

Headlines

Chichester High School for Girls Specialist in Arts & Science



Together we aspire
Together we achieve

November 2008

Dear Parents

Welcome to this edition of headlines. There is plenty of news to report to you, but to start with I am delighted to announce our most recent success regarding the International Baccalaureate.

International Baccalaureate

It's official, and we're the first in West Sussex! We are now an International Baccalaureate World School, offering the prestigious IB Diploma as an exciting alternative to A levels, which is widely recognised by the world's leading universities.

As you already know, our Sixth Form, which has been joint with Chichester High School for Boys for many years, is one of the largest and most successful in West Sussex. The results for the last three years have been consistently high – with 99% pass rate and half the grades being the highest of A and B. With over 450 students, we are able to offer over 40 A level and BTEC subjects which allows a myriad of subject combinations.

Over the last year senior staff from both schools have been putting together a detailed bid so that Chichester High Schools Sixth Form can offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma from September 2009. Two assessors from Geneva visited us for two days in October to study the bid, interview staff, students and governors and to inspect the facilities in both schools. In their report, the assessors said that our Sixth Form had “well qualified and dedicated professionals”, “a rigorous academic environment – with excellent facilities”, and “a wide range of activities and outreach programmes”.

The letter of authorisation arrived at half term and I am delighted to let you now the IB Diploma will now be offered to students going into our Sixth Form in September 2009. We will still offer the wide range of A levels and BTEC subjects, but we know that a good number of students will want to study the IB, as an exciting alternative. For more details, visit the Chichester High Schools' Sixth Form website at www.chssixthform.org.uk/courses or contact the Heads of Sixth Form Maddie McGuffin and Andrew Berriman.

Many congratulations and thanks to everyone involved in the bid and the assessors' visit.

New School Website

Our new-look school website went 'live' just after half term. Do take a look at www.chichesterhighschoolforgirls.co.uk. Susan Mulkern, our specialist status manager, has been the one putting the new site together, and I think you'll agree, she's done a great job. We hope we have put information on the website which is useful to a wide range of visitors especially parents. Do let us know what you think via the feedback form on the site.

The site will be updated weekly, and we are hoping to develop it further so that it becomes one of the main 'links' between home and school. You can view the latest prospectus, parents' calendar, a list of extra curricular clubs offered at the school, and links to the Sixth Form website. Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 curriculum details are also available on the site as are archived copies of Highlights (our half termly magazine) and Headlines (this newsletter to parents).

Parents Teachers' Association (PTA)

The Parent Teachers Association (PTA) is for all parents and staff at CHSG. As a parent, you are already a member of the PTA. The aim of the PTA is to strengthen the links between home and school and a group of hardworking parents, has been very busy over the last year doing just that. I hope you have had the chance to meet members of the committee when you visited the school for a parents' evening, induction or social meeting or a school production.

At the recent annual general meeting, we said farewell to Mike Fildes, former longstanding Chair (and Treasurer), and Rachel Ritchie (Treasurer). My special thanks go to Mike and Rachel, as they have been great friends to the High School over many years and we will miss them.

Welcome though to Julie Brombley, our new Treasurer, who joins the team of Peter Wilson (Chair) and Caroline Cooper (Secretary).

The next PTA event is the Christmas Fair which takes place on Friday 28th November, 5.30 p.m.-7.30 p.m. and everyone is invited. There will be a host of stalls and activities for you to see and there will be plenty of Christmas cheer. All the Year 7 and Year 8 tutor groups are currently planning what stalls they will be running this year, so do come along. If you are able to help on the day, or the evening, please contact the PTA via email – pta@chichestergirls.w-sussex.sch.uk. You will find further details about the Christmas Fair in this mailing. The PTA is currently raising funds for a new mini bus.

Parents' Feedback

Every year, we send a questionnaire to all our parents at the end of the school year. We use a firm called Kirkland Rowell to do the survey for us and to collate the results. For the past few years, despite posting the questionnaires to parents we have had a low response. In 2008, we only had 167 responses. We welcome the feedback from parents. We compare results year on year so that we can see whether parents have seen any improvement on the issues they raised the year before.

Summary of the 2008 report states: "The survey results reveal that the school has reason to be happy with most of its activities."

The academic areas that obtained significantly higher scores (i.e. improvement) than the previous survey in 2007 were Geography and English.

The non-academic areas that obtained significantly higher scores than in 2007 were:

- School communication
- Availability of resources
- Caring teachers
- Teaching quality
- Control of bullying
- Ensuring pupils do best and make good progress

The 2008 survey reveals that parents want us to continue to improve the teaching quality, community spirit, levels of homework and developing moral values.

Also, on balance, more parents felt that their daughter was "not pushed hard enough" rather than "pushed too hard".

We are acting on the feedback from the 2008 survey and have put in place strategies and action to bring about further improvement.

Parents' Coffee Forum

Our next parents' coffee forum is on Thursday 27th November 10am to noon. It is a chance for parents to chat to each other, and to senior staff including the Headteacher, during the morning, to give us some feedback and to ask us any questions. Do come along if you have a free morning – just arrive at the main school reception at any time between 10am and noon.

Highlights

I hope you received your copy of Highlights magazine just before half term. If you didn't, you will find a copy on our new website under the 'parents' section. We rely on your daughters to bring your copy home to you, so if the 'postman' didn't deliver the goods, do please have a word with her!

GCSE Presentation Evening

In order to celebrate the best GCSE results in the history of the school, we invite Year 11 students of 2008 (now in Year 12) and their parents to a presentation evening on Thursday, 11th December.

Super Learning Days

As you are aware, we have made significant changes to the curriculum this year. We have moved to a two-week timetable (week A and week B) which everyone got the hang of quite quickly. On the Friday of week B, we have a Super Learning Day. This is where students experience extended periods of time to study and learn, rather than six fifty-minute lessons during the day. So far, although there have been a few 'teething problems' Super Learning Days have been very well received by the students. They have commented very favourably on the extended learning sessions as that they can 'finish their work'. We have an afternoon as well as a morning break, but many pupils decide to work through their breaks! The longer sessions allow staff to arrange all sorts of exciting learning opportunities for the students that would be difficult in a fifty-minute lesson or without disrupting other lessons.

In Geography, for example, year 7 students experienced a 'sweat-shop' which helped them understand the different lives lived by children in other countries. Their 'wages' had to cover all their living expenses, and for many it was a real eye-opener!

A Victorian classroom in History was a bit of a scary experience too, as overnight, their teachers had transformed and meted out strict rules, regulations and severe 'punishments'. The students played their role in the scenarios brilliantly!

At Key Stage 4, students have been able to concentrate on in-depth exam techniques or to complete a whole assessment in one day.

I am delighted to report that staff say the quality of the work being produced is higher on Super Learning Days than it would be in the equivalent time spread over a week or two's lessons.

Christmas Carol Service

Our annual Christmas Carol Service takes place in the Cathedral on Wednesday 17th December at 7pm. It is always a wonderful opportunity for our CHSG community of students, families and staff to celebrate together in the beautiful setting of the cathedral. Everyone is welcome. There will be a retiring collection in aid of St Wilfred's Hospice.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our forthcoming events.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Oliver-Watkins