



Aylesbury High School

Parents' & Students' Newsletter: *July 2015*

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Failed again....

Schools are sometimes accused of being exam factories and it is certainly true that the government's focus has been mainly on measuring results in terms of GCSEs rather than anything 'softer'. One important feature of most factories is the need to produce absolutely identical items at the end of the production process. We certainly do our best to achieve uniformity – everyone has to wear the same clothes, follow the same curriculum and we do our best to ensure teachers deliver lessons that are similar to those of their colleagues.

However, I need to report that yet again we have failed and have a school full of individuals who may have some common AHS values and qualities but still retain their uniqueness despite our best efforts.

As the end of term approaches swiftly, this is a chance to thank everyone who has, in whatever way, contributed to the last year at Aylesbury High School and helped to shape those individuals.

Much of the work is behind the scenes so a public Thank You to the members of the AHSA for their tireless organisation of social and fund-raising events, to the governors for their 'critical friend' role in many meetings each year, and, of course, to parents for lending us your daughters every day. Finally, my gratitude to the students for your energy and enthusiasm, and to the staff who have worked so hard this year (again) – AHS couldn't do it without you!

I hope everyone has a great summer and returns in September refreshed and ready for another action-packed year. To those for whom this is the last newsletter, best wishes and good luck for the future.

Alan Rosen

Staffing news

As always at this time of year, we say farewell and thank you to a number of colleagues who are moving on from AHS.

Pride of place goes to Mrs Knowles who retires after an amazing 44½ years as a Science Technician. I know how much colleagues in Science will miss her hard work and unequalled knowledge of AHS's science department, and we wish her a happy retirement.

Also retiring with our best wishes are Mr Skinner after 17 years in Business Studies/Economics, Mrs Frith after 13 years in PE and as Head of Year in the Sixth Form, and Mrs Frazer after 12 years as Staff Secretary, producing many of the school's publications and providing invaluable support for the UCAS and reports systems.

Mrs Kitchen started at AHS in 1999 and is leaving with our thanks to take up an exciting post as Secondary Curriculum Leader of the Geographical Association, having served as Geography Team Leader, Humanities Curriculum Manager and Head of Year in her time with us.

We also would like to thank everyone else leaving to take up positions elsewhere and to explore new opportunities; we are very grateful for all of your hard work and much-valued contributions to the school:

Dr Coles	Chemistry and Science
Mr Druker	Director of Music
Miss Graham	Biology and Science, Year Head
Mrs Grimmette	Maths, Careers Co-ordinator
Ms Mast-Hughes	English, Communications & PSHE
Miss Mead	Psychology
Miss Melluish	Chemistry and Science, Year Head & PSHE
Mr Meyer	Maths
Mrs Monaghan	PE
Mr Nuttall	Languages
Mr Turner	Chemistry and Science Curriculum Manager
Miss Webb	Art

We must also pass on our collective best wishes to Mrs Williams, Mrs Waugh and Mrs Bywater who have either started their maternity leaves or will do so shortly.

Our Year Head and Pastoral Support Assistant teams for 2015-16 will be:

Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Mrs Jarrett	Mrs Rust	Mrs Sillence	Mrs Johnson & Mrs Crafts	Mrs Taylor	Mrs Bevan	Mr Ochiltree
Mrs Ray: KS3 PSA			Mrs Faulkner: KS4 PSA		Mrs Sutton: Sixth Form PSA	

We are still seeking a maths teacher for September; if parents know of possible candidates please do encourage them to have a look at the vacancies section of our website and get in touch.

2014-15 School Improvement Plan

At the start of the year I outlined the areas we were going to focus on in 2014-15 to move the school forward. Staff and Governors have been evaluating the plan and here is a very brief summary of the progress that has been made:

TEACHING & LEARNING		
TL1	Curriculum change	New National Curriculum being implemented in Y7-9 Changes to GCSE English and Maths for Y10 Sept 2015 implemented Significant modification to Sixth Form curriculum in response to national changes to A Levels
TL2	Developing teaching	Initiatives on Flipped Learning and Growth Mindsets
TL3	Initiatives in the classroom	Development of ICT use in the classroom, programme of staff Learning Lunches to share best practice
TL4	Outreach work with primary schools	Sixth Form and staff successfully running primary school sessions; talks with primary schools about Y6/7 transition
TL5 TL7	Whole-school and team performance targets for 2015-16 Improve use of data	Initially using a system called SISRA but about to move to FFT which is more widely used nationally to monitor progress and set appropriate targets at all levels Considerable work done on moving to Life After Levels, staff consultation and parents' focus groups
TL6	Student resilience	Introduced the Penn Resilience Programme for Year 7 Assemblies and staff training delivered Running Have a Go! week (June)
TL8	Student leadership	Overhauled election process for Sixth Form student positions, produced job descriptions, introduced Student Ambassadors
TL9	Develop academic and pastoral reviews	Reviews including work scrutiny, student focus groups etc.
TL10	Parental involvement	Successful evenings on (eg) resilience, Life After levels, on-line safety plus year group information evenings
TL11	EAL provision	Working group developing guidance
PERSONNEL		
P1	Teachers' Appraisal year 2 of revised scheme	Work done on improving job descriptions and revising the appraisal process
P2	Change to three Governor Committees	Structure is more successful than having four committees so to be continued
P3	Review staff training	More focused training and ensuring all staff can benefit
P4	RIFT (Right First Time)	Notion introduced successfully, particular focus on report writing
RESOURCES		
R1	Reducing Budget	Budget for 2015-16 continues to be in the black through efficient management of resources and careful handling of limited funds
R2	Development Campaign	Science project has raised ~£70,000 through parental donations plus £370,000 through applications for government and charitable grants
R3	Green approach	Assemblies and consciousness raised
R4	Marketing and communication	New multi-purpose website, Twitter account running well
R5	Exploit ICT	Transformation of e-mail, cloud storage, on-line collaboration tools etc
R6	ICT infrastructure	Improved backup, new high-speed Internet connection being sourced

Year 10 Work Experience

We have reluctantly decided not to run Year 10 Work Experience next year. This is in line the recommendations of the [2011 Wolf Report](#) which suggested that pre-16 work experience was not as effective as we might hope, and supported the post-16 work shadowing which we will continue to offer.

There is no doubt that many students get a great deal from the placements and some really do gain ideas for the type of work they might want to pursue in the future. However, there are also some less worthwhile placements and the week involves us in a great deal of administration (in previous years the Bucks Education Business Partnership did more of this).

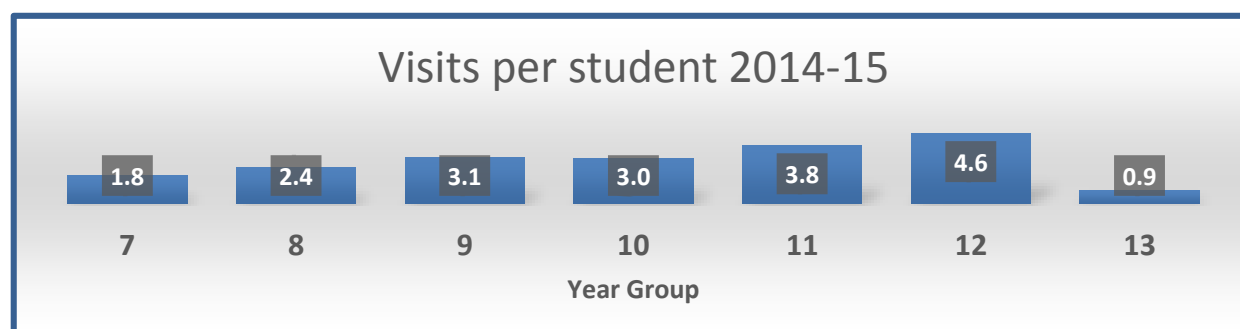
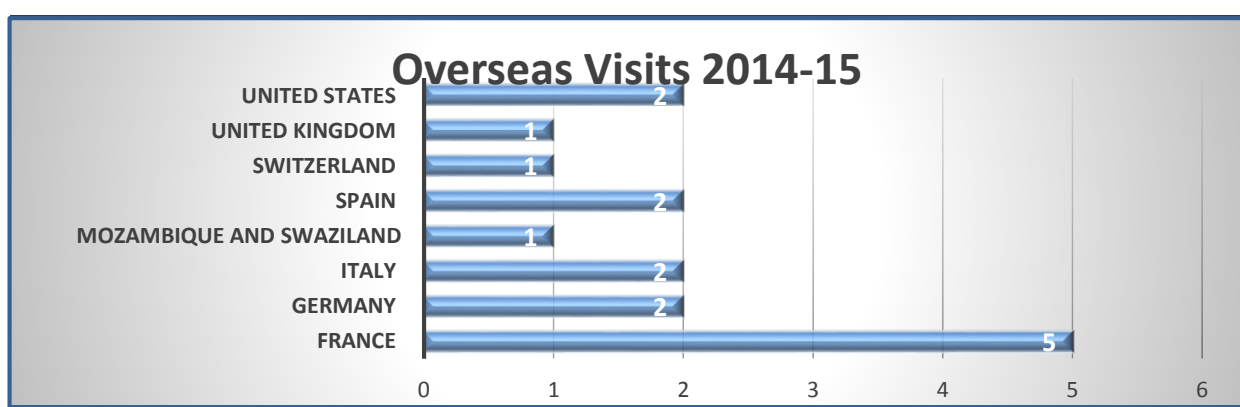
Parents are being asked to pay for the placements and it also costs the school a significant sum to buy in the checking service.

So we are going to give Year 10 work experience a rest and that should mean a bit more time freed up both for lessons and anything else we want to focus on next year.

Thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to make the work experience placements such a success over many years and we will review this to see whether we want to reinstate it in the future.

Trips and Visits in 2014-15

Total number of visits	110
Total number of students	3756
Total number of days	270
Total number of participant days	8520



Exam/Curriculum Changes 2017 onwards: GCSE

For Year 9 about to start on their GCSE courses, and the younger year groups, the Key Stage 4 landscape is going to look significantly different from the present set-up.

The most obvious change will be in the grading system which is moving to using 9 - 1 rather than A* - G. There are 4 lower grades (the replacement of 4½ existing grades: a bit of C plus D - G) and 5 higher grades (replacing 3½ existing grades), with the top of grade 9 higher than the present A*. More information about the new grading system and how we will be using it will be shared with parents and students in the new academic year.

Year 9 only have this for the new English Literature, English Language and Maths GCSEs, with other subjects following one or two years later (see below). The exam boards and Ofqual are still trying to establish the level of difficulty of the exam papers in Maths but the intention is that the subject is bigger in terms of content and, at the top end, more stretching. When this is resolved it may well affect whether our students do or don't take any additional Maths qualifications in 2017.

The focus on grade C as a 'good' or 'expected' grade has always been unhealthy, not least because it devalues the efforts of anyone who works hard but doesn't achieve it. The new equivalent will be a 5, which includes only the upper part of the present grade C and is therefore more demanding.

New GCSE taught from <i>(year groups in September 2015)</i>	First exams	Subjects (but we don't do all of them)
September 2015 YEAR 10	Summer 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English language English literature mathematics
September 2016 YEAR 9	Summer 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient Languages (Classical Greek, Latin) Art and Design Biology Chemistry Citizenship Studies Computer science Dance Double Science Drama Food preparation and nutrition Geography History Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish) Music Physics Physical education Religious studies
September 2017 YEAR 8	Summer 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient history Astronomy Business Classical civilisation Design and technology (incl. Food, Textiles and Product Design) Economics Electronics Engineering Film studies Geology Information and communications technology Media studies Psychology Sociology Statistics

Exam/Curriculum Changes 2017 onwards: A Level

The A Level reforms are not about difficulty; unlike GCSEs there is no intention to change the 'standard' so it's much more about the structure of the exams. The amount of content change varies considerably between subjects; some are virtually untouched while others do look quite different from their predecessors.

Again there is a focus on terminal exams rather than coursework, except where there are 'essential skills' that need to be tested. The courses will no longer be divided into modules and there will be no exams in January.

AS and A levels are 'decoupled' – this means that AS results will no longer count towards an A level, unlike now.

The new exams are coming in over three years, which is going to make it rather confusing because of the different approaches to AS exams in each 'phase'. Our intention is for next year's Year 12 to take AS exams in the same way as they presently do, but potentially make changes when the second phase of A Levels is introduced a year later.

New AS and A level taught <i>(year groups in September 2015)</i>	First AS exams	First A level exams	Subjects (but we don't do all of them)
September 2015 YEAR 11 Phase 1	Summer 2016	Summer 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art and design • Biology • Business • Chemistry • Computer science • Economics • English language • English language & literature • English literature • History • Physics • Psychology • Sociology
September 2016 YEAR 10 Phase 2	Summer 2017	Summer 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient languages (Classical Greek, Latin) • Dance • Drama & theatre • Geography • Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish) • Music • Physical education • Religious studies
September 2017 YEAR 9 Phase 3	Summer 2018	Summer 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Ancient history • Archaeology • Classical civilisation • Creative writing • Design & technology • Electronics • Environmental science • Film studies • Further mathematics • General studies • Geology • Government and politics • Health and social care • History of art • Information & communications technology • Law • Mathematics • Media studies • Music technology • Philosophy • Statistics

Term Dates 2015-16 - reminder

Please note that these are not necessarily the same as other schools.



Term	First day of term	Half Term	Last day of term	Other days to note
Autumn 2015	Thursday 3 September	Monday 26 – Friday 30 October	Friday 18 December	INSET 1: Tuesday 1 September INSET 2: Wednesday 2 September INSET 3: Friday 9 October
Spring 2016	Tuesday 5 January	Monday 15 – Friday 19 February	Thursday 24 March	INSET 4: Monday 4 January
Summer 2016	Monday 12 April	Monday 30 May – Friday 3 June	Wednesday 20 July	INSET 5: Monday 11 April Bank Holiday: Monday 2 May

The Giving Machine

Are you doing any on-line purchasing this summer?

If so, could you spend a couple of minutes registering at

www.thegivingmachine.co.uk?

Companies such as Amazon, John Lewis, W H Smith and M&S will all make a donation to the AHSA, **at no cost to you**, if you go via The Giving Machine to buy anything.

It is completely pain-free so please do sign up before you reach for your credit/debit cards!



2015 Survey Results

On behalf of the 2015 Survey Group, we are pleased to be able to publish this report into the findings of the surveys completed by students, parents and staff in April this year. 637 parents (576 in 2013), 637 (526) students and 92 (44) staff returned the surveys. There are many areas of school life which show improvement and the overall approval ratings are all over 90%.

	Parents	Students	Staff
Good or better 2015	91.6%	93.6%	96.6%
Good or better 2013	94.1%	91.6%	95.2%
Good or better 2011	93.6%	88.7%	87.0%

Academic Subjects

Students and parents rated academic subjects very highly, with particularly high approval ratings for: English, Maths, Science, Business Studies, DT, Geography, History, History of Art, MFL, Politics, Spanish, Thinking Skills and World Development. We have shared specific comments with Subject Team Leaders so that they can take your feedback into consideration when planning for next year.

Whole School Aspects

The areas rated most highly were: quality of teaching, choice of subjects available, control of attendance / truancy / bullying, exam results, behaviour, standard of facilities, approachability of staff, encouragement and help from staff, caring nature of students, management of the school.

Improvements since 2013

There are several areas which **parents** feel have improved since the previous survey, some of which the school has focused on in the past two years. These include:

Out of school activities/clubs	(up 3%)
Careers advice and guidance	(up 2%)
Control of attendance/truancy	(up 2%)
Encouraging and listening to parents' views	(up 2%)
Regular marking of work	(up 2%)

There are numerous areas **students** feel have improved, most notably:

Parents being kept up-to-date with progress	(up 11%)
My school treats all students fairly and equally	(up 7%)
Students at the school care about each other	(up 6%)
Most of my teachers would listen carefully if I had a problem	(up 6%)
My parents often check that I have done my homework	(up 5%)
My parents want to know what I'm learning about in school	(up 5%)

Parents' and Students' Areas for Improvement

Both parents and students were asked to choose one area that they would like to see improved.

Parents' top priorities for improvement were:

- Developing self-confidence / esteem in students (57 parents)
- Happiness of students (28 parents)
- Ensuring students do their best / make good progress (27 parents)
- Suitable levels of homework (26 parents)
- Standard of school facilities (26 parents)
- Careers guidance (26 parents)

Students' top priorities for improvement were:

- Suitable levels of homework (64 students)
- Developing self-confidence / esteem in students (63 students)
- Happiness of students (63 students)
- Access to computers (53 students)
- Choice of lessons and subjects available (40 students)

Written Comments

By far the most common response from parents was to praise the school and its teachers. However, both parents and students also commented on some inconsistency in students' experiences and had other suggestions for improvement. Below we have listed the top responses from parents and students:

Parents (n = 304)	n	Students (n = 274)	n
Praise (general)	93	Homework levels too high	31
Comments about teaching/subjects	16	Praise for the school	29
Positive comments about pastoral care	15	More access to computers and printers	27
Concern about too much focus on exams	14	Concern about too much focus on exams	21
A request for more PE for non-elite teams	13	Concerns about teaching	18
Concern that homework varies in amount and quality of task	13	Marking	17
Suggestions about parents' evenings	12	Comments about the canteen	12
A request to improve feedback to parents	12	Staff unapproachable	11
Positive comments about teaching/subjects	11	Staff are too strict	9
Concerns about marking	10	School needs to be more eco friendly	9
A request for more support for students struggling with work	10	Issues with cleanliness of site	8
Concerns about pastoral care	9	PSHE/L4L needs more on mental health/sexuality	8
Comments about the canteen	8	More support for students not going to university	6
Unfair treatment of /dealing with behaviour	3	Unfair treatment of some students	6

The Survey Group's Conclusions: Overall Priorities for Improvement

Having taken into account the importance placed on different aspects of the school, as well as staff, student and parents' suggestions, the key issues in the table below have been identified. The Leadership Team has already begun to consider these priorities as part of the School Improvement Planning for 2015 - 16.

- 1 Develop self-confidence of students and help them know how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- 2 Set consistent and reasonable levels of homework so that homework extends students' learning without overburdening them.
- 3 Develop effective and efficient marking which benefits both students' learning and staff workload.
- 4 Improve access to computer facilities.
- 5 Explore student, parent and staff views on careers provision to ensure we continue to meet our students' needs.

Summer 2015 Exam Results Collection

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
					<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>31</i>	<i>AUGUST 2015</i>					

GCE & AQA Baccalaureate Results - Thursday 13 August 2015

Y13 may pick up their results from 9.00 am onwards.

Y12 (and any others who have taken early AS/A2 exams) may collect their results from 10.30 am.

GCSE Results – Thursday 20 August 2015

Y11 may collect their results from 9.00 am onwards.

Y10 (and any other candidates who have taken GCSE exams) may collect their results from 10.30 am.

After midday on all results days, any stamped, addressed envelopes will be posted and any uncollected envelopes will be kept in Reception until the start of the Autumn Term.

Please note:

No student's results can be released to any other person (including parents/relations) without a signed letter of authorisation from the student giving permission for her results to be collected by that person.

Science Building Work

I would like to thank staff and students alike for coping so well with the disruption - the building work has been underway since Easter.

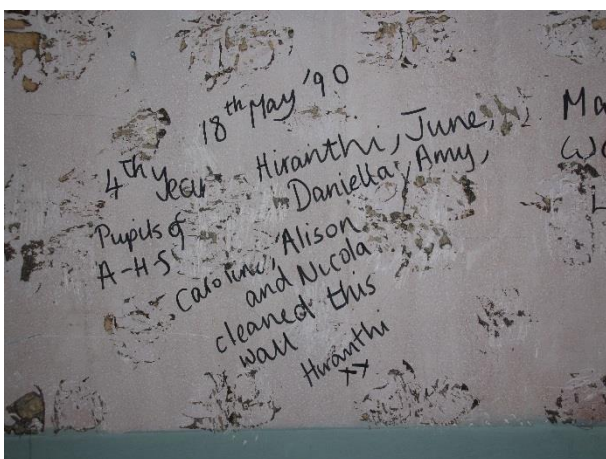
We are now in week 14 out of 21 and the builders have just about completed the demolition and stripping out phases in all areas of Science.



Old windows and curtain walling removed (S4)



New windows and curtain walling installed (S1)



Graffiti from 1990, presumably before a previous re-decoration or installation of furniture.



First fix of power, water and gas services



New corridor created between S8 and S9



Replacement of roof started

At the site meeting last week, the builders told us that they are slightly behind schedule mainly due to unexpected issues fitting the window frames (the first floor concrete slab sticks out more than the ground floor slab so all of the frames have had to be modified). This may or may not affect the start of term but the builders are doing their best to catch up.

At the start of the holidays, the builders begin work on the Dining Room and Main Hall which will be out of action for much of the summer while they replace the windows, so we will organise the exam results days using the Harding Hall, unless the builders have made sufficient progress by then to release those spaces to us.

We could not have carried out this work without the generosity of parents through the Development Campaign but we haven't finished fund raising yet! We still need significant funds to complete the work and would very much like to tackle S11 which we had to delete from this project to keep costs down. Please see our [website](#) for the donation forms.

Linking with Kenya

Our link with Chagaik Secondary School in Kenya is one of the longest standing between any UK and Kenyan schools; we have been working together since 1999.

We share lots of activities in different subjects and Active Citizenship is an area where many of the younger AHS girls have come to know our partners. There have been several visits of staff and students in both directions over the years and we were looking forward to receiving a visit this month. Sadly our guests were not able to get their visas in time and have been unable to come. We are all disappointed. However, in the words of John F Kennedy "we choose to do these things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard".

Linking has brought great benefits to AHS girls over the years and will continue to do so. Amongst its highs and lows, this is a particular low but we are already planning how we shall move forward and strengthen the link in the coming months.

Also, we support the Karibuni Trust through fundraising at school for their invaluable work in Kenya, so are pleased to let everyone know of their Fun Day coming soon.



Karibuni



20th Anniversary

Free
Entry!

Fun Day

B-B-Q and refreshments • Cake stall •
Circus Workshop • Rowsham Band •
Mad Mark Sublime Science • Trampolines •
Children's sports • Stoke Mandeville
Combined School singing and recorder
groups and much, much more...

Saturday 18 July 2015

10am - 4pm

STOKE MANDEVILLE VILLAGE
COMMUNITY CENTRE AND PLAYING FIELDS

www.karibuni.org.uk

Registered UK Charity Number 1044872

Helping children from the
streets and slums in Kenya