



Balfour Newsletter Easter 2016



Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Balfour Newsletter! First and foremost, a very well done to Mrs Beck, who has been appointed to the post of Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour School with effect from 1st September 2016. I am extremely pleased Governors have made what I firmly believe to be an excellent decision and one which will benefit our school community for many years to come.

This last term as ever, has been an extremely busy one. Preparation for the external exams in summer has been an inevitable focus for many staff and students. However, academic study has been complemented by our increasingly extensive enrichment programme. This has involved Futures Days activities, Modern Language and English plays, and our school Panto amongst many others! However, two events stand out. Firstly, our biennial Sixth Form visit to Sir Graham Balfour Cambodia and secondly our annual 'Spinathon'. Both of these events do much to enrich the life of the school and provide excellent opportunities for personal growth for all those involved.

The Cambodia visit was the result of a two year commitment by all participants. Students had to apply via a rigorous application process and then were required to organise and take part in a whole series of ongoing fundraising activities, for example; giving talks about our Cambodia initiative to local organisations. All finance for the trip had to be and was, self-generated. The visit was conducted successfully during February half-term. Staff and students were both elated and overwhelmed on their return.

The whole school has benefitted from their experiences. Assemblies have been given by the team and a DVD about the trip has been created. 'Thank you' talks have been given to local groups who lent their support to the venture. Most of all, however, the students from SGB Cambodia benefited from contact with the team and from the resources they took with them. We now have clear understanding of the needs of the school which will give a clear focus to future Cambodia related fundraising. An excellent result all round!

The Spinathon was a huge organisational venture involving students, staff, parents, Governors, primary students and friends of the school. It really brought the whole school community together in a way no other event does and created a real 'buzz' around the school. Over £5,700 was raised in 1 day which will be divided between Katherine House Hospice and Sport Relief. I would like to thank formally everyone involved in either organising or taking part in such an outstanding success. I would also like to thank wholeheartedly all who contributed sponsorship money for two very worthwhile causes.

Further details of both these events can be found inside the Newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading it!

BBC School Report

Thursday 10th March saw 21 Balfour students, along with Mr Rowley and Mr Massey taking part in the tenth anniversary of BBC School Report.

BBC News School Report gives 11-16 year-old students across the UK the opportunity to research and produce their own news reports for a real audience.

Last year, more than 1,000 schools across the UK took part in this project, reporting on a range of issues, producing stories and publishing them on their school website. The event helps students develop their journalistic skills so they can report on the stories that matter to them and make their voices heard.

Please have a look at our website (www.sirgrahambalfour.co.uk) under the 'STUDENT' tab to see our students' participation. You will find some really great articles including The Northern Lights, The Balfour Battlefield Trip and Colombia - A moment of a Lifetime, to name but a few.



Cambodia

SGB Cambodia

Thank you to Ellen Butter (Year 12) who raised an amazing £410.82 for our school in Cambodia. Ellen raised the money by Carol Singing around her village at Christmas.

Cambodia 2016 Visit

In the early hours of the 12th February 2014, 12 students and 3 members of staff began their 10 day adventure to Cambodia.

After a 3 hour drive to Heathrow, a 12 hour flight to Hong Kong and a further 2½ hour flight, we arrived safely in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh at around 10:30am in the morning Cambodia time (which is 7 hours ahead).

There was no time to sleep, we went to our guest house and got straight out into the bustling city of Phnom Penh to visit S21. This was once a high school in the capital city; however during Pol Pot's reign with the Khmer Rouge, the school had been turned into a place of torture and a prison. An estimated 20,000 people were killed here during a very short space of time. This was a very sobering start to our trip and made us all begin to understand the horrifying history of this beautiful country.

To get over our travelling and to adjust to the incredible culture change, we spent the next two days in Sihanoukville, Cambodia's beach resort. With the sun beating down and the warm waves crashing on the shore we found time to try the exotic fruits and meet the locals. In between the odd spot of sunbathing, our time was mostly spent making friends with the local



children and getting our first taste of traditional Cambodian food.

As our time in **Sihanoukville** came to an end, we drove the 5 hour journey to Chi Phat - home of Sir Graham Balfour Cambodia. On arrival at the school, the entrance was lined with over 200 friendly and welcoming smiles clapping and cheering our arrival.



Our time in the school and Chi Phat village was by far the most amazing experience that many of us will cherish for the rest of our lives. We took many resources over to the students to enhance their teaching and learning, from glitter glue to play dough and we taught a range of lessons including English, Maths and Geography. Some students used play dough to make farm animals, then teach them the English word, some taught them body parts, and some students

taught the Cambodian children the names of the colours which they then applied to a Maths puzzle.

To begin with, the 6th Form students found the experience challenging (overcoming the language barrier) but ended up leaving in awe of every young person, due to their resilience and determination to learn English and their gratitude for SGB Stafford's continued support and interest in improving their lives.



Whilst all of this was happening throughout the day, the afternoons and evenings were fun filled too! We were taught some traditional Cambodian playground games, and we taught them some of our games too! We also visited the local waterfall which gave us chance to cool down after a long day of teaching and we visited the high school and played volleyball with the students. With all this in mind, the trip wouldn't have been the same without the experience of staying in a remote village with limited access to electricity and Wi-Fi and lots of interesting creepy crawlies and creatures of the jungle!

From here we had another 7 hour journey back to Phnom Penh where we visited the Killing Fields. This was again a very hard place to visit as it once more reminded us of the shocking history of the country. Having taught in the school at this point it also made us appreciate the importance of the help that we as a school community all give to our school in Cambodia.

We then had another 6 hour drive to Siem Reap; due to the speed at which the country is developing, and the improvements made to the roads, this journey was 2 hours shorter than it was 2 years ago. During our time in Siem Reap we visited the incredible world heritage site of Angkor Wat, which is a series of beautiful and ancient temples across the city. A lovely end to an amazing trip!

This was once again a very successful trip which was made possible by just less than 2 years of hard work and fundraising from the 12 students and 3 members of staff involved. It is an incredible experience and one which everyone involved in the trip will never forget!

Thank you to everyone who supported the fundraising campaign. Donations were received from:

- The Inner Wheel Club of Stafford
- Bishop's Offley Methodist Church - Harvest Supper
- The Rotary Club of Stone and District
- Staffordshire Local Community Fund supported by Councillor Ian Hollinshead
- Stafford Railway Building Society for donating stationery supplies for the team to take to Cambodia
- Williams Coaches of Rugeley who provided discounted transport to and from Heathrow airport.
- Also, thank you to our primary schools for allowing our students to participate in their Christmas Fayres
- Lastly to everyone in school who supported the team, from managing the finances to buying snacks, cakes and other fundraising items.

Pictured: Nathan Stevens, Ellie Young, Liberty Smith and Anya Elliman with Emma Parker from SRBS.



Careers Fair

Our Annual Careers Fair took place on Futures Day 2 on Thursday 22nd February. Initially aimed at Year 9 students who are in the process of deciding their GCSE options for the following academic year, we then decided to extend the fair to Years 10, 11 and 6th Form.

Over 30 organisations attended SGB to speak to our students and encourage them to think about their future career choices. Exhibitors included The Army, Francesco Group, The Lewis Partnership, Universities and colleges to name but a few.

Feedback from the event was excellent and year on year we continue to expand on the number of stands exhibiting.



Debate Club

Debate Club runs every Friday lunchtime in room 430. It was set up in September 2014 and since this time there have been many interesting debates held, from 'Which is better, Cat or Dog?' to debates on more serious issues such as the death penalty and abortion. We have members of the Mid Staffs Youth Net that come along to the Friday meetings to help the students and to make some excellent contributions to the debates.



We have a number of regular members that attend the club, as well as extra students who pop in from time to time.

If you enjoy putting your point across, or have strong opinions on a particular topic that you would like to see included in Debate Club, please see Mrs March, Saffron Howdell or Katie Henderson (Year 11).

Eco News

There is No Planet B Exhibition

The annual 'There is No Planet B' arts exhibition took place from Saturday 27th February through to Saturday 5th March at St Chad's Church and at the Food for Thought Café just around the corner.

'There is No Planet B!' is an environmental arts festival which has grown into an inspirational annual event, attracting hundreds of visitors and a vast array of exhibits and performers. The event encourages people of all ages and abilities to exhibit artwork of any form that inspires concern and respect for our planet. Artwork might include paintings, collages, models, sculptures, photographs, mobiles and ceramics, posters and poems all helping us show the world how much we care for our precious, one and only, Planet A.



This year two pieces of art were entered by the school, a collage by The Inclusion Unit (above) and a poster by House Group S5 (right). Both entries were highly praised by the judges, with the school receiving Commended and Highly Commended awards and a prize money cheque for £25.00.



Recycling Matters

The school continues to recycle waste paper, with House Groups being responsible for emptying their own classroom recycling bins on a regular basis. In order to encourage this system the school has recently invested in replacing the old bins for new colour-coded versions.

Royal Horticultural Society Christmas Card Competition

Thank you to Mrs Hill for organising the entries for the RHS Christmas Card Competition.



Despite being only March, the Society has launched a competition to design their first ever RHS Campaign for School Gardening Christmas Card, which will be sold in RHS shops this Christmas. Good luck to all the students who have entered!



Rocket Seeds from Space!

"Astronaut Tim Peake calls for help with 'rocket seeds' experiment"

Tim Peake has asked thousands of schools to grow seeds that have journeyed through space.

In April, up to 10,000 schools will grow and compare the seeds flown to space with those that have stayed on Earth as part of the nationwide experiment.



Sir Graham Balfour will be one of those schools!

The results will be analysed by biostatisticians and published later this year.



It is hoped the experiment will help reveal the effect of microgravity on seed growth and whether exposure to radiation has caused mutations.

The seeds are back on earth!

At 04:26am on Tuesday 2nd March, Commander Scott Kelly of NASA and Russian cosmonauts Mikhail Kornienko and Sergey Volkov of Roscosmos landed safely back on Earth in Kazakhstan. The seeds then travelled with Scott Kelly to NASA in Houston on a charter flight from Moscow, Russia and returned to the UK on Thursday. They are now getting ready to be packed up so they can be sent to schools with a Rocket Science experiment pack in April!

Sir Graham Balfour will be expecting a delivery of their Rocket Seeds on Tue 12th or Wed 13th April ready to sow on 19th or 20th April.

Jack and the Beanstalk Panto

This is the second year SGB has hosted a panto and this year's production of Jack and The Beanstalk was a credit to all involved. Thoroughly enjoyed by visitors to the two evening productions, the show was also performed to over 360 of our Primary School children over a two day period.

Thank you to our site company Pell Frischmann and our SGB Parent Teacher Association, who kindly donated towards the cost of coaches to transport classes 4 and 5 from Bishop Lonsdale and John Wheeldon. The Cambodia 2016 team organised the refreshments, with all profits supporting their impending trip in February half term and prizes for the raffles on both nights were kindly donated by local businesses and staff.

Thank you to everyone who supported the production, especially the staff and students for volunteering their time and talent; in total over £680.00 was raised!





Upon asking the student cast which charity they would like to support with a donation, they had no hesitation in choosing Guide Dogs for the Blind. Their choice had been inspired by Steve Cunningham, 'the World's Fastest Blind Man' and his Guide Dog Foster, who had recently visited the school and delivered a motivational speech on RESPECT. The students had been so moved by his visit that they decided Guide Dogs for the Blind would be the charity they would like to support following their Panto performances.

On Wednesday 10th March the school was visited by a very special guest; Quilla a Guide Dog came along to collect a cheque for £500.00 along with Daniel Myatt, Community Fundraiser for the charity. Our donation will help to cover the cost of training a class of puppies which will become Guide Dogs of the future.

We have since heard from the charity, and pups Fifi, Eddie and Fargo are benefitting from our fundraising and are taking their first steps to become fully trained guide dogs.





Pictured: Quilla and Daniel Myatt, Community Fundraiser - Guide Dogs for the Blind and some of the student cast of Sir Graham Balfour Jack and The Beanstalk Panto.

News from the Music Department

Our school choir has been out and about singing in the community; this half term we were invited to sing at John Wheeldon Primary Academy at their end of the week assembly. 20 of our students went along to listen to their choir who were performing that evening at The Gatehouse Theatre and then took to the stage to perform a range of songs to the very appreciative pupils.

After Easter we will be visiting Marshlands School on Second Avenue with our Orchestra. Pupils at the school will be able to see what instruments our students play and listen to them perform some pieces. Thank you to Miss Braverman, Head of Music for arranging our visits into the community.

News from the PE Department

The PE department is in the midst of a very busy season of fixtures and competitions! Our summer Balfour News will have a full report on our successes and tournaments.

A quick note from Miss Marshall - Y10 and 11 girls performed extremely well in the recent district netball tournament. Both teams demonstrated exceptional commitment to training and great teamwork. They only narrowly missed out on a place in the semi-finals.

Spinathon and Sport Relief

What a result! Yet again we have exceeded our fundraising expectations following the annual whole school fundraiser Spinathon. Thank you to students, staff, governors, parents and representatives from Katharine House Hospice who all took to their Spinning bikes for an 8 hour continuous pedal smashing last year's total of £5200.00 and **raising an amazing £5700.00!**



The event was officially opened by The Mayor of Stafford, Councillor Peter Jones and ran from 8.00 am until 4.00 pm with 18 bikes continuously spinning in 15 minutes shifts. We also had pupils from Tillington Manor and Parkside Primary Schools visiting the school to join in the event, adding to the sponsorship total. Students sold cakes and we had Sport

Relief Soft Balls for sale. This fantastic fundraising amount will be split equally between Katharine House Hospice and the national charity Sport Relief.



Miss Poole Assistant Headteacher, coordinator of the event, was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the children and the fantastic amount the school raised.

"After the success of last year I never thought we could match, yet alone exceed the amount raised! It is a fantastic achievement and I would like to thank everyone who took part and supported the Spinathon, I am so pleased Sir Graham Balfour School is able to support such worthy charities.

I would also like to thank MOD Stafford who very kindly provided the Spinning Bikes; without their help we would not have been able to achieve such a brilliant result".

Rotary Young Artist

Thank you to Miss Fisher and our incredible artists who entered the Rotary Young Artist Competition. We were delighted to be highly placed in the awards which were hosted by The Rotary Club of Stafford Knot.

Miss Fisher congratulated the students on their achievements;

"I am extremely proud of all of the students who entered the competition and especially pleased for those who received an award. The time and hard work involved in producing pieces of this quality is immense and I think it is always lovely to praise and recognise the dedication of our students. Thank you to The Rotary Club of Stafford Knot for organising the competition and allowing our students to showcase their wonderful work."



Above: 2nd Prize Piece by Mollie Edensor, 16-18 Age Category



Left: Anya Elliman, Highly Commended 14-16 Age Category.

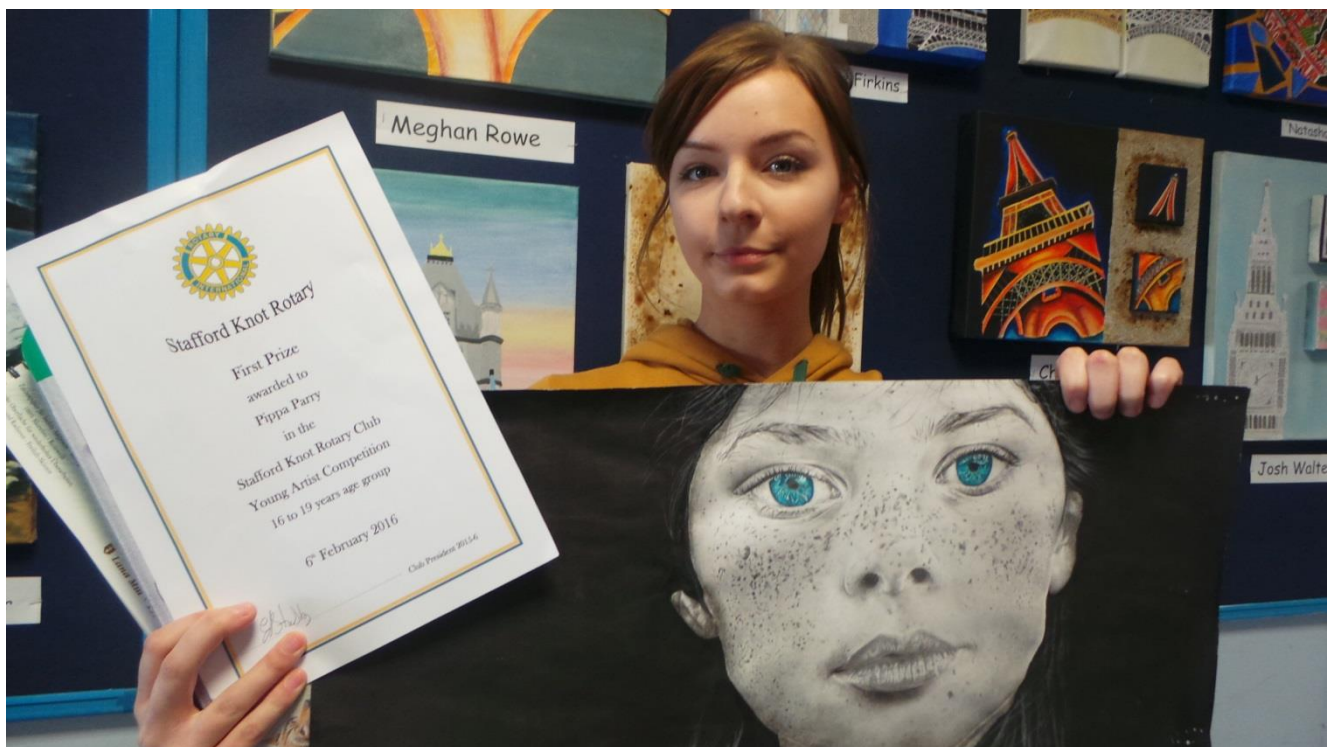




Above: 14-16 Entrants, Catherine Horton, Isobel Nowosielski and Britney Stroud

Right: 16-18 entrants, Highly Commended Natalie Mukerji, Pippa Parry 1st Prize, Highly Commended Alice Hughes

Below: Pippa Parry 1st Prize 16-18 Age Category.



Sacred Space

On Tuesday 15th and Wednesday 16th December we welcomed the team from Mid Staffs Youth Net, who, for the fourth year running, transformed room 430 into a Sacred Space.

Mid Staffs Youth Net is a Stafford based charity and exists to be a network with and for local churches; to provide a Christian resource for schools and to help local churches to empower young people to reach their full potential in God. During the two days many students had the opportunity to come into the room and experience some quiet time out of their normal day.

There were many stations in the room which they were encouraged to engage with. The stations gave the students the chance to reflect, think about and if they liked to, offer prayers for things which are



on our minds.

The Sacred Space always has very positive feedback from students and staff and we are really looking forward to next year's Sacred Space already!



Spanish Play

In February, Year 9 had the opportunity to see the second of the MFL plays, performed by the Onatti Theatre Group, which they will be watching this year. This play was in Spanish and was called Primera Cita (First Date).

This story was an observation of two love-struck Spanish teenagers, María and Carlos, getting ready for that most important first date!

In both bedrooms there was hysteria, panic, fear and apprehension. María had issues with her make-up, her hair, her clothes and a very untimely spot on her face! While Carlos, in his room, attempted his first ever shave!



The play also gave the opportunity for some of our Year 9 pupils to participate in the action as well as use their Spanish. Well done Jess, Oli and Lee for coming onto the stage! Although the language was challenging, all pupils agreed they could follow the story and they enjoyed the experience.

A Message from Mrs Beck

Life beyond Levels....

You will be well aware that National Curriculum levels have been phased out. I wrote in Balfour News last time about our plans for our 'Curriculum 2016' and what it will look like.

Our teachers are working very hard to have everything in place for September and we are confident that this will be the case.

There will be some minor changes to our Attitude to Learning Reports, particularly for Years 7 and 8. Instead of reporting students' predicted grades, we will be showing simply 'traffic lights' which will indicate whether they are currently predicted to achieve above, on or below their target. We are keen that students so young do not become 'hung up' on a grade which is likely to change several times in the five years up until their GCSEs - rather, we want to show the extent of their progress. I will be holding Parent Q&A sessions on the new Curriculum and Reporting systems in September, so please watch this space for further details. If you have any concerns or questions at this point, however, please do not hesitate to contact me at school.

Homework and organisation

Please do help us and your children by checking that they have packed their bags properly and that they have completed their homework to the best of their ability each time. This will help them make further progress overall and stop them picking up BCs for missing equipment and homework.

And finally...

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all the students, parents, carers and other members of our community who recently sent me cards, messages, emails and gifts upon my appointment as Headteacher of Sir Graham Balfour from September. It was quite rightly a gruelling interview process and I am both proud and honoured to have been chosen to lead our wonderful school in the next stage of its development. Many, many thanks.

**Have a fabulous Easter break
and we look forward
to welcoming students
back in school on
Monday 11th April 2016!**