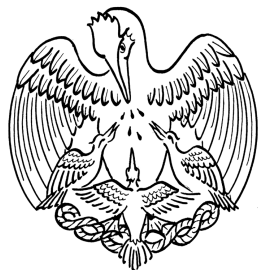


# SAWSTON VILLAGE COLLEGE



## NEWSLETTER

12 February 2009

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### ***Dates for your diary***

Staff Training Day (School closed to pupils)	23 February	Year 8 Examinations	2 to 6 March
School re-opens to Pupils	24 February	Years 9 & 10 Chinese Away Day	4 March
Options interviews begin	24 February	Year 9 Parents' Evening	5 March
Year 11 Art Trip to Tate Modern	26 February	Year 10 Triple Science Coursework Day	9 March
		Year 9 Options Deadline	13 March

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Dear Parent

What a half term so far! We had the afternoon when the electricity went down, leaving some areas of school in Stygian gloom; teachers knew there were pupils there somewhere; we could hear them, but ... Then we had the will we / won't we close discussion again in Stygian gloom long before the start of school, resulting in a decision to close when the weather reports were predicting heavy snowfall in the afternoon which would have left us struggling to get our pupils back home at the end of school. Mind you, we could always have organised a sleep-over. And then, as if one day's closure hadn't been bad enough, along comes another one.

Thursday's decision was an easier one to make. Staff in Huntingdon and Ely areas were snowed in. Then at 6.50am Stagecoach announced that bus services were suspended until

further notice. This was swiftly followed by the other bus services that serve the college, all of whom suspended their services. Early-morning Radio Cambridgeshire reports included a message from the Police – reiterated well into the morning – that driving conditions in the City centre were 'treacherous' and advising motorists not to drive. Keeping the school open with all of those factors in play would have been foolhardy.

Then again, on the Friday, the vast majority of local schools opened, relieved to see that there had been no snow overnight. By 8.15 it was falling in large lumps, leading many schools to close from 10 am onwards. We held our nerve, trusting the weather forecast that there would be rain in the afternoon and in the knowledge that temperatures were scheduled to remain above freezing. This gave our pupils a

lunchtime opportunity to take advantage of our hastily - formulated snowballing policy: only snowball consenting individuals and do so as far away from the school buildings as possible. The resulting scene on the school field during the lunch hour was like a scene from 'Apocalypse Now', but at least it ensured that our pupils could take advantage of the snowy conditions to be children – and that those who were not boys could find a space far from the madding crowd ...

We had some problems with snowballing on the school field during our closure days. In the end, I sent them all home, although Mr Richmond was most put out that he hadn't quite managed to hit Mr Holloway or Mr Morris.

Please accept my apologies and be assured that the last thing our staff or I want is school closure. We only take the

decision when we have weighed up all of the factors. On the days we closed, it really was the only sensible option.

### **Visits from abroad**

We have thoroughly enjoyed the recent visits by teachers and headteachers from Australia and Sweden.

First to arrive at SVC were two Australians from a boys' grammar school in Melbourn. They had originally planned to stay 2 hours but stayed for longer. We were very impressed with their school motto: 'We teach boys'. It seemed very apposite. As I sat at my desk one morning last week, an e-mail of thanks popped up. We were amused by the contrast in our circumstances: 'The weather has also been a shock. We are in the middle of the worst heat wave in over 100 years with four consecutive days of temperatures above 44 degrees. Feral boys returning from 7 weeks' holidays in this temperature are not a pleasant experience!' Swap then?

However, we were very saddened to learn of the disaster that hit very close to their area with the fires that are raging out of control. We were relieved to learn that they and their charges are all safe, although their summer camp has been razed to the ground and families known to the school have been seriously affected by the tragedy. How quickly circumstances change. Our new friends are at the forefront of our minds during these tragic times.

We also hosted visitors from Sweden, ironically both English. They belong to the Swedish

'schools-for-profit' organisation, Kunskapskolan. One is the Managing Director, the other head of one of their schools. Their particular strength is offering each of their pupils an individualised curriculum. There is much we can learn from them. In turn, they were very interested in how we have developed the ethos in our school. They are opening an academy in Richmond in 2010 and will have the challenge of importing their system into the existing schools that will form the academy with the existing staff and some of the existing pupils.

There is so much to be gained from such visits. Talking to educationalists from other countries makes us review and reconsider our own practices and energises the debate on how best to give our pupils the best deal possible. It is always a delight, too, to see our pupils reflected in other experienced teachers' and headteachers' eyes; they are invariably a huge credit to the school. Our school forum representatives were wonderful with our Swedish visitors who had asked particularly to speak to them.

I have been so impressed also by the willingness of my senior team colleagues who are offering, selflessly, to undertake fact-finding missions to both of our new partner schools. In fact, there has been some rather unseemly wrangling. Clearly, however, it's a job for a headteacher ...

### **Channel 4 fame**

Some of our pupils have been working with Channel 4 on a new eight-part online series centred around DNA, called 'The Routes Game'. Joe Ives,

Marc Smith, Daisy Hewson, Grace Mooney, Lara Edington, Palvi Williams and Holly Sondi visited Channel 4 Headquarters on 29 January to be part of this new venture in meeting the teaching and learning needs of 14 to 19-year-olds.

The game is a groundbreaking exploration of genetics and bio-ethics through a developing thriller and a series of community challenges and mini-games on genetic themes. Mixing with people from all sectors of the media and being interviewed on camera at Channel 4 was an exciting experience for our pupils – and staff! Mr Morris, who accompanied the group, was fulsome in his praise of our pupils' maturity. They represented the school very positively indeed.

You can join in the fun on line at [www.routesgame.com](http://www.routesgame.com)

### **Music Tuition and School Trip Payments**

The balance for Music Tuition fees is due by Friday 13 February.

The balance for the following school trips is due:

Normandy	27 February
Spain	2 February
Rhineland	9 February
Italy	13 March
Ardeche	27 February
Non Residential	27 February

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

*Year 10*

We were delighted to receive the results of the first Maths modular examination taken by our Year 10 pupils – they broke all previous records with 83% of them achieving GCSE Grade C or above; 41 pupils gained an

A\*. This is a significant achievement for the individual pupils but also a great credit to our excellent Maths team and to our pastoral team for all they have done to teach, encourage and support.

#### *Year 9 Basketball Team*

This newly-formed team stormed their way impressively to the final of the District Basketball tournament, meeting and beating Netherhall and St Bede's in their final games, and coming top of the 12-school group. We are looking forward to great things from them all in the future. Congratulations go to Jake Andrews (Cpt), Toby Andrews, Jakob Vikner, Jordan Searle, Bradley Tweddle, Jimmy Bamrah, Aaron Peters and Alex Whitehouse.

#### *Youth Speaks*

Hannes Whittingham, Diana Paulding and Lydia Chantler-Hicks came worthy runners-up to Melbourn Village College's team in this annual debating competition run by the Sawston Rotarians. Hannes, as main speaker, presented the team's arguments on the impact of the digital age, ably supported by Diana as Chair and Lydia as proposer of the vote of thanks. All three deserve praise and congratulations for the confidence, articulacy and maturity with which they engaged the audience.

#### *Sawston Youth Drama*

If you have yet to see the latest production, 'The Boyfriend' by this terrific group of young dramatists, you have until Saturday evening to do so. Congratulations go to a wonderful cast who bring the Jazz era alive in this light, romantic 1920s musical

comedy. In the current meteorological circumstances it was a real bonus to be transported even for a few hours to the French Riviera. The production was utterly charming.

Our thanks go to Mark Long, the Producer and Director of SYD, and to the redoubtable Mrs Macleod, the Musical Director. They do a marvellous job of inspiring our young people to achieve the very highest standards.

#### *Emily Morris*

Emily's cricketing career goes from strength to strength. Only in Year 8, she has again been chosen to play for the County. She has our warmest congratulations.

#### **An invitation to lunch**

I hope you will be able to join us at **12.15 on Tuesday 17 March** for lunch in the school Dining Hall. This is an opportunity to meet other parents over lunch, but also to be introduced to members of the Forum over coffee in the Library afterwards. An additional inducement to come is that after coffee, we will visit the new Science laboratories before the start of afternoon lessons. Our Science staff are delighted with their new home, as, indeed, are our pupils.

The next phase is already underway, as is the planning for the one after that starts in September 2009 and will bring us new Maths, ICT, Business Studies, Food Technology and Hospitality and Catering centres. Last to fall into place will be a new Geography building. We anticipate that the programme will be complete by

2011, giving us a school campus that matches our aspirations for our pupils.

#### **The Henry Morris Community Trust**

As you know, we recently launched a consultation on forming a trust, the full details of which you can read on our website. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the planned consultation evening because of the weather. We have been unable to find a date when the involved schools and partners are able to attend, so have

decided not to reconvene it. Holding such an evening is not a mandatory part of the consultation process; we had decided to hold it simply to give anyone who wished to find out more the opportunity to do so.

I have been very pleased that the returned questionnaires are showing huge support for our proposals. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the plans, please do not hesitate to contact me at the College. I should be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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

The half term break starts today! I hope that we return to the early signs of spring and can actually see the grass on Fountain Court.

I am always conscious that not all parents are able to take time off work to enjoy the half term breaks with their children. I hope, however, that you are able to have some relaxing family time and catch up with each other over the week's holiday.

June Cannie  
Principal