



Belper School and Sixth Form Centre

# Parent/Carer newsletter

Issue no 8: Autumn 2 2018

## IMPORTANT NOTICE—FRIDAY 21 DECEMBER 2018

On Friday 21 December 2018 (the last day of the Autumn Term), school buses will operate as normal in the morning.

As in previous years, the school day will finish at 1.10pm and students will be permitted to leave. For those students unable to leave early there will be supervised activities until the normal end of the school day at 3.00pm.

At present, school buses will be operating their normal timetable at the usual times at the end of the school day **with the exception of the 360 Harpurs service to Bargate, Parks Estate, Three Gates and Milford which WILL NOT BE OPERATING.**

Students return to school on Monday 7 January 2019 which will be **timetable week 2.**

## School Calendar and Term Dates

Don't forget that you can view our up-to-date school calendar and term dates in the Information section of our website, along with term dates for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Our remaining INSET days this year are:

- Friday 7 June 2019
- Monday 22 July 2019

Coming up next half-term ...

- Thursday 17 January 2019—Year 11 Parents' Consultation Evening
- Thursday 7 February 2019—Year 9 Options at 14+ Evening
- Thursday 14 February 2019—Year 9 Parents' Consultation Evening

# Message from the Headteacher

Welcome to another edition of the newsletter, one of the ways school communicates and shares information with parents/carers and keeps them updated on school matters. With a busy life it can be difficult to keep up to speed with everything that is going on so we appreciate parents/carers taking a few minutes to go through the newsletter and note some important messages. If there is anything that requires follow-up or further querying then please do get in touch with the school. In addition, we share information through the website, letters via students, notes in student planners and via twitter.

## Summer 2018 Outcomes

Well what a cracking job last year's Y11 and Y13 did! For the fourth time in five years since joining the school, I can once again say we got 'record results'. A fabulous feeling. The Y11 students got the highest progress score the school has ever seen. This is the amount of progress they make all through the school when comparing their Y6 SATs to their Y11 GCSEs. The hard work, determination and resilience of so many students and staff to enable this to happen is simply phenomenal. We salute them!

We are also tremendously proud of our Y13 students who achieved some stunning results. There is a wind of change Post 16 at Belper School and it is great to see some quality students step up and embrace this. This year we had higher than national averages for students going to the top third of universities (including Cambridge) and to Russell Group universities. Students also achieved excellent success in securing top degree-level apprenticeships with great companies, such as Rolls-Royce and Severn Trent. Superb.

## School Life

Away from exam results, the school continues to flourish on so many levels thanks to the great students, staff and parents of this town and the surrounding villages. A small number of examples include: numerous trips, competitions and excursions which have been appreciated and enjoyed by students and staff alike; success in sport continues to be a key theme at the school, such as in cross-county and football, and we look forward to further success as our teams progress through the rounds; and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme continues to showcase the many talents of Belper School students, and has also helped with the school drive to be more environmentally-friendly - great to see the army of volunteers out sorting the recycling!

## School Funding

It is well documented that schools across the country are facing tremendous financial difficulties to secure the highest possible standards of provision for the youngsters of today. The Governors and school staff work hard to ensure that the situation is managed and that the experience for our children are maximised. Circulated with this newsletter is a statement from the Governors regarding the funding situation.

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## **Message from the Headteacher continued ...**

### **Mobile Phones Policy**

Belper School and Sixth Form Centre has a policy that allows students to bring mobile phones to school and use them during social time (before school, break, lunch and after school). This policy is currently being monitored and will be reviewed at some point in the new year. Students are very good at following the rule of when they are allowed to use them. Sadly, some students are not using their mobile phone for positive reasons when they do have access to them. If the inappropriate use of apps and social media technology interferes with the smooth operational running of the school then there is the risk that there will be a no mobile phone policy introduced.

### **Online Safety**

In the modern digital age there are an unbelievable amount of amazing sites, apps and programmes which have enhanced our lives. Unfortunately, there are also sites, apps and programmes which are highly inappropriate and can put our children at risk. As a parent, staying on top of the latest technology can be difficult. To support this there is a vast wealth of information and useful links available through the Belper School website. Simply go on the search area and put in 'online safety' to access this material.

### **Road Safety**

It is the time of year where we make regular pleas to students to be road safe and aware of their surroundings. Darker mornings and nights, alongside the joys of winter weather, make travelling to and from school more dangerous. We regularly talk to students about road safety and encourage yourselves as parents to do the same. They are never too old to have a health and safety lecture! It is particularly important for those children who can no longer use the Alton Road cut-through to be extra vigilant on the busy Kilbourne Road.

### **New Governors**

As parents will be aware, there has been a nomination and ballot for three parent Governor positions in the school due to the previous members' terms of office expiring after four year's of service. Thank you for all the forms that were returned and the votes that were cast. We welcome Sue Stone-Makin back to the school to continue into her second term of office and introduce two new Governors, Helina Kirkup and Claire Lightfoot. We thank all three for their support and commitment and wish them well in their terms of office!

As Christmas approaches, may I pass on the school's warmest wishes for a happy and restful festive period. We look forward to seeing all our students back safe and well for the spring term

**M Cooper**  
**Headteacher**

# Statement from the Governing Body of Belper School and Sixth Form Centre—Educational Funding

Over the last few years there has been unprecedented change within education: Levels at Key Stage 3 (KS3) have been abolished; new syllabi at Key Stage 4 (KS4) have been introduced for all subjects; the GCSE grading system of letters has been abolished and replaced with numbers; coursework has been removed for nearly all subjects; assessments are linear rather than modular; new syllabi have been introduced for Key Stage 5 (KS5); and new assessment frameworks have been brought in to Key Stage 5, to name but a few.

Whilst all the above changes have led to upheaval within schools of an intense nature over a very short period of time, not one of them has had the impact that the school funding crisis has. It has been well documented in the media over recent times that there is a significant issue with funding in schools and that, as a consequence, the provision for students and the educational experience they have, are suffering. As well as the input of media there have been various statements and pieces of information from the Government and the Department for Education which counters other comments and actually states that schools have 'never been as well funded'.

Consequently, there have been a series of mixed messages, which have led to confusion and uncertainty over what the actual situation is and how this is playing out in schools. This statement attempts to address this confusion by providing some clarity over the issue of funding and how it is impacting on schools.

## School Income

- Schools are given a set amount of money per student. Therefore the main budget is affected by how many students are at the school. Changes to student numbers can consequently have significant impact on how much base funding comes into school.
- The amount of funding given per student across the country has historically varied with some authorities getting over £1000 per student more than others. Derbyshire has traditionally been an authority that is at the lower end of the funding range. The introduction of a national funding formula is an attempt to even out this discrepancy. This is in its infancy with teething problems being worked through.
- Sixth Form funding has decreased consistently over the years. For example, Belper School's funding for 257 Sixth Form students in 2017/18 was £280,000 lower than its funding for 255 Sixth Form students in 2013/14, which gives an idea of the scale of the cuts in this area, and the magnitude of the problem to be managed. This represents a cash cut of over 20% when comparing 2017/18's income with 2013/14's income for the same number of students.
- Income streams have been reviewed over time and there has been a change to them, such as the Key Stage Strategy funding, resulting in some schools receiving lower amounts or even no longer receiving funding that they once used to.

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## Educational Funding continued ...

### 'Education has never been as well funded'

- The national stance from the Government and the Department for Education (DfE) is that education has never been as well funded as it is now, with quotes being given regarding the amount of money now in the system compared to a few years ago. Percentage figures are also given regarding increases.
- It may be statistically accurate that it can be argued that education has never been as well funded, but there are issues behind the statement that make it misleading.
- Firstly, the devil is often in the detail, and big national calculations do not necessarily reflect what is happening at a school level. One example of this is the recent inclusion of the tuition fees that families pay for university courses as part of a defence of the national amount spent on education. Another example is that of course the funding spent on opening new schools is included in the 'pot', and may be part of the reason why education spending is stated as being higher than in previous years, but this is not any help on the ground for schools like Belper.
- Secondly, there are certain types of funding that used to go straight to the Local Authority to pay for services that now come to schools, thereby on face value increasing the amount of money going into school. However, that funding has to be passed straight to the Local Authority by the school therefore is not part of a school's actual disposable budget. On paper the school has an increase in its budget, in reality we are acting as a bank and temporarily holding funds for someone else.
- Thirdly, it may be stating the obvious but if income increases a little and costs increase a lot, then the net effect is a reduction in what can be afforded.

### Rising Costs

- There are a number of cost areas that over recent times have increased quite dramatically. These inevitably have an impact on the school budget. Where it can, the school will always tender, negotiate, haggle and barter to get the best value for money. However, there are certain costs that this cannot happen with, as there are numerous areas where the school cannot control rates and have to accept increases with very little recourse of action. For example, all of the exam boards have continued to increase examination fees, and tax increases have ensured that energy prices have continued to rise.
- Staffing costs have increased dramatically through Government legislation. The national insurance contribution from employers increased from 10.4% to 13.8% in April 2016. This was unfunded by the Government.
- The teachers' pension contribution increased from 14.1% to 16.4% in September 2015. This was unfunded by the Government.
- National pay awards of 1% have been applied annually. These were unfunded by the Government.
- In summary, the cost of a teacher in 2017/18 was 7.5% (£3408) more than the cost of a teacher on the same hours and pay scale in 2014/15. In order to cover the unfunded costs of this increase, funds have to be diverted from other areas of the school therefore reducing funding and consequently provision in the affected area.

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## Educational Funding continued ...

- Living Wage costs and pension auto-enrolment costs, while welcomed, have increased the pressure on school budgets. These are unfunded by the Government.
- New costs have been introduced by legislation, such as the apprenticeship levy, which have put additional costs on schools.
- In a number of cases, there has also been an increase in costs regarding the services that are provided by the Local Authority. In previous years, Local Authorities would provide services fully, or at a discount, as part of their offer using central funding from Government or from a top slice amount from schools. Over time, these funding sources have dried up as less funding is available. Consequently, services such as careers education, education welfare and educational psychology, are now almost fully chargeable directly from school funds.

## Managing the Funding Issue

- Through national and local media many examples have been given of how schools are practically dealing with less income, rising costs and shortfalls in their budgets. Some of the pressure has enabled schools to find more cost-effective and efficient ways of working which is correct, desired and fully expected. This has happened at Belper School. However, when increasing costs are very high and decreases to income streams very significant it is not possible to make the budget balance through efficiency savings and, consequently, more structural intervention is needed. This has happened at Belper School.
- One form of saving is to reduce the number of support staff that the school employs. This has happened at Belper School. Reductions in staffing make significant savings but have the knock-on impact of reducing the services and provision that a school can offer. This reduction can be in the form of less availability, less casework management, an increase in threshold levels so fewer students qualify for support or stopping doing certain things. At Belper School there are less staff/staffing hours of office staff, Teaching Assistants (TAs), librarians, cleaners, finance staff, mid-day supervisors, technicians, kitchen staff, learning and safeguarding mentors, exam staff, Modern Foreign Language Assistants, Event Support Staff, cover supervisors and business support assistants than there were five years ago. This represents a 15% reduction from the 2013 total.
- Another form of saving is to reduce the number of teachers that the school employs. This has happened at Belper School. There are fifteen fewer full time equivalent teachers at the school now than there were five years ago. This represents a 17% reduction from the 2013 total.
- Another form of saving is to reduce the number of leaders in the school. This has happened at Belper School. The Leadership Group has reduced from nine to seven over the last five years representing a 22% reduction. The Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) structure has also been amended with five TLR posts being removed from the structure over the last five years, equalling a 12% reduction in TLR posts.
- One of the consequences of reducing the number of teaching hours available by reducing teachers and leaders is an increase in class sizes. This has happened at Belper School.
- A second consequence of reducing the number of teaching hours in this way is a reduction in the subjects and courses offered by the school and the number of groups that run. This has happened at Belper School with KS4 and KS5 where groups are not viable to run economically.

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## Educational Funding continued ...

Schools have less funding than they used to have. Costs are higher than they used to be. Recent budgets have been 'stand still' thereby increasing the gap between income and expenditure. This gap is increasing faster than it can be addressed resulting in reserves that schools hold running dry. This is the situation that schools, including Belper School, find themselves in - a very difficult situation that impacts on children, regardless of what the Government or DfE say.

It is a tremendous testimony to the students, staff and wider community of Belper and the surrounding villages that the school has managed to maintain its ethos and high standards in such turbulent times. The school has been proactive in coping with the difficult environment we find ourselves thrust into, knowing that it is very hard for all schools and we are not alone nor unique in the issues we face. The next step for the school is to confirm the budget we have for the next year and then review the provision in place with the funds we have. These are worrying times for the education of our children, but rest assured, the Governors and the school will continue to navigate the choppy waters and make the difficult decisions that are needed in order to secure a successful future for Belper School and Sixth Form Centre.

At Belper School, we will continue to strive for an outstanding education for the children of Belper and the surrounding villages, and no matter what resources we do or do not have we will continue to provide for them as best we can so they can grow, develop and become somebody whilst they are in our care.

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## Parent Portal

Parents/carers can apply for a username and password to access Parent Portal through which they are able to view attendance, behaviour and reports. If you do not have access and would like an application form, please see the school website and look under *Services/Parent Links/Parent Portal applications*. These forms are also available on request from the School Office.

If you mislay or forget your log-on details, or are having difficulty accessing the Portal, please email [info@belperschool.co.uk](mailto:info@belperschool.co.uk) or contact the School Office.

# Message from the Chair of Governors

## Exam Results

The governors were delighted with the GCSE and A level results this year when we reviewed them at our full governors meeting on 8 November 2018.

At GCSE level, the school achieved our best ever score on the measure of Progress that students achieve from Year 7 to Year 11, and the overall results attained were also amongst our best ever. Government League tables now focus on the Progress measure and we exceeded the national average for that measure for the first time.

At A level, there was a significant improvement in the results compared to those of the last 3 years.

The Governors recognise that these results are a testament to the effort put in by the students and whole staff, supported by parents and carers. We believe they are all part of a continually improving trend on our journey to become an outstanding school.

## Safeguarding

At the Full Governors meeting on 8 November 2018, the Governors also approved a new Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, which includes the latest advice from local and central government and our own views on what we need to do to keep our students safe. The policy includes practical steps to ensure our students do not come to harm at school.

We also reviewed the results of a Child Protection Audit carried out by the school's Senior Safeguarding Designated Lead and our Safeguarding governor. Overall the result of the audit was good, and a few specific areas were identified where further improvements can be made. These improvements are being actioned and will be monitored by governors in the future.

**Alan Eccleston**  
Chair of Governors

# School Calendar and Term Dates

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## Year 11 update

Don't forget that year 11 parents/carers can access information on the school website under *Information/Year 11 Information*.

A provisional date for the Year 11 Prom has been set for Wednesday 26 June 2019. We are in the process of finalising some details with the aim of sending letters out to parents about the event soon. Until then, please do not send in any money. Students who paid a deposit in October will have that amount deducted from the ticket price.

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## Head Lice

From time to time we are made aware of the occasional student in school who has head lice. We would ask parents to be vigilant, check their son/daughter's hair regularly and treat accordingly as and when necessary.

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## Belper School and Sixth Form Centre

John O'Gaunts Way  
Belper  
Derbyshire  
DE56 0DA

Telephone: 01773 825281  
Email: [belperschool@belperschool.co.uk](mailto:belperschool@belperschool.co.uk)

 @belperschool