

OLCHFA SCHOOL—YSGOL YR OLCHFA

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NOVEMBER
2007

AUTUMN TERM NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents

The school year is now well under way and the new timings of the school day are becoming familiar to staff and pupils alike. The initial feedback we have received is very positive. Most of our staff and pupils seem to like the earlier finish time and also like the shorter afternoon. Most of us get a bit hungry during the fourth morning period and some of us have been known to arrive at the canteen an hour early by mistake! However, the longer morning

break and the food options on offer seem to have helped matters along. We did experience some initial problems with lateness in the mornings which, if we are honest, we had anticipated. However, this too seems to be abating.

We are currently in the process of renegotiating our catering contract and have gone to external tender. Several companies have bid for the Olchfa contract and I am optimistic that the eventual chosen contractor will move the game on

significantly in terms of food options and the whole notion of 'customer responsiveness'. I hope that the School Council will give us early feedback when the new arrangements commence later in the Spring Term.

Please note the arrangements for some of our Christmas events. I do hope that you are able to support the school by attending one or more of them. I know that such support means a lot to the pupils.

Hugh Davies, Headteacher

INSET

FOR 2008

7th January

8th February

7th March

27th June

PLEASE NOTE
THAT THERE IS AN
ADDITIONAL
INSET DAY ON
THE 8TH
FEBRUARY WHICH
HAS NOT BEEN
PREVIOUSLY
PUBLISHED

For Information

All vacancies, teaching and non-teaching, are routinely advertised on

www.eteach.com



CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The school's production this year is the "*The Dracula Spectacula*". It will be running from the 27th to 30th November in the South Hall. If you have attended our productions previously, you will know that the performance is always very professional and entertaining, and this year will be no different. Please support the pupils and staff involved by attending. Tickets are priced at £5.00 for adults and £3.00 for child/senior citizens/concessions. Tickets can be purchased via your child from Mrs Preuss who will be in Room 63 on Mondays/Wednesdays & Thursdays from 3 until 3.30 pm.

Our annual *Christmas Carol Service* will be held at St Paul's Church on the 11th December commencing at 7pm. Again an invitation is extended to you all to attend this festive event.

UNIFORM SHOP

THE SCHOOL UNIFORM SHOP WILL BE OPEN DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS ON FRIDAY 4TH JANUARY FROM 10AM TO 1PM. OPENING HOURS DURING TERM TIME ARE MONDAY LUNCHTIME 1.05PM TO 2PM AND WEDNESDAY 3PM TO 6PM. OLCHF A POLO SHIRTS WILL BE ON SALE IN THE SHOP DURING THE SPRING TERM READY FOR WEAR AFTER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS.

Last Day of Term –21st December

Arrangements

Details of the activities that are being arranged, including the Panto, will be issued to pupils shortly. **On 21st December, there will be an afternoon registration at 1.45 pm and pupils will be dismissed at 2 pm.**

CALLING HOME

We would remind parents and pupils that the use of mobile phones to call or text home during the school day is not permitted. Pupils who are unwell should report to the Pupil Welfare Officer who will then call home if necessary. For any other messages pupil can use a phone in Room 42.

PUPIL RECORDS

The Data Checking sheets have recently been issued to pupils for completion by parents and return. It is vital that parents advise the school of any changes to circumstances /addresses/contact numbers etc. during the school year in order that our records are updated accordingly.

SCHOOL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Christmas dinner will be served to pupils on the **12th December** in the Main Hall. The cost will be £1.60 which includes pudding. There will also be a limited choice of other lunches.

Routine Vacancies

If you are interested in becoming a Dining Room Assistant, please contact Mrs Baglow on 534304 for further details.

If you are interested in becoming an exam invigilator please contact Mr Helliwell, Exams Officer on 534309. Training will be provided.

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTIONS

Please see attached documentation relating to two Parent Governor vacancies that arise in the school from January 2008. We would appreciate parents' time in completing and returning these nomination forms.

VIRTUAL REALITY BABY EXPERIENCE

Once again, during October this year, the Year 10 and 11 pupils taking both Child Development and Life Skills were given the opportunity to take a virtual reality baby home and become a "parent" for the evening. The eight "babies" were on loan from the Sure Start organization and pupils had to have the consent of their parents before they were allowed to take them home.

Most pupils (a few boys took part) were keen to participate and with so many pupils, the programming of the babies went on for many weeks.

All pupils arrived on the dot of 3 o'clock to collect their babies, all asking ,“When will it start crying?” The babies would cry when they needed feeding, changing and comforting from 3.00 pm – 6.00 am. Most pupils were exhausted by the experience and many were waiting early in the morning to return them, although some also said they would value having them for longer. Pupils were all keen to get their printout of how well they had done, many wanting to show mums at home!

Overall, it was a valuable experience for pupils to be aware of how demanding babies can be. Many thanks to the tolerant parents who allowed the pupils to participate and to Mrs B Morris for all of her patience with the programming and recording the data from the babies!

LITERACY AT OLCHFA

As part of Olchfa's commitment to developing the individual potential of every pupil, pupils are tested on entry to Year 7. We use the All Wales Reading Test to assess pupils' reading ages and the University of Durham's "MidYIS" test to make predictions of attainment by the end of Key Stage 3. The results of these tests are analysed very closely and, where necessary, we are able to target individual pupils with additional support to ensure they fulfil their potential.

Literacy interventions include the Language and Learning Group. This provides pupils with

an intensive five-week course of coaching in language skills, which is taught by Mrs Diane Morgan, a specialist teacher. The scheme is offered to 40 Year 7 pupils annually.

We also run a very successful Reading Partners scheme. In this scheme, around 40 Year 7 pupils are partnered with a Year 12 pupil for weekly reading sessions. We are fortunate to have a team of very dedicated Year 12 pupils who give up some of their own time each week to be involved. The year 12 pupils are given on-going training and support to ensure the quality and success of this strategy. Last year, around 80% of Year 7 pupils

who were supported by a reading partner showed a significant development in their reading ages.



During the Spring Term we will be running a series of literacy-based events for Year 7, by participating in the national "Read a Million Words" campaign. This has been developed to encourage reading for pleasure. If you can offer any assistance or would like any further information, please contact Mr R Williams (Basic Skills Co-ordinator) at the school, or by e-mail: rjw@olchfa.org.uk.

World Challenge Expedition to Venezuela 2007

Over 20 of our pupils and four of our staff went to Venezuela on a World Challenge Expedition during the summer. This month-long expedition involves community work and, depending on choice, trekking into the Andes or the jungle! Here are a couple of reports on their experiences.

During the Summer of 2007, two expeditions left Olchfa with one common aim—to explore Venezuela. Two years earlier, a presentation by 'World Challenge' caught the imagination of a group of students who decided that they wanted to take the challenge and visit South America. As the possible adventures were researched, one group decided that they wanted to visit Angel Falls in the East of the country, whilst the Andes Mountains called to another group. It soon became clear that two expeditions were emerging so it was that our adventures started.

The Mountain Team. Our group was made up of 17 students and two staff from school, Mrs Janet Cadogan (Head of Geography) and Ms Julie Riley (Head of Year 10). We were also accompanied by a World Challenge leader, Mr Nahuel Alonso, who was flown up from Argentina at very short notice after our designated leader broke an ankle the day before we were due to fly out of the UK. One of our students, Ruben Banfield, has desig-

nated a power point presentation of the group and some of our adventures. This will be placed on the website in the near future. Also, Nahuel is a keen photographer and you can access some extraordinary pictures by opening the two Venezuela folders on his website: <http://picasaweb.google.es/nahuelaukache>. Some of the students have written about their experiences and we are sure you will enjoy reading them. It was not always easy as we all faced a series of mental and physical challenges which took us out of our comfort zones. However, the month-long expedition was packed with fun and friendship as we coped with new environments and became more aware of our own strengths and weaknesses. It was probably a life-changing experience for every member of the team, including the staff. We are all proud of our involvement and the successful completion of an adventure of a lifetime. We both feel it was a privilege to have been part of an expedition with such caring and supportive young people—a real team.

Janet Cadogan and Julie Riley.

My time in Venezuela was an experience I will never forget. It also taught me valuable skills that I will be able to use in the future. Team Challenge certainly lived up to its name, with challenges to tackle throughout the build up process and well before we even thought about checking into Heathrow! Raising money was a tough but worthwhile experience. Most of the group raised a significant amount of money from bag-packing in shops such as Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer.

The first thing that hit me when we arrived in Venezuela was the difference in the culture compared to the UK. I first noticed shanty towns along the hillsides, something which you would never see in the UK. There was also a huge difference in the standards of motoring, with little notice of road safety and car maintenance.

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We trekked in two different areas of terrain. First was the jungle area of Venezuela and our final trek was its mountainous area. The jungle was a place I only thought I would see on television. In reality it was amazing! The different types of plants and animals I saw were vast. The group was lucky enough to see a Howler Monkey! We knew it was a rare sight seeing one in the wild and it is a moment I will always remember. Trekking through the jungle was a challenge because of the warm temperature and high humidity. This meant it was important to help each other out as a team, by keeping each other motivated through encouragement. Once the jungle trek was completed, the Caribbean beaches awaited our arrival for some important rest and relaxation.

The mountain trek was challenging because of the temperatures ranging from high to freezing. Also the altitude was an issue, with base camp being well above the altitude of Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales. We aimed to

Reach 4300 metres above sea level. The final day of the mountain trek was one of the toughest but most satisfying of the trip. With the group feeling tired and bad weather conditions threatening to hamper our trek, it was beginning to look unlikely that we would reach the peak of 4,300 but we all managed to reach the peak as a team.

Overall, the trip was a huge success. Each individual had to face and overcome different challenges including physical and mental. For some even the lack of food was an issue. However, with a brilliant leadership team of Nahuel and Olchfa's very own Mrs Cadogan and Ms Ridley, they ensured everything ran smoothly but most importantly fitted into the team, and therefore everyone overcame personal challenges and achieved goals. I would recommend taking part in a Team Challenge Expedition if given the chance. I would certainly do it again.

Michael Davies (formerly Year 13)

PHYSICS ENGINEERING PROJECT

Nine AS Physics students from Year 12 have been given the opportunity to take part in EESW—Engineering Education Scheme Wales. The students have linked up with Corus to work on a real engineering project, which we will develop over the next four months. The students have been given access to £20,000 worth of advanced computer software for use on the project and the facilities in Swansea University in early December. We will present the completed project at the Celtic Manor Hotel in March and, if we have successfully developed a realistic project, our ideas may be used in the Corus plant in Port Talbot.

Amy Want

Congratulations to students and staff who undertook and successfully completed the Venezuela Challenge.

Our expedition to Venezuela with World Challenge first began with lots of hard work to fundraise the money we needed. This was the most difficult part of the challenge. We all spent endless hours bag packing and arranging various sponsored events such as abseiling. After all the hard work it all felt worthwhile when we arrived in Venezuela. The experience most definitely would not have been the same if it wasn't for the difficult challenges we had to face. Our trip got off to a bad start as we were left without a leader for the first week. With a large group and no clear leadership we had plenty of problems but it did make our group stronger. When we finally got our leader it was worth it. The trip wouldn't have been the same without him, plus he spoke Spanish which was a bonus. I dread to think where we would have ended up without him. In the days we spent in the jungle we faced the most extreme conditions. Adapting to the humidity and 15-hour-long treks proved really hard, especially with the lack of food, which was not fun!

Then there were the highlights. Each day we experienced something new, but it was some of the simple things which made the trip so enjoyable. Things like relaxing on the beach after the jungle trek, camping and cooking right on the beach along the Caribbean coast. Meeting and helping the community really did make me appreciate what I have back home. The experiences in rest and relaxation, like white water rafting were incredible and so much fun, and just gave the chance for everybody to relax as usually we were so busy. The final trek was my highlight from beginning in the jungle to ending the journey in the highest village in Venezuela was incredible, especially when we reached our summit.

The trip was a once in a lifetime experience. I made loads of awesome new friends, who literally became my family for a month. I have the best memories from the trip and I speak for everyone when I say we would do anything to do it all over again!

Ffion Batcup—Year 13

Pupil Achievements

We are aware that many of our pupils have various hobbies and interests outside school and compete at various levels. The Headteacher asks to be informed of these pupils' successes as a routine. We would like to congratulate Sarah Falconer on becoming the British Lifesaving Champion and Jack Davies on becoming the new British Junior Prokart Champion.

Pupils who did extremely well in the Urdd Swimming Gala were Sarah Falconer, Joseph Tucker, Rachel Hatcher, Bronwen Harry, Laura Hatcher, Chloe Preece, Iona Evans and Megan Wyatt. The Year 9/10 relay team—Browen Harry, Sarah Falconer, Sian Davies and Rachel Hatcher won both the freestyle and medley relays and are through to the final which will be held in January 2008. Very well done to all.

Congratulations also to a group of Year 11 boys who organised the Inter-Schools Year 7 Rugby Tournament in October. This group organised the whole event, from setting up the tournament and corresponding with the other schools, to gaining sponsorship and organising the day. Staff from all the schools involved were very impressed.

It is not our intention to select certain pupils in this article, merely to highlight some of the activities our pupils are involved in. If you have any information of this nature, please e-mail to Olchfa.School@swansea-edunet.gov.uk

EVENING CLASSES AT OLCHFA. Courses are for 10 weeks and start week commencing 7th January. Enrolment will take place on the first evening of each class.

Monday	Men's Keep Fit Art	7 pm - 9 pm	New Gym S13
Tuesday	Art	7 pm - 9 pm	S13
Wednesday	Yoga	7 pm - 9 pm	Main Hall
Thursday	Line Dancing Beginners Line Dancing Intermediates	7 pm - 8 pm 8 pm—9.30 pm	Main Hall Main Hall

SCHOOL TERMS AND HOLIDAYS					2007—2008	
Term	Term Begins	Term ends	Begins	Ends	Term begins	Term ends
Autumn 2007	Tuesday 4th Sept	Friday 26th October	Monday 29th October	Friday 2nd November	Monday 5th November	Friday 21st December
Spring 2008	Monday 7th January	Friday 8th February	Monday 11th February	Friday 15th February	Monday 18th February	Thursday 20th March
Summer 2008	Monday 7th April	Friday 23rd May	Monday 26th May	Friday 30th May	Monday 2nd June	Wednesday 23rd July
BANK HOLIDAYS	21st March 2008 — Good Friday / 24th March 2008—Easter Monday / 5th May—May Day / 26th May 2008—Spring Bank Holiday					
INSET DAYS	7th January / 8th February / 7th March / 27th June PLEASE NOTE THE 8th February INSET day, not previously published					

November 2007

Dear Parent

City & County of Swansea Governing Bodies—Election of Parent Governors – Olchfa School

I am writing to inform you that two vacancies will arise for Parent Governors at Olchfa School towards the end of January 2008, and you are invited to submit a nomination for the posts.

In general, any parent of a registered pupil at the school at the time of the election is eligible to become a parent governor and to hold office for four years, even though the pupil may leave the school in the meantime.

If you are eligible and wish to be nominated as a Parent Governor, please complete the **attached** form and obtain the signatures of two other parents of registered pupils at the school.

The completed form should be returned to the box provided in the school Reception no later than 1.30pm on Thursday 20 December 2007. Please note it is your responsibility to ensure that the nomination is placed in the box at reception.

If the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies which exist, then an election will take place. Voting papers will be sent to all parents with children in the school.

Training courses for Governors are provided free by the Authority and information is also circulated from time to time regarding courses arranged by outside bodies for which a fee may be payable.

You also need to be aware that the LEA reserves the right to carry out a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check before any new Governor is able to take up post.

Yours sincerely

Jan Platt, Clerk to Governors

Dear Parent

Many people who have been parent governors in the past say that they have found the role rewarding. Parent governors, like all governors, are involved in considering the way in which we would like the school to move forward in order to best serve the needs of our pupils. The day to day management of the school is obviously left to the Headteacher and staff, but we work very closely together and everybody's views are important and are listened to.

There are two full Governing Body meetings each term and several sub-committees which give rise to termly meetings. We hope that you will consider applying to join us – after all it is the future of your children which the Governing Body has as its primary focus.

Rev Fr Tim Williams, Chair of Governors

CITY & COUNTY OF SWANSEA GOVERNING BODIES
NOMINATION FORM

ELECTION OF PARENT GOVERNORS - OLCHFA SCHOOL

NAME OF NOMINEE: Mr/Mrs/Miss _____
(Block Capitals)

ADDRESS: _____

Post Code: _____ Tel No: _____

PARENT OF: _____
(Block Capitals)

1. **PROPOSED BY:** _____
(Block Capitals)

Address: _____

Parent of: _____ Form: _____

Signature: _____

2. **SECONDED BY:** _____
(Block Capitals)

Address: _____

Parent of: _____ Form: _____

Signature: _____

You may wish to use this space to give brief details in support of your nomination which may be included on any ballot form (please do not exceed 50 words).

The completed form must be returned in a sealed envelope to the ballot box situated at Reception at Olchfa School ON OR BEFORE 1.30pm, THURSDAY 20 DECEMBER 2007