

SPOTLIGHT



Issue 3

Parents' Information Newsletter

Autumn Term 2010

Dear Parent/Carer

I am delighted to be able to feedback to you an immensely positive message about our two special events which have taken place this week. You will remember that last week I spoke of the innovative concept of inviting all year 6 pupils in the area to join us for a day on Wednesday 22 September. The day was an outstanding success and I am very grateful to Claire White and Ross Mack, Assistant Headteachers for organising what was a huge logistical challenge. However, the day would not have run so smoothly if it had not been for the whole-hearted teamwork of staff and prefects. Our newly appointed Head Boy and Head Girl demonstrated outstanding leadership on the day and our Primary colleagues were very appreciative of all the exciting activities which had been so carefully planned for the children. Our site team and catering staff deserve a special mention for the quality of their work.

This event was quickly followed by yesterday's Open Evening. This time a wider range of pupils was involved in supporting the school and again we witnessed pupils demonstrating their proud and positive attitudes as they were able to 'showcase' Poltair at its very best.

May I take this opportunity to remind parents and carers that we will be holding a series of Open Mornings to enable anyone who wishes to do so, to tour the school during a typical day. These are aimed especially at parents of prospective pupils. Please contact Mrs Ann McPherson the Headteacher's PA to book a place on any of these dates:-

Tuesday 5 October
Wednesday 6 October Open Mornings (9:00 am – 11:00 am)
Thursday 7 October
Friday 8 October

Stephen Tong

Stephen Tong
Headteacher

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 27 September	Year 9
Tuesday 28 September	Year 7
Wednesday 29 September	Year 8
Thursday 30 September	Year 10
Friday 1 October	Year 11

Target Setting Days
Parents will be informed by letter of times and venue. **Normal lessons for all pupils.**

SCHOOL UNIFORM/ LOST PROPERTY

Please ensure your child's school uniform and equipment is clearly labelled with their name. This helps to return items to the appropriate child if and when they go astray.

As part of our focus on Literacy the MFL Department is having a 'word of the week' chosen by members of the staff.

Mr Tong, Headteacher has chosen the word this week:-

Malheureusement

Jack goes the extra mile



Jack's dream is to one day become a professional dancer. He enjoys learning French and involving himself to the full in drama activities. Now he has been named as Poltair's first 'Vivo Student of the Year'. Jack has earned more rewards points than any other Poltair student since the scheme started. Unsurprisingly Jack says he likes being helpful to his peers at tutor time and enjoys lessons in Citizenship Education. Vivo Miles are proving a great incentive for our students. Staff can quickly allocate rewards online and then pupils can cash them in for items ranging from stationery items to iPods or sports equipment.

TOP TWENTY 'VIVO MILES' STUDENTS:-



Oli and Jess lead the way

Poltair has appointed its senior prefects for this academic year. They had to undergo a rigorous selection process which would be more than a challenge for most adults. After applying by formal letter, the candidates then gave a presentation to 75 Year 7 pupils followed by an 'on the spot' question and answer session. All this was just a precursor to a formal interview before a panel including the Headteacher Stephen Tong, Head of Year 11 Gemma Owens and Director of Specialism Linzi Booth.



L - R: Jack [redacted], Jamie [redacted] (Deputy Head Boys),
Jess [redacted] (Head Girl), Oli [redacted] (Head Boy)
Becky [redacted] (Deputy Head Girl)

Oli [redacted], Head Boy, is delighted at the honour and challenge the new responsibility will bring. 'I have been involved in lots of leadership activities in the past such as peer mentoring, as a Junior Sports Leader and as a Literacy Leader but the profile of this position will enable me to represent the student voice at a whole school level.' Jess [redacted], Head Girl, explained that the senior prefect team plans to work closely together with pupils and staff to endorse the Poltair banner of 'Believe and Achieve'. They already have some exciting plans for future charity events.

Literacy Across the Curriculum: A Whole School Approach

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

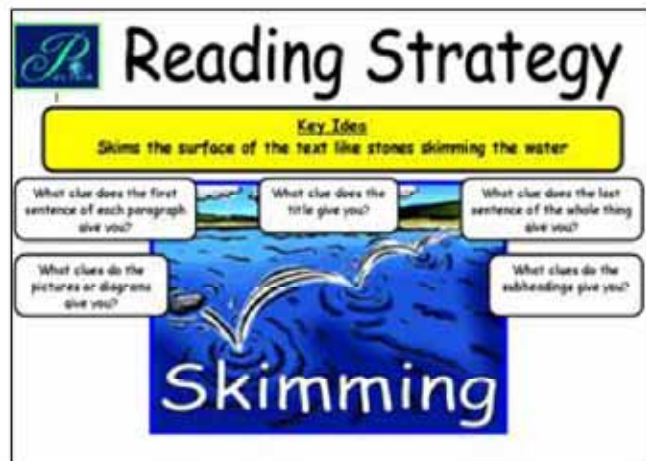
*Quote from
Joseph Addison
(18th Century Author)*

At Poltair School, we firmly believe that literacy is the foundation of all learning. Consequently, this year, we have started a new and exciting initiative focusing on the cross-curricular development of literacy skills.

Over the school year, we shall focus on a range of strategies that support learners in being effective readers.

This has been successfully launched with our first reading strategy: **Skimming**. In every classroom, a literacy poster (pictured right) is on display showing the skimming of a pebble across a lake to visually represent the idea of the reading skill. Teachers are introducing the strategy with the help of some practical teaching activities that help learners to demonstrate the reading strategy in every subject area.

This model will be repeated for all of the subsequent strategies.



Alongside this the English department is taking the lead on other literacy-based strategies designed to move students forward in their learning. These are: Individual and small group intervention; Literacy Leaders; Accelerated Reader and Literacy Plus.

Intervention

Initially English teachers will identify small groups requiring extra help to achieve their target. The English department then plans and organises the work for this group. Although they will follow the same work as the whole class this small group focus will also have more individualised learning opportunities.

Literacy Leaders

Following last year's successful pilot, the Literacy Leaders (pictured right) have been busy planning exciting activities to carry out with the new Year 7 pupils they will be mentoring this year. They particularly enjoy adapting popular games such as Countdown, Jeopardy and Boggle to make the most of the literacy opportunities in a fun way. They are a most enthusiastic bunch and can't wait to get started this year.



L – R Sheree Murray, Stephen Bryant, Steven White, Connor Pearce, Oli Elston, Leon Trudgeon, Sam Marchant & Joe Morris

Literacy Plus

Here a class of targeted students will have the opportunity to follow a specially designed cross-curricular programme enabling them to strengthen their key skills and thereby achieve in line with their targets. The consistency of meeting the same skills in all of their lessons will reinforce the message and enhance the learning experience.

Accelerated Reader

Now in its fourth year, our well-established Accelerated Reader programme is going from strength to strength. Every pupil in Year 7 and 8 participates in this reading scheme which encourages pupils to read one book per week for pleasure. On completing the book, pupils take a computer based quiz that tests their understanding of the text. The nature of the programme motivates readers to develop their reading skills and we have seen many pupils make significant improvements to their reading ages.

If you have books at home that your child likes to read, it is highly probable that the book has a corresponding test as part of the Accelerated Reader Scheme. Your child is very welcome to bring the book in, take the test and count it towards their Accelerated Reader score.

Accelerated Reader Home Connect can be found at:

<http://www.renlearn.com/ar/overview/homeconnect.aspx>



Here you can see the pass rate for quizzes taken and also look at your child's "virtual bookshelf" which shows which books have been read by your child.

Screen shot of the Accelerated Reader Home Connect website

What can parents and carers do to help their children to develop their literacy skills?

- Ensure that children have free and easy access to a range of reading materials e.g. fiction and non-fiction as well as newspapers and magazines
- Provide the tools and opportunities for writing. Youngsters enjoy using a range of different papers e.g. lined; unlined; note cards. Using interesting pens makes writing more fun so encourage experimenting with gel pens, fountain pens etc
- Visit and become active members of your local library
- Make reading a natural part of daily life e.g. reading instructions, the television guide, recipes etc.

Forthcoming reading strategies

Monday 4 th October - Friday 22 nd October	Scanning	Searching for specific words; phrases or numbers
Monday 1 st November - Friday 19 th November	Predicting	Making informed guesses about the text
Monday 22 nd November - Friday 10 th December	Visualising	Creating a mental picture from words