a Kinship Care arrangement. If you would like any further information please give a call or email.
Regards, Angie Potter

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STOP PRESS

If you missed our BBC News School Report Team on Heartland Radio, you can now listen to their Xmas podcast which is accessible from the school website.