

# Parents' Post

Newsletter - Issue 29

'Aspire and Achieve'

April 2017

## Welcome to the Spring 2 edition of our "Parents' Post".

The previous half term was incredibly busy in so many ways, despite the miserable weather and dark mornings and nights. What this has meant, of course is that we have all been confined in the academy buildings for much of the time, learning to live together much more so than during a normal half term (!). This has, however, engaged us in a variety of opportunities to talk more frequently with each other, outside of our studies, and discover just what hidden talents there are amongst our students in their lives, both in and outside of the Academy.

There have been some super achievements by our students over the past couple of months; most of which are highlighted in this edition of the 'Parent Post', but particular highlights have undoubtedly been the performances of the 'Treasure Island' cast and orchestra, and our two "Youth Speaks" teams. Congratulations to all who have taken part in these two particular ventures - you are, surely, better people for making that effort to be part of something new and challenging. Well done!

As I have said on many previous occasions, it truly is a fantastic and rewarding part of a teacher's job to be able to observe young people stepping completely out of their 'comfort zone' and start to make that 'zone', that incredibly challenging activity, become their norm, their new 'comfort zone'. Please take the time to read of our young people's achievements and truly witness what it is to 'Aspire and Achieve' at Braunton Academy.

M. Cammack – Principal



**Our Intermediate 'Youth Speaks' Competition Team**

### Rotary Club's 'Youth Speaks' District Competition

On Saturday 11th March the Braunton Academy "Youth Speaks" Intermediate team competed in the Rotary District Final at the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth. Cassius Lay, the speaker, Holly Milton-Jefferies, the chair and Nathaniel Rodney-Jones, the vote of thanks, competed against eight Devon and Cornwall teams for their place in the Regional Final.

Not only did the team present a thought-provoking speech on the topic of 'The Sugar and Obesity Epidemic,' they were very professional in their performance, and very patient during the judges' 50 minute deliberation.

For the first time in Braunton Rotary's history, our intermediate team won with Cassius Lay also winning a prize for the best speaker. Each member of the team received a £20 Amazon voucher.

The Regional Final was held on Saturday 25th March at Exmouth Community College, and although our amazing team did not win this round, having been beaten by Dartmouth school, we are all extremely proud of their achievements. Our thanks go to the students and their parents who supported them, and to Mrs Young who worked so hard to prepare them for the event.

## **An unprecedented crisis in education funding and its impact on Braunton Academy**

Like most areas within the public sector, schools have always been good at managing on limited funds, and Braunton Academy has been hugely successful at this over the years, especially since, as a smaller school, we are unable to build up the funds of the larger schools and Multi-Academy Trusts. Braunton Academy has always maintained its high standards by being resourceful, seeking alternative funding streams, and engaging the support of their local community. However we are now being forced to a point by both government and Devon County policies that means it is becoming impossible for us to balance our budgets. School income is being cut: inflation isn't taken into account by government 'soundbites' and promises whereas, in reality, of course, our expenditure keeps rising with inflation and, alongside all other schools, we are faced with a **national 8% cut** to our overall funding. Furthermore, as Devon is not able to afford the support required by children with special needs and disabilities, the council is taking another £33 per student from the budget of every school to pay back the deficit in this area of county funding. This is **an additional £22,110 cut** from Braunton Academy's budget.

The government has, of course, pledged to introduce a new National Funding Formula (NFF) aimed at applying a consistent and fairer approach to funding and eliminating the anomalies that currently exist: In 2016-17 this 'anomaly' has resulted in a shortfall of £290 less per Braunton Academy student when compared to the national average: this difference in funding for us means that we receive a budget which is **£194,930 less than the average** across the UK. This significant funding shortfall has been, and will continue to be detrimental to the quality and range of the education provision for our children.

**Even worse**, is the fact that if the NFF is introduced as currently published, Braunton Academy will receive **a further cut of £90,000** because we are considered to be living in a wealthier area than most.

The new formula is being fiercely contested by schools and local authorities who will lose out across the country so there is no certainty about how it will end up. Despite all of this the Academy's governors have a legal duty to set a balanced budget. What this

means is that we are having to cut all of our costs to the bare minimum: the Academy's 'balanced budget' will inevitably see funding for many support services, equipment, training, supply teaching cut back radically.

It is important for you to know, of course, that we have prioritised protecting our staffing levels and are ensuring your children will be taught the broad and balanced curriculum you wish for in the coming academic year (2017-18): this means the students will be taught by graduate professionals, teaching in their specialist areas, (not something every school can promise!). However, we will sadly have to seek other alternative forms of funding by the end of this academic year, if we are to continue to provide the very best provision and meet with our expected standards.

Looking ahead, there is hardly any flesh left on the bones and schools around the country are now, or soon will be, faced with increasingly difficult choices and options which include asking parents to make cash donations, larger class sizes, a shorter school week, and reduced staffing levels.

As a school, we have already written to our MP, Peter Heaton-Jones, who fully recognises the issues outlined above, and has visited the Academy on several occasions in support of our concerns. We have also written letters to The Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, our local Devon County Councillor, Caroline Chugg, and continue to liaise with other Devon schools facing similar challenges, challenging the government on a national level with various letters and petitions, as you can see below.

Essential ancillary support services like the Braunton Learning Community Parent Support Advisor have already been cut: all schools as we know them will start to look different. These cuts will inevitably make a difference to the provision we can make for your children. So, **please be prepared to support the 'Parent Partnership@ Braunton Academy' (previously, 'Friends' or the PTA) in their fund raising initiatives and consider other ways in which you might support your child's school.**

All the money raised by the 'Parent Partnership' will be spent on carefully selected projects that will support the wider curriculum and make a real difference to the school, and which couldn't otherwise be afforded. Please help where you can.

Mr M. Cammack (Principal)

## School Funding/National Funding Formula – March 2017

Braunton Academy has continued to support an amendment to the proposed National Funding Formula by signing up to the two letters (below) that have been sent to the Government and our local MP, respectfully:

### **We, the undersigned, support and acknowledge the following contextual factors relating to school funding and the proposed new National Funding Formula, set to be introduced in April 2018:**

The new National Funding Formula provides an important opportunity to improve funding mechanisms that are currently used to allocate money to schools. The Government's decision to introduce a much needed new formula is welcomed as are the key tenets of fairness, transparency and stability.

The Government is operating in a challenging financial climate and funding arrangements for schools must take into account the financial constraints faced.

Currently, school leaders are having to make significant cuts to services which are negatively impacting upon the education provision and care of pupils in schools.

We recognise that adequate (minimum) funding will be different in different areas of the country.

### **We, the undersigned, support the following action:**

The government must honour its 2015 manifesto commitment:

*"Under a future Conservative Government the amount of money following your child in to school will be protected...there will be a real-terms increase in the schools budget in the next Parliament"*

The Department for Education must find out - and then publish - a clear breakdown of what it costs to adequately fund each child in school (for each Key Stage) and convert this into a minimum school funding guarantee.

Any new formula will determine that schools in England are funded at different but adequate levels.

The Department for Education must ensure that in times of austerity overall spending decisions and associated policy directives provide clear and established value for money.

A new National Funding Formula should not be established in isolation from inflationary cost pressures.

Signed:

All schools and their executive associations:

Brighton (secondary)	East Sussex	Peterborough	Wokingham
Cambridgeshire	Essex	Suffolk	West Sussex
Cornwall	Hertfordshire	Surrey	
Devon	Norfolk	Thurrock	



Dear Mr Heaton-Jones,

I am contacting you again with regard to the mounting fears that Head Teachers and Principals have in relation to school funding.

Recently, school leaders from four counties expressed significant concern at the bleak situation that their schools, and the vast majority of others, are facing. Now, school leaders in Devon have joined with 13 other counties as we continue to speak with 'one voice'.

In spite of the increasingly damaging financial situation, no adequate response has been provided in terms of our concerns about current and future spending proposals made by the Department for Education.

There is no question that a new National Funding Formula is urgently required but it must be credible and reverse the unsustainable and deeply unsatisfactory methodology that is currently used to allocate school funds.

Rather than making matters better, the new National Funding Formula proposals do not offer meaningful solutions to our current and future school finances. Amongst many issues, key points that remain include:

The new National Funding Formula is not new. It is based on a flawed and outdated model. As a consequence, considerable and completely unacceptable inequalities will persist in our school funding arrangements.

The new National Funding Formula attempts to ignore inflationary cost pressures that all schools are enduring.

The Department for Education does not know what the minimum funding required for an individual pupil is and how this relates to minimum school funding for a school to adequately resource staffing and equipment.

The assumption that schools all have 'further efficiencies' to make is fundamentally flawed, especially for those schools that have been severely low funded for an extended period of time.

To make matters worse - far worse - the Department for Education continues to divert significant monies to capital and revenue funding such as Free School provision and Grammar School expansion and this does not always guarantee value for money. At the same time, our schools simply do not have adequate funds to provide the education that every child in our care needs and deserves.

To see such ill-judged spending being prioritised in a time of austerity is unacceptable. The disconnect between a Department making decisions that seem to entirely ignore the wishes and needs of dedicated and committed school leaders provides significant and tangible cause for concern.

School leaders simply want a reasonable settlement that sees every child in every school adequately funded. There is no question that schools with differing contextual challenges should be funded differently but this should not come at the expense of allowing every school to operate effectively on behalf of the pupils' families and communities that we serve.

As a collective group representing over 3500 schools and 1.5million pupils we do not wish to be ignored any longer. We need, therefore, for our local political representatives to stand up for every school in their constituency and make clear that considerable changes to funding arrangements/proposals must be put in place.

Any permanent new funding formula will require parliamentary approval and this makes your role even more crucial.

The Department for Education has had two years (and huge resources) to produce a sustainable new formula – now is the time for implementing a formula that improves schools budgets for the vast majority rather than the few.

We would be grateful, therefore, for you to join us and sign up to the attached statement which we believe to be transparent, fair and reasonable. Schools and their communities will then be able to present a united front to the Department for Education to ensure that the children in our schools receive the educational opportunities that they deserve.

In turn, parents and carers will be able to see, without equivocation, that their child's education is being put first by local school and political leaders and that meaningful changes to an urgently required new National Funding Formula will be put in place.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of all schools and their executive associations.

## “Treasure Island”

Braunton Academy Drama Club recently performed their latest show, “Treasure Island”, over three evenings and a matinée. The play, based on the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, is an adventure on the high seas and a deserted island, culminating in the discovery of buried treasure. A crew of fearsome pirates, led by Long John Silver (Scarlett Rolls) called for more rum, yo-ho-hoed and brandished their swords and muskets, whilst being accompanied by the school orchestra. Drama Club stalwart, Ryan Hill, played the part of Smollett with haughty aplomb, while the part of Jack Hawkins was played by Year 7 Oliver Argyle, and Year 8 Holly Pitches in alternate shows. The set was painted by the Art Club, and included a treasure map backdrop, giant coconut palms and the ship's deck. With an excellent score arranged by Head of Music, Miss Cassells, the music and singing were very impressive. The entire production was masterminded and directed by Head of Drama, Ms Ratcliffe, who received bouquets from the cast as a measure of their gratitude to her for all her hard work in ensuring our budding thespians are given a chance to shine on stage every year.



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## Year 7 ‘Gifted and Talented’ Day with Multi Story Theatre Company

Fifteen of the most talented and able Year 7 Drama students had the opportunity to take part in a workshop run by MSTC on 23rd February at Park School. Students from three other North Devon schools took part, so we also had the chance to make new friends! During the workshop, Bill and Gill, from MSTC performed some excerpts from some of their recent performances. When we returned to school, the students recorded their impressions:



*“I wasn't expecting to see parts of plays. I met some new people as well which is a bonus and it was fun.”*

*“It was really good because I got to work with friends from Stagecoach.”*

*“Today was very good and very funny.” “ I really enjoyed today and I liked meeting new people.”*

*“It really boosted my confidence which is something I struggle with”.*

A general, *“Even Better If”*, was the possibility of doing a play with more lines in bigger groups, which I will pass on to Bill and Gill.

The Drama Department organise Gifted and Talented workshops for each Year group during the academic year, to give students a chance to work with professional theatre practitioners.

## Certificate of Achievement

Congratulations  
Braunton Academy

On your great work in collecting 310kg of textiles  
And raising £108.50 for your Academy.

Awarded by ‘PHIL’ THE BAG



## Non-Uniform Day

A total of **£1,146.75** was raised on our recent non-uniform day of which **£573.38** will be forwarded to Comic Relief and **£573.37** will go towards the school's own fundraising.

Thank you, as always, for your generous support!



### **"It is Rocket Science!"**

To celebrate British Science Week, students from 7A and 7E learned about rockets with the very entertaining Peter Wright from "Wonderstruck" (the Devon-based STEM learning company). The students found out how to blow up rice-crispies with gunpowder, why lying on a bed of nails is safe, how burning fuels can produce thrust, how flammable shampoo removes wax, and how loud a pulse-jet engine is (answer – very!).



The students thoroughly enjoyed themselves:

"I really enjoyed the Wonderstruck show and the demonstrations were really good, especially when the man blew up gunpowder with rice-crispies in the bowl." Eva Moorcraft-Holland

"The show was amazing and I learnt a lot during it. My favourite bit was the rocket engine." Jay Dyer

"I thought it was really fascinating and fun to learn new things." Reece O'Donovan

"The show was really fascinating and it's amazing what science can accomplish." Jemma Hudspith

"It was very good and the explosions were loud." Ben Major

"I loved the show but was terrified at times! The suspense was amazing and I would love to do it again." Lilli Fiddes

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### **"Timber Girls"**

Nine girls and two members of staff set out for the wilds of Umberleigh on 21st March, for a day of forestry work. They arrived to see two enormous horses waiting in the yard. These were Kip and Sol, two Ardennes heavy horses, who were trained to pull giant logs out of the woods.

Our students carried one of these logs out of the working area, using strap handles, and, given the weight of this log was estimated at 150-200kg, they were all relieved that the horses would do the hard work of taking it up the hill!

"Before the horses got to work though, it was time for us all to learn how to use an axe, without chopping any body parts off. We learned how to make the first cuts on a tree, how to rig up ropes and pulleys to bring down a big tree, and to make sure it fell where it was supposed to. Teamwork was the word of the day, as most of the jobs could not be done by one person alone."

"During the morning we cut down two trees, and once we'd had lunch (where we learned more about the history of women working on the land), it was back to the woods to ready the two trees for the log pile. More axe-work and sawing, and we had a neat pile of logs, ready for transport. Kip and Sol were harnessed up, and the students each had a try at driving the horses (with logs attached) up the hill and out of the woods." There had been a lot of rain the day before so the tracks were very muddy. Much of this transferred onto us, but it didn't slow Kip and Sol down as they powered through it, towing huge logs behind them as if they were matchsticks."

It was a long hard day's work for our students, but they all learned some useful skills. Even those who were not so confident to begin with, were chopping away by the end of the day.

What we learned:

How to use an axe

How to use a bow-saw

How to make a tree fall where you want it to go

How to clean a felled tree

How to chain up logs

How to drive a horse and log(s)

How to reduce the risk of injury while doing all the above and...how to use a composting toilet!



## Exciting times ahead for both of the Academy's Equestrian Teams!

'Team Aspire' were placed a very respectable 4th in their British show Jumping Competition at the beginning of March. Bella Wilkes and Lilli Fiddes went on to jump clear in the next class up - a huge achievement! As a team, the girls are improving more each time they compete and learning some invaluable lessons to further improve their performances.



As it stands, 'Team Aspire' are sitting in 9th place out of the 27 teams in the "British Show Jumping 70 League".

This is a huge achievement since the Braunton

Academy team is one of the only teams to ride with just 3 riders as nearly every other team rides as a team of 4. Should the girls manage to climb one more place on the table, they will have successfully earned themselves a place at the very prestigious end of year championship in Warwickshire in July!

The newly formed second Braunton equestrian team is to be called "Trivium" and the riders are named as Donella Phillips, Katie Holton, Sienna Gray and Poppy Priscott. This team are taking part in the North Devon Schools Showjumping league. They have been training fortnightly for the past month getting ready for their first competition on 4th April.

We are extremely grateful to the local businesses, **Dryrobe**, **Brends Hotels**, **Ground Force**, and **Croyde Motors** who have stepped forward to help with the teams' costs in competing and buying kit they need.

This is great news as more people are becoming genuinely very excited about Braunton Academy being the first to lead the way in the area with our equestrian teams. Our special thanks must also go to Mrs Fiddes and Mrs Wilkes for all their help in managing the teams so willingly and in such a fantastic manner.

### Students' Achievements in PE

I have pleasure in informing you of a new email address I have set up for you to use in order to give the Physical Education department photos, news reports, information etc about your child's sporting success and achievements outside of school. **Contact us on: [sport@braunton.academy](mailto:sport@braunton.academy)**

We find that our students are incredibly successful in their chosen sport(s) outside of school but we are rarely informed about them by our students or their parents. We are really interested and keen to know how successful they are and also we want to be able to recognise their achievements across the academy so that all staff and students are aware of this and we can celebrate this with your child which I think is extremely important.

#### PLEASE NOTE:

1. This email address is a read only account, therefore no emails can be sent from this account only received. This means that we will not respond to any emails. If you need to contact any of the PE staff, the normal procedure of contacting the main school email address will need to be used or a note in your child's planner.
2. This must only be used to celebrate the sporting achievement and successes of your child and nothing else please.

Kind regards and I look forward to hearing about the many achievements and success of our students. Follow us on twitter: @brauntonpe

Mr Frickleton  
Head of Physical Education



