



### Dates for your diary

- **22 September**  
**Year 11 Parents' Information evening**
- **29 September**  
**Year 10 Work Experience evening**
- **1 October**  
**Open Evening Training Day (school closed to pupils)**
- **6 October**  
**Official opening of Science wing**
- **15-18 October**  
**Battlefields Trip**
- **22 October**  
**Year 9 Diploma evening**
- **24-27 October**  
**Year 11 Paris trip**
- **26-30 October**  
**Half term**

Dear Parent

Welcome to the new school year! We have had a very positive start to term – apart, of course, from the gale-force winds that swept the school campus for the first two days. We had to tether our new Year 7 pupils to the playground to avoid their flying off into the stratosphere. I'm very pleased to report that we lost none of them.

What a start they have made – they have already shown themselves to be quite delightful: friendly, open and very enthusiastic about their new school. We couldn't be more pleased.

Our older pupils, too, have returned with a spring in their step, clearly delighted to be able to catch up with their friends – and even, dare I suggest it, their teachers ... We have a very positive school year in prospect.

### Class of 2009

It was a real pleasure to share in our pupils' delight when they joined us in school on 27 August to receive their GCSE results. Our warmest congratulations go to the Class of 2009 who achieved our highest GCSE examination results to date. 81% of our pupils gained 5 A\* - C, 68% of them with English and Mathematics. 28% of all of the passes were at A\* / A; 50% of the passes were at A\* / A / B; 28 young people achieved 10 or more passes at A\* / A.

Some departments deserve particular praise too: 100% of our Religious Studies pupils achieved C or above, two of them achieving 100% in their

examination papers; 91% of pupils who took Drama at GCSE achieved a C or above; History achieved its highest percentage to date at 87%; in Music it was 86%, in Business Studies 83% and in Art 81%.

Just as impressive were the results in vocational subjects: 100% of Construction pupils who completed the course achieved pass grades; 56% of Health and Social Care pupils achieved C or above, a significant achievement for this cohort of young people.

The bedrock of our success, however, rests with the core subjects who year on year support our young people to a high level of achievement: English deserves particular credit for their statistics of 82% higher level passes in Language and 84% in Literature; Maths at 76% and Science at 75% round off the picture of success for this wonderful group of young people.

I am immensely grateful to my colleagues who routinely give of their best to support their pupils and to our parents who work so well with the school to help us to do our jobs.

Once again, with Miss Plant as Head of Year, the boys edged the girls in terms of examination performance, bucking all local and national trends. I would say it was down to gentle persuasion, but the irresistible force meeting the immovable object would be more accurate. The boys knew when to move ...

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## New colleagues

Each new school year brings its new school staff. We have been very fortunate in our recruitment once again and have been able to recruit colleagues of high calibre to join us in working with our young people, following last term's exodus of former colleagues to retirement or promotion.

Miss Cox	Principal's PA.
Mr Brown	teacher of Science
Miss Dann	teacher of Science
Mrs Evans	Inclusion Officer
Mrs Lanzrein	teacher of Art
Mrs Macehiter	Year Manager, Year 7
Mrs Pesci	teacher of Dance
Miss Price	teacher of English
Miss Rose	teacher of History
Dr Tunna	teacher of Mathematics

Congratulations go, too, to Mr Tanner who got married over the summer break; he will still be known as Mr Tanner ... and to Ms McNeill and Mr Lockwood who also tied the knot; Ms McNeill is no longer.

Mr Lockwood takes over from Mr Konig as Head of English and Mr Wallace has formally joined the Senior Leadership Team because of the quality of his developmental work on teaching and learning in recent years.

They all have my very best wishes for a positive start to the new school year and happy times at SVC.

## Opening of new Science Building

You may already have heard from your children about our new Science Building which was completed during the summer holidays. It is truly wonderful and deserves some fuss and fanfare, hence our intention to hold a formal opening ceremony on 6 October. Sir John Sulston, winner of the Nobel Prize for medicine for his astonishing contribution to the sequencing of the human genome, and founding director of the Sanger Institute, will open the building officially on that date.

I hope that parents will wish to be part of the occasion. I know that work commitments will

preclude most of you from attending – just as well, really, as you are significant in number. However, should you wish to join us, please contact Reception on 712777 before Friday 25 September so that we can include you in our catering arrangements.

The schedule for the opening is as follows:

1.30	Arrival and lunch
1.55	Speeches
2.15	Official opening and the opportunity to observe Year 9 pupils and their teachers at work in the new building

We are very grateful to the Local Authority who invested vast sums to give us this fine facility for the teaching of such an important strand of the curriculum.

## Sawston cinema

If you have yet to visit our cinema, this term's programme is bound to tempt you in.

We are delighted that the film made by our pupils, Projecting the Past, will be shown again on 22 September as a precursor to the evening's programme as part of the 29<sup>th</sup> Cambridge Film Festival. It will include other archive footage on this occasion and be followed by the Festival's choice, Little White Lies, a German film that enjoys its UK premiere in our cinema.

There is much to look forward to in the autumn programme – The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, Monsters vs Aliens, Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince and Slumdog Millionaire among others. Please do check out the full programme at [www.sawstoncinema.org.uk](http://www.sawstoncinema.org.uk).

## Open Evening: 1 October at 6.30 pm

As established parents you will no doubt know that this is the evening when we showcase the work of the school for Year 6 pupils who are considering our school for their secondary education.

We are always delighted by the number of our pupils who choose to work with us on the evening – they are definitely our best advertisement and are responsible for attracting large numbers of families to choose SVC.

It is vitally important that we create the best impression on such a key evening. I should, therefore, appreciate your support in ensuring that your son or daughter *only* joins us in school if he or she has an official role on the evening. It is essential that all pupils involved are in full school uniform and have a responsibility to discharge either as guides or as working in departments.

It has been wonderful for our school that we have attracted such large numbers in recent years, many of them from other schools' catchment areas. The open evening plays a part in that process. Your support in ensuring its success is greatly appreciated.

### **Leading learning**

We were visited last term by a Local Authority consultant whose task it was to assess schools' work with Assessment for Learning (AfL) and their capacity to support other schools to improve their practice with this vital strand of teaching and learning. We were very pleased to be invited at the start of term to become a Lead School for AfL. This will involve our senior staff working closely with a nominated school to support their staff towards improvement. It was also an acknowledgement of the work of the Mathematics Department that they have been asked to become a Lead Department and, again, to work with other schools to influence their practice.

I am very grateful to my colleagues across the school who work hard continually to improve their practice to the benefit of our pupils. Their expertise has been acknowledged in these new designations.

### **Parental questionnaire**

As some of you will already know, we issue questionnaires randomly to a third of our parents each year on the effectiveness of our provision. The process is organised by an

external company and parental returns are processed by them, not by us; the process is entirely anonymous from the school's point of view. We receive all comments made by parents and an analysis of the scores parents have given on all aspects of our provision. We believe it gives us a very fair reflection on parental views on the progress of the school.

We were very pleased with parents' overall score of 'outstanding' for the work of the school and with the many positive comments parents had taken time to write. Thank you to those of you who were asked to contribute.

Each year, however, there are invariably issues raised by parents. Some may be mentioned only by one parent – that doesn't make the issue any less important, but I would fill too many pages of this newsletter were I to address all of them ... and one of the complainants mentioned the Principal's 'wordy' newsletter ... it still smarts ... There were, however, one or two key issues raised by more than one parent. A response to these follows.

#### *Variability in the quality of teaching*

Some parents felt that, although the vast majority of teaching in the school was very good, there were some areas of concern. 0809 was a very difficult year for staffing, particularly in the core subjects. English, Maths and Science all had to deal with the long-term absence of colleagues for a range of reasons. This led inevitably to periods where some classes experienced teaching that was not of the standard we aspire to offer our young people. This was as much a cause of concern for us as it was for the children and parents concerned. Despite our best efforts, it was not always possible to provide teaching that measured up to our high expectations.

It is important to note that we devote a great deal of energy to pushing up the standards of teaching in the school: we run teaching and learning briefings each fortnight for all teaching staff; we run a coaching programme, where teachers observe each other's lessons and learn from each other; our performance management cycle focuses heavily on classroom observations and formative discussions between teachers and their line managers; we are a Teacher

Learning Academy School – this encourages our teachers and other colleagues to undertake research into best practice and to disseminate it across the school: in short, we put teaching and learning at the heart of the school because we know that good teaching is essential to good learning.

I am very pleased that we have been able to recruit staff of a high calibre to fill all vacancies this year. I am hopeful that the level of satisfaction with the standard of teaching this year will be high.

#### *Flow of information on pupils' progress*

The other key issue raised by a few parents this year was the importance of information on their child's academic progress. There was dissatisfaction with the current reporting system from some; others wanted more information on examinations, their outcomes and implications.

A major strand of our work this year is a root and branch review of assessment, recording and reporting, led by Mr Russell. The outcome of it will be a new and more extensive reporting system which will, we hope, provide parents with a comprehensive set of information that will support them to help their children. Further, because of some exciting ICT development, parents will be able to access up-to-date information on their children's progress online from September 2010.

The most important function of assessment is to engage young people in their learning. They need to know where they are now, where they have the potential to reach and what they have to do to get there. Our work is centred on ensuring that we improve our current systems with those aims in mind.

Please note, however, that if you would like any information on your child's progress, you can contact his or her subject teacher, form tutor or Year Manager, any and all of whom would be happy to help.

#### **Free School Meals**

In these hard-pressed times, we have noticed an increase in the number of parents claiming

free school meals. We are convinced, however, that not all those who could claim are doing so, possibly because they are unaware that it is possible to claim even if you are in employment. Please, therefore, note that if you are in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers' Allowance or Child Tax Credit, but not entitled to working tax credit, and your annual income is below £15,575, your family is eligible to receive free school meals.

If you have any questions about this issue, please contact Ms Perry on 712777 or visit her in Reception. She will be happy to help.

It may be that your son or daughter is a Year 11 pupil and that you believe it would not be worth your while to claim as Year 11 have exit privileges and are allowed to leave the site in the lunch hour – providing their homework and coursework are up to date, of course. Year 11 pupils who are entitled to free school meals would be able to buy their meal at morning break when a range of hot food is on sale.

#### **Congratulations to .....**

... Luke Fitzgerald, Year 8, who has been accepted as an Aldeburgh Young Musician this year. Aldeburgh Young Musicians (AYM) is an organisation that offers young people aged 8 – 16 who 'can demonstrate exceptional talent and potential' the opportunity to work along outstanding musicians to extend their musical experience. Luke is a gifted musician who has contributed with great enthusiasm and skill to Music and Drama in and beyond school since he joined us last year.

We were delighted to hear also the success of one of our former pupils. Louis D'Heudieres was top music graduate at King's College, London, in June, winning their prestigious Purcell prize. Louis was an outstanding student when he was with us; we are all delighted – especially Mrs Macleod, our Head of Music – that he has continued his success beyond our school.

#### **Compass House**

The Local Authority has devolved to schools some of the money it has used in the past to accommodate young people whose behaviour

has resulted in their being removed from mainstream education. As a school we have a very good record of inclusion, referring very few young people out of our school and preferring to find alternative strategies to support them in school, whilst prioritising the majority who deserve to be educated in a calm, orderly environment.

We have taken our inclusion practice one step further this year, using the LA's devolved funding, by creating an inclusion facility on the school site; Compass House is the former Principal's House. It has been redecorated and upgraded over the summer break and is now ready for use.

We are still evolving our policies with regard to its future population, but we intend to use it in a range of ways. For some young people who might in the past have earned themselves a day or two excluded from school, Compass House will provide us with the option of 'including' them and ensuring that they continue learning, although separated from the school population. That will depend entirely on the deed that earned them the exclusion in the first place, of course. We intend also to refer to Compass House those young people whose behaviour causes persistent disruption in mainstream classrooms if they fail to respond to our other strategies.

Those young people who need additional support with aspects of their learning and who would benefit from one to one tuition in a very quiet setting will also be accommodated there.

We were very lucky to be able to appoint Mrs Evans, formerly a Higher Level Teaching Assistant, as our Inclusion Officer. She has significant teaching experience and an excellent record of supporting young people who need it.

We are hopeful that Compass House will prove to be an invaluable asset in underpinning our very high standards of behaviour and pastoral care.

### **And finally ...**

I look forward to working with you again this year in support of our young people.

June Cannie  
Principal

### **Coming soon....**

#### ***Year 11 parents' information evening: Tuesday 22 September: 7.30 pm***

Senior staff will give an overview of Year 11 and give parents the information they need to support their young people towards success in their examinations.

#### ***Year 12 prize-giving and presentation evening: 24 September: 7.30 pm in the sports hall***

We look forward to seeing the Class of 2009 and celebrating with them their success in last summer's examinations. The guest speaker is Dr Rob Wallach, Senior Tutor at King's College University of Cambridge.

#### ***The Official opening of the new Science block***

Please see the article in the newsletter for your invitation to join us on this important day.

#### ***Year 11 post-16 evening: 8 October: 7.30 pm***

6th form education and training centres send their representatives to this evening to offer parents and Year 11 pupils an opportunity to find out about what courses are available when they move on next summer from SVC.

#### ***Year 9 Options Evening on diplomas: 22 October: 7.30 pm***

A first opportunity for Year 9 parents to find out about the new diploma courses on offer to their children from next September.

Please note, you can find the school's calendar on the home page of our website at [www.sawstonvc.org](http://www.sawstonvc.org)