

Parents' Post



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Spring 1 2023

Thoughts from the Principal's Office

Dear Parents/Carers

It has been a very short, but busy half term, and the students and staff have worked extremely hard to make it a success. It was a real pleasure to welcome Year 11 parents back into the building for the first face-to-face Parents' Evening to take place since January 2020. It was extremely well-attended, with over 80% of parents and students coming to discuss their progress in the run-up to the final examinations that start in 13 weeks time!

We were also able to welcome back the Class of 2022 for the first formal presentation evening to take place in the past three years. It was lovely to see how the Braunton Alumni are continuing with their studies.



The photo shows the two students who were awarded the 'Spirit of Devon' Award.

The Braunton Academy expansion

On the last day of the Autumn term we found out that the Department of Education had granted the Academy permission for the proposed expansion. This means that the official student allocation will rise to 840 allowing us to take 'bubble classes' of 30 students when needed over the next couple of years, and again in the future if required. Now that the capacity has been agreed, the final planning consultation has begun leading up to the formal planning permission process to be completed at the end of March. The community consultation that took place in January was extremely positive, with only one objection to the planned building work.

This term will see the start of some of the work in school to re-design office and storage spaces to facilitate the expansion. If planning permission is granted we expect the work to begin straight after we finish for the summer holidays. I will keep you updated over the coming months as the process progresses.

Mrs Fay Bowler, Principal

La Thuile, Italy - Snowsports Trip 2023

The excitement of our long-awaited snowsports trip became real on the last day of the Autumn term when we left North Devon in two coaches with 98 students and staff en route for Courmayeur, Italy.

The journey is long but a fun part of the trip and a great introduction to the world of travel. After getting through border control unscathed we drove onto the ferry, landing on French soil after midnight. We slept through the night and were woken for our breakfast at 8.00 am. Climbing up to the Mont Blanc Tunnel is always exciting; it shows the scale of how huge and amazing the Alps are and how small we are. Examples of glaciers can be seen and frozen streams. Twenty minutes later and we arrived in Italy to sunshine and snow - gorgeous!

For five days our skiers and boarders had five hours of tuition every day and with ten instructors between the two sports varying in ability from beginners to advanced the beginners were soon traversing the mountain and the more advanced going at pace, learning new skills with some groups travelling over into the valley on the other side and into the French resort of La Rosiere.

Although we had managed to take some illness with us (Coach 1!?) it was a fantastic week with lots of experiences to laugh at, boast about and generally feel good about, even those who won 'The Spanner Award'!!

A big thank you to all the staff who volunteered to come and support this amazing experience for our students and for the students for being fantastic ambassadors of Branton Academy.



University of Plymouth - Year 10 Maths Trip

The maths department took 25 students from Year 10 to Plymouth University to take part in a number of maths workshops aimed at students who were achieving the highest grades in maths and may well be looking at taking maths as an option post-16. These students took part in some very challenging maths lectures and workshops that enhanced and challenged their mathematical thinking.

A particularly fascinating lecture was given by Professor David McMullan where he demonstrated how prisoners of war during WW2 sent seemingly innocent letters home via the Red Cross but by using cyphers had encrypted secret messages for MI-9 (codebreakers) so that they were able to obtain supplies to escape. Another workshop was attended where students learned practical uses for capture/recapture sample analysis and put the processes into use with a practical experiment. A further workshop looked at statistical analysis and how the incautious use of statistical summaries can lead to errors in drawing conclusions from data.

This was a really positive trip for students and has certainly enhanced their maths knowledge and perspectives.

North Devon Schools' Winter Chess Tournament

Braunton Academy took part in the North Devon Schools' Winter Chess Tournament at Park School. A total of 12 teams were entered and whilst we did not win, our Team A came 4th and Team B - 5th and Team C - 6th. Our B and C teams beat all the other schools' B and C teams and proves that we have some very strong young players in Year 7 and 8. Chess Club runs on Thursday and Friday lunchtimes in room 17 in the Maths Department.

Eco Club

14 members of the school's Eco Club went to Yeo Valley Community Woodland in Barnstaple to plant 60 saplings in order to help offset North Devon Council's carbon footprint. As well as learning about how woodlands can sequester carbon from the atmosphere, reduce flood risk and provide a diverse habitat, the group also learnt how to use a mattock! The students were fantastic and full of enthusiasm plus the view was spectacular.



Supporting the Little Princess Trust



Marnie in Year 7 has donated her hair to the Little Princess Trust. Since 2006 they have been supporting children and young people who have lost their hair through cancer or illness by providing them with real-hair wigs. Well done, Marnie!



Student Scholarship

We are delighted to tell you that Sam Year 11 has successfully applied for scholarships to Blundell's School in Taunton and West Buckland School.

Sam underwent a challenging application process for both. A string of exams and interviews at Blundell's saw fifteen candidates through to the interview stage, Sam was offered the only scholarship place.

At West Buckland School Sam wrote a handwritten application letter and was interviewed by both the Head of Sixth form and Art.

Incredibly, Sam was offered a partial scholarship at both places, and after some careful consideration has taken up the offer to study his A 'levels at West Buckland School. We wish him well in his studies.



Plymouth University STEM Trip

Year 9 students had an inspiring day at the Plymouth University STEM showcase. Interactive stands exploring subjects such as icebergs, earthquakes, sustainable living, robotics and cyber security enabled our students to explore the wide range of STEM courses on offer. We next visited the Sea Life Centre and found out about the impact of climate change on coral reefs and had time to explore all the great exhibits.



A Level English

The time will soon come when you will no longer be a student or the parent of a student here at Braunton Academy. The next steps after this wonderful school will for most be a staircase leading to the world of Higher Education. It may well be that A Levels will be the route many want to take. But what to choose? There are so many to consider! In this post we will touch lightly on English as an option. Obviously, we are biased in the English Department but three benefits of picking English as an A Level are that you already have a skill set you have been developing since you were in reception class (aaaaaaahhhh weren't you sweet?!) and secondly English is not as content heavy as many other subjects. But also, you get to study some really fun topics and texts. For example, if you choose language as an option you might study how babies acquire language or how language has power and how that dynamic plays out between

genders. Or you might get to read a classic like *The Great Gatsby*. Institutions may offer English Language or English Literature as separate A Levels or they may offer a hybrid like the English Literature and Language course offered by AQA. If you went for that option you would be reading some amazing literary non-fiction pieces based in Paris, your institution might even offer a field trip so you can visit the places that inspired the writing. You might read *Othello* then see it live at The Southbank. Also, you would get to produce a personal investigation that explores a specific theme or technique in another piece of writing. This is worth 20% of your overall mark and could take a bit of exam pressure off. Whatever pathway you choose we wish you all the very best and although we will be sad to see you leave, it is our dearest wish to see you well equipped as you embark on your next academic adventure.

Until next time, The English Department.

Youth Speaks Caen Rotary Competition 2023

Both our intermediate and senior teams competed at The Park Hotel against other secondary schools in the North Devon area for a place in the District Final in Bodmin.

The intermediate team consisting of Issi as Chair, Izzy as Proposer and Flo as Opposer debated on the subject of organ donation for 15 minutes. Izzy missed being in the official photo because she had to drive to Bristol to compete at a cross country running event! The team gave an engaging and polished performance, that wowed the audience, but unfortunately, weren't put through to the next level of the competition.

Our senior team made up of Amelie as Chair, Sian as Proposer and Amelia as Opposer debated on the theme of human cloning. Similarly, their team impressed the audience with their highly-researched and well-constructed and sophisticated speeches, but were not offered a place at the District Final.

Mrs Haines and I, along with Patrick and Serena from the Braunton Caen Rotary feel privileged to have been able to work with two highly conscientious teams. Their attention to detail has been inspirational and it has been a pleasure to watch them develop into confident and assured public speakers.



School of Rock

The Expressive Arts Department are very excited for the upcoming performance of The School of Rock. Rehearsals have been going brilliantly and we are excited at the transformation of Isaac Hall into a theatre for the first time. Tickets are available on ParentMail or from School Reception.

Adults £7

Children £3

Family ticket (2 adults 2 and children) £18



Absence From School

We believe that in order for a student to fully benefit from their education, good attendance is crucial. It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement and full attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career.

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Student Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that students should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'.

A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by this school.

I must take this opportunity to remind you, that should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school, then Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following;

- A Penalty Notice
 - A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.
- Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a student has a number of unauthorised absences. Unauthorised absences can be acquired when;
- Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
 - Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head teacher can authorise an absence. This year there have been occasions when schools have been notified that the student is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.
 - A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.
- This school will be notifying the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above. Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within the first 21 days. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated.

We understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause and we apologise, but as you can appreciate this policy represents the school's responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education and supporting their future life opportunities. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for the 190 days each year that the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by an unavoidable circumstances).

With the cost of living rising, now may be a good time to check if your child may be entitled to a free school meal. Please go to: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/school-meals>

Devon School's Cross Country Championships

Congratulations to Freya, Amber and Isabelle, and former student Marisa who have been selected to represent Devon schools at the South West School's cross-country championships in Bristol next month. A special mention for Farli and Lyra who have also both been called up to the team as first reserves.



Year 10 Netball

Congratulations to the year 10 netball players, who took silver place at the North Devon Netball Tournament.

They showed determination, fair play and excellent team spirit. Their versatility on court was brilliant with many playing a variety of positions to help the overall team effort. Well done on a fantastic achievement.



Term Dates for 2023

We return to school on Monday 20th February.

Summer Term starts on
Monday 17th April and ends on
Friday 21st July.

Bank holidays are Monday 1st May and Monday 8th May.

Half term is 29th May - 2nd June.

School will be closed from 12.45 pm on Friday 21st July and
re-opens on Wednesday 6th September 2023.