

# Head's Newsletter: July 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are rapidly approaching the end of the current school year and I wanted to write to you all to keep up to date with all that is happening here at Balshaw's including important information for the new school year.

We are very excited about the newly refurbished changing rooms and the fitness suite that is nearing completion. This will provide our students with the opportunity to access state of the art fitness equipment in their PE lessons and as yet another extra-curricular opportunity. All of these facilities will be in full use for September.



ABOVE: Year 11 Leavers at Barton Grange

## Sports News:

I do hope that you have been keeping up-to-date with the news section of our website which is updated on a daily basis with the achievements of our students. We love to hear what our students are achieving outside school too, so if your son or daughter has been involved in something you think we should know about, please send us a picture and a short article and we will include it on our website.

We have had many fantastic sporting achievements already this year and these were celebrated at our annual sports awards ceremony. This year the awards were presented by Laura Massaro, the world's number one squash player. There are too many sporting achievements to list here – see the website for all our sports news. However, some of the highlights were:

- Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 South Ribble Athletics Champions 2016 (for the second year in a row!)
- Year 7,8 and 10 South Ribble Football League Champions 2016
- Year 10 South Ribble Rounders Champions 2016
- Boys and girls under 13 Cricket District Indoor Champions (3<sup>rd</sup> in Lancs).



ABOVE: World no 1 Squash champion, Laura Massaro presented our sports awards



ABOVE: Liv Cooke – professional freestyle footballer

Former student Liv Cooke was filmed for a BBC documentary piece this week about her work in Freestyle Football as she continues to go from strength to strength working with the Minister for Sport, touring around the world and taking part in the World Freestyle Football Championships. Jade Eccleston, Great Britain rounders player, returns regularly to coach and assist the PE department. Adam Butler continues to excel in his chosen sport and is a British Schools Judo Champion. There are many more individual successes which you can read about on the website or be kept updated on by subscribing to our Twitter feed.

## Charity News:

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I would like to thank all parents and students for the fantastic generosity and efforts that you put into raising money for charity. This year we have raised an incredible amount for various charities £12,928.85 The generosity of parents and students is a really strong feature of what it is to be a Balshavian. Special mention must be made to Christian Smith and Katie Carlisle whose fundraising achievements are explained on the website.

This giving breaks down into three main areas:

- Lenten Charities £3,223.20
- Other charities: £2,432.65 (including Children in Need, Text Santa, Jeans for Genes, NSPCC, Macmillan Cancer Trust, Teenage Cancer Trust, Make a Wish Foundation, CRY, Clare House, Save the Children, Water Aid, Parkinsons UK)
- The highlight of giving in our school year is the Spring Fair and Family Fun Day. The school was flooded with bottles and chocolates in response to the requests from the Balshaw's Association. Thank you for all your support with which we managed to raise an incredible £7,273 for the Lacey and Tyler fund.

## Term Time Holiday Absence

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Balshaw's has never authorised term time holiday absence except in exceptional circumstances. Schools' Minister, Nick Gibb has issued clear guidance to schools and Directors of Education about term time absence in which he says: "I would expect applications of this kind [*requests for holidays in term time*] to be refused in the ordinary course of events. We will set out any additional steps necessary to secure children's attendance at school in due course."

The school sets the target for minimum attendance at 97% and this is what we hope everybody strives for. This year one of our Year 11 Leavers completed her school career without having a single day off school either at her primary school or at Balshaw's – a remarkable achievement!

## School Uniform

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The summer sunshine seems to make our students grow even faster and many of you will be going to purchase new items of uniform for your sons and daughters.

### Kilts:

Please note that from September the only skirt allowed as part of the girls' uniform is the grey checked kilt as shown in the photograph (right).

### Shoes:

The other thing to make note of when you are making purchases is of boys' shoes. Despite what your son tries to tell you, just because an item of footwear is black it doesn't make it a shoe! Boots which have hooks for laces are not shoes, they are... boots. Trainers which are black are... trainers.

Please look carefully at the photographs on our uniform list of what are acceptable shoes. It is not a nice position to be in to spend more money if the school has to inform you that the footwear you have purchased does not constitute a shoe.

### Hair and Piercings:

If your child has a piercing done over the summer, make sure that this is done at the start of the holiday as they will have to have the piercing out by 5<sup>th</sup> September. With hair, there should be no tramlines, or extreme gradations of length. Hair colour should be natural.



All girls are to wear the kilt from September 2016

## Saying good bye to teachers.

Mrs Flannery has been a teacher of Geography and Geology at Balshaw's for fourteen and a half years. Sadly she will be leaving Balshaw's to spend more time with her family. In the time that she has been here she has taught many hundreds of children from Leyland opening their eyes to the incredible wonders of the geography of our world.

Mrs Fielding also retires this summer after seven years teaching in the Modern Foreign Languages department, helping our youngsters to communicate in French and Spanish.

Mrs Hope who joined us as Head of Science in September 2014 finishes with us this year to spend more time with her family too. Mrs Smith has worked in the Maths Department following Mr Eccleston's departure earlier this year and we would like to thank her for the contribution that she has made to the Maths Department in her time with us.

We will not be saying good bye to Miss Brown from Geography, but *bon voyage* as she begins her year long sabbatical in order to travel the world. We are hoping that Miss Brown will be able to maintain a blog so that we can keep up with the amazing places she intends to travel as she turns geographical knowledge into geographical experience!

## Welcoming new teachers in September.

Mrs Thomasson will start in September as our Curriculum Leader for Geography. Mrs Thomasson is an experienced leader of Geography who joins us from St Mary's Catholic College in Blackpool. She will be joined in the Geography department by Miss Blenkinship who is returning to the North West after working in the Midlands. Mr Daniels joins the Maths Department, doubling the number of men in Maths meaning that Mr Jennings won't be the only male Maths teacher any longer.

After Mrs Sarah McAlister finished her role as chaplain earlier this year, we are delighted that Miss Fiona Conway will become our School Chaplain from September. This is a really important role at Balshaw's. Fiona will be working not just at Balshaw's, but also at St. Andrew's church with the Youth Team and at Runshaw College. Fiona will help to look after the spiritual growth and needs of all our staff and students

## New lesson times and two week timetable

From September we will have a new school day with 5 teaching periods instead of 6. The start and finish times of the day are the same, but the lesson times are different:

Time	
8.50 – 9.20	Collective worship or Tutor time
9.20 – 10.20	Period 1
10.20 – 10.40	Break
10.40 – 11.40	Period 2
11.40 – 12.40	Period 3
12.40 – 1.30	Lunch
1.30 – 2.30	Period 4
2.30 – 3.30	Period 5

With fewer lessons in a week we have also moved to a two week timetable. This means that across the two weeks we are able to provide the proportion of teaching time that we feel is appropriate for each subject. Student's timetables will be largely mirrored across the weeks, but week A and B will be different in places, so your son/daughter will need to make note of which week they are in.

The important thing to remember is that if we finish on a Week A before a holiday, we pick up at Week B when we return to school (i.e. the holidays don't count).

### Weeks A & B until Christmas:

WEEK A w/b	WEEK B w/b
5 <sup>th</sup> September	12 <sup>th</sup> September
19 <sup>th</sup> September	26 <sup>th</sup> September
3 <sup>rd</sup> October	10 <sup>th</sup> October
17 <sup>th</sup> October	24 <sup>th</sup> October
7 <sup>th</sup> November	14 <sup>th</sup> November
21 <sup>st</sup> November	28 <sup>th</sup> November
5 <sup>th</sup> December	12 <sup>th</sup> December
19 <sup>th</sup> December	9 <sup>th</sup> January

## Communication between home and school

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Over the past twelve months we have been developing the way that we communicate with you. Our website is constantly updated and you can keep in touch with us using Twitter. Did you know that you can also report reasons for your child's absence via the school website?

However, it is our ability to communicate with you via email and text message which has been the most significant development. In cases where the school has to make an exceptional closure, such as earlier in the year when there was no heating, or if there are other reasons why the school site may be unsafe, we can now send text messages direct to your mobile phones. We will no longer print paper copies of your son/daughter's school reports, but these will be emailed to you. This means that you will get them much closer to the time staff entered the information, making the assessment data they contain more relevant for discussion.

All of our students will be given a school email account from September which uses Office 365. This also means that you as parents can download the full Microsoft Office Suite for free on up to 5 of your PCs at home. Your son/daughter will be given their email address when they return to school after summer which will end with @students.balshaws.org.uk

All families are entitled to a free Office Suite download on up to five machines.



We are also making it easier for you to get in touch with your son/daughter's teachers. With this newsletter is a list of all staff's email addresses. The first port of contact for you should be your son/daughter's form tutor. They see them for a minimum of 30 minutes every day and more if they teach them too. They are the best people to have an overview of the progress of your child in every area of their school life.

## Balshaw's Assessment Framework

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All of our students in Years 7 – 9 will have their progress monitored against our new Balshaw's Assessment Framework which we will introduce to parents in the new Academic year. The old levels system (for example working at level 5b) is no longer in use and students starting with us in Year 7 will have no concept of what a level is, as this is not how students are assessed anymore. Similarly many parents are still to understand that GCSE letter grades will no longer be used from 2018 onwards (earlier in Maths and English), but are replaced by numbers up to 9 (9 being the highest grade a student can achieve at GCSE).

We will explain all this to you – we have created a very easy to understand system for students and parents that will enable you to monitor the progress that your child makes as they move through Balshaw's.

## E-Safety

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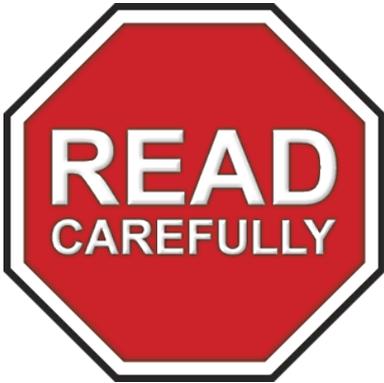
Finally, although the use of the technology discussed above for communication is brilliant, I'm afraid that when misused, it remains one of the greatest issues facing schools, police and other authorities at the moment. Earlier this year we ran an evening for parents about how to keep your child safe in the digital world. Parents who came rated the event as outstanding and all would recommend it to



other parents. We would have liked the evening to have been much better attended though.

One key issue for all parents to be aware of is this: No matter how much we educate our students about e-safety, no matter how much you *think* your child is safe and understands the risks of using social media, it is safe to say that you are wrong.

**CHECK YOUR CHILD'S MOBILE PHONE REGULARLY:** look at their image gallery, check their browser history, look at their Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat accounts. Some parents have said: "I couldn't do that, it would be like reading their diary." It is not! You are most likely paying for and providing the mobile phone and a diary never caused young people to be exposed to 24/7 trolling and the potential for exploitation. This is something that you should be clear about and agree up front with your child as a condition for them having such a device.



I cannot emphasize this enough to all parents. If this is one thing that you do as a result of reading this newsletter it will be one of the most important communications that I am likely to have with you during your child's time at Balshaw's.

## Stay safe and have a great summer

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**Keep reading!** It is important to keep your son/daughter engaged in reading to ensure that they remain active with their literacy. Staff in our English department will be happy to recommend some reading that will appeal to students. If you are going on holiday, get them to work out exchange rates for you to keep their numeracy skills going.

So that's it for another academic year! We look forward to our new Year 7 starting in September and to finding out in August the achievements of the Year 11 who have left. In the meantime, I pray that you all have a safe and happy summer and look forward to continuing to draw out the gifts and talents of our young people with your support next academic year. We will see all of our students on **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September** (years 8 – 11 over the course of lunch ready for 1.30 afternoon lessons).

Mr Steven Haycocks  
HEADTEACHER



## Staff Email Addresses

Your child's form tutor should be your first point of contact in most cases.

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