Bringing Science to Life!

As you will know, Swanshurst is very proud to be a Specialist Science College. Not only does this mean we have amazing Science facilities, it also means we really make sure students are genuinely ‘immersed’ in Science, and have some wonderful opportunities to see Science in action.

Last week, Year 8 undertook a joint project with Maths looking at Forces and Flight in the natural and man-made world, culminating in a presentation from the local Falconry centre and a competition to build a miniature hot air balloon.

In the Sixth Form, our keen chemistry students are working with a local business on a way that the company can clean metal ions from the sulphuric used in one of the processes so that the acid can be reused. They will also then find out if any of the metal removed can be recovered and also reused. The project ends in a residential where they will be making an ion exchange chamber to perform this function and then spend the spring term experimenting with samples of the acid to find out how effective this system is. Very exciting if you love chemistry!!!!

There is also an incredible Science visit to Iceland planned for October 2013 where students will have the chance to walk on a glacier, explore inside an extinct volcano and hopefully get to see the Northern Lights. Any interested girls should see Mrs Hanvey in Science.

What is Pupil Premium?

You may have heard the term ‘pupil premium’ used on the news recently. This is a sum of money that schools have been given to ensure all pupils make the same progress, and have the same access to opportunity, regardless of their background and income.

We are very proud that data shows that the majority of our students make excellent progress (which means moving forward in their learning over time) and there are no gaps between students from different backgrounds. We do this through providing excellent teaching and teacher training, having smaller classes in some subjects and extra individual support for students who need it the most.

To ensure everyone has access to the same experiences, we fund all educational visits that are essential to learning, and have a fund available to anyone who would like to go on any other visits but cannot afford it. These funds are administered discreetly and confidentially, and if you ever feel like you need to access them, you can contact your daughter’s head of year or contact Mrs Tigue.

A detailed costing of what we do with a summary of its impact is available on our website.

What do you think?

We are always looking at ways of improving our communication with parents and carers. The fact you are reading this means it’s managed to make its way home but what other ways of sharing are there?

- Would you sign up to a Swanshurst Facebook page?
- Do you use Twitter?
- Could we improve our text message service or change the website to make things more accessible?

We really want to know what you think, and would love you to tell us, so we are holding an informal meeting with coffee and biscuits on Monday 10th December at 5.00pm in Upper reception. If you can’t make it but have some ideas please email me at rebecca.tigue@swanshurst.org
Black History Month

To celebrate Black History Month, a number of theatre and music groups were invited into school to share stories and experiences from different cultures. 'The Frog Who Wouldn’t Hop' was a joint venture with a local theatre group and a Korean actress and storyteller. The story is a traditional Korean folk tale, warning of the perils of not listening to your parents! The play was performed half in English, and half in Korean, and the children in Year 7 were enthralled throughout.

‘Caliche’ came to share stories from South America and played authentic instruments from that part of the world, along with some more recognisable ones. Many of the original instruments had fantastical stories behind them, and were traditionally made from teeth, bones and animal skin! The girls also got a chance to join in and improvise their own percussion tracks, and were a little tentative using the more traditional instruments but were intrigued by Caliche’s way of mixing facts and fun.

Road Safety

Research found that 62 per cent of teenagers admitted to being distracted by talking to friends while crossing the road.

- 12-19 year olds are the age group most likely to be killed or seriously injured in a road incident.
- Serious road incidents (deaths and serious injuries) involving pedestrians aged 12-16 years old are most likely to happen on Fridays.
- For 12-16 year olds, the time of day when the most fatal pedestrian incidents happen is between 3pm and 5pm.
- Typically October and November see the most pedestrian deaths and serious injuries amongst 12-16 year olds. It is dark when people are travelling, including getting to and from school, and the road conditions may be bad.
- Road incidents are a bigger killer of young people than cancer. Statistics for 5-24 year olds in 2010 show over 700 people were killed in road incidents - that compares to around 600 by cancer, 70 by assault, 30 by drowning and 10 from meningitis.
- Traffic is the biggest cause of accidental death of 12-16 year olds.
- Almost 1 in 5 teenagers report having been involved in a road accident or "near miss" on their way home from school. But only 4 per cent said that road safety was their main concern.

So what can we do? There is a big difference between girls knowing what to do and actually doing it. Please encourage them to:

- Always find a safe place to cross—outside Swanshurst there are controlled crossings for all the roads.
- Don’t cross when the red man appears or when the green man starts flashing.
- Stop, look, listen at all road crossings, remove earphones and stop any phone calls

What can parents do?

Please follow safe practices yourself:

- Don’t stop on the yellow lines and zigzags and let girls jump out
- Don’t stop on the roundabout to collect girls—use the Billesley car park or the car park at the side of the school.

Children in Need

Nearly 100 girls entered the Children in Need bake off and the standards were very high. The Zone staff had the lucky job of trying all the shortlisted cakes to see which ones tasted as good as they looked. Special thanks to Becky in Year 9 who donated two amazing Pudsey cakes for the raffle. The Bake Off managed to raise an amazing £240 for Children in Need.

It’s all for Charity

A number of events have been taking place to raise money for charity. The girls are always willing to give up their time to help organise events, or take part in events others have organised. This month, over £100 was raised by the poppy appeal and a 1940’s disco, girls undertook a bake off for Children in Needs and some beautiful bracelets made by the year 8 beading club were sold to raise money for ‘Harry’s charity’ and cancer research.

Anti Bullying Week

‘Birmingham Poet Laureate’ will visit us for national Poetry week, and run workshops for the Year 7 girls on how to find their own voice.

We are very lucky as a school that incidents of bullying are very rare, and what girls often perceive as bullying is often just a falling out with a friend that is often resolved quickly with support from tutors or the staff in the Zone.

If you are concerned about bullying, please contact your daughter’s tutor or head of Year so they can investigate. We have zero tolerance of bullying (you can find out more on our website) but we can only tackle it if we know its happening.

Outstanding attendance = outstanding results—THANK YOU!

Our attendance so far this year in every year group is above 96% - an amazing achievement. Analysis of this year’s GCSE data shows very clearly that girls whose attendance is above 95% are nearly 10% more likely than national average to reach their forecast grades. The message has definitely got through that coming to school every day is the best way to reach your potential so thank you for supporting that.

Two girls have lost their place at Swanshurst this year for having more than 20 days of unauthorised visits abroad; another group are on Spotlight, which could result in court action if attendance does not improve. However, we understand that there can be genuine reasons for absence and we do all that we can to help and support girls and their parents for whom genuine absence is unavoidable.

If you have any questions about attendance you can contact your daughter’s head of Year or Mrs Tigue.