

# School News

## NHGS U16 West Yorkshire Netball Champions!

**CONGRATULATIONS....**NHGS U16 Netball Team on becoming West Yorkshire Netball Champions. Their performance throughout the tournament was phenomenal beating experienced schools such as Bradford Grammar and Leeds Grammar School. The team of mostly Year 11 girls included:

Ashlea, Sophie, Amy, Fiona, Carolyn, Sophie, Zoe, Hannah, Rebecca, Ailish (YR10), Beth (YR10).

The tournament was held at Leeds Grammar School and NHGS started off with a stunning 15-6 win against the hosts. They followed this with further victories in the group stage over Wakefield Girls and Shelley High School. Bradford Grammar in the Semi-Finals was a real battle and the girls showed tremendous spirit, skill and determination to win the game 8-7. By this stage the girls were full of confidence and fought tirelessly to become west Yorkshire Champions by beating Prince Henrys school in the final 6-3.

The girls are truly worthy champions and this is the result of 3 years hard work and dedication to training. They are an absolute pleasure to work with, a credit to themselves and the school and I am extremely proud of their performance at the tournament.



### Well done!!

The results were as follows: **Group Stage:**  
NHGS 15    6 Leeds Grammar School (Won)  
NHGS 10    8 Wakefield Girls (Won)  
NHGS 12    8 Shelley High School (Won)

### Semi-Final:

The North Halifax  
Grammar School



# NHGS News

NEWSLETTER 2  
OCTOBER 2009

**Page 1**  
NHGS U16 West Yorkshire  
Netball Champions

**Page 2**  
NHGS U19 Calderdale Netball  
Champions  
Christmas Fayre  
Year 7 Mummies Nights

**Page 3**  
LRC News  
Comenius Visit to Estonia

**Page 5**  
Geography Coursework Field  
Trip to Sheffield  
PA Meetings

**Page 6**  
Calling all Cake Bakers!  
NHGS Parents' Association  
Concert  
Pilot Change to Appearance  
Code  
Parents' Association Prize Draw  
Winners  
Parents' Evenings 2009/10

**Page 7**  
Nature, Nurture or Neither?  
What Parents Can Do!

**Page 9**  
What Parents Think!

**Page 11**  
Grease  
HPV Immunisation Programme

**Page 12**  
Tear off slip for Grease  
Tear off slip for Baking  
Volunteers

**Page 13**  
Tear off slip for Parents'  
Association Concert

NHGS 8 7 Bradford Girls  
(Won)  
**Final:**  
NHGS 6 3 Prince Henrys  
(Won-West Yorkshire  
Champions!)

## NHGS U19 Calderdale Netball Champions!

**CONGRATULATIONS....**NHGS U19 Netball Team on becoming Calderdale Netball Champions. The girls played incredible Netball throughout the tournament and fully deserve to be Calderdale champions! **Team:** Leah Farrar, Holly Ackroyd, Beth Allen (YR10), Bridget McHugh, Beth Garside, Megan Scholefield, Zoe Littlewood (YR11), Kate Bullock, Joanna Bullock.

The tournament was held at Brooksbank and NHGS started off playing the toughest opposition of the day, Brighouse. With some outstanding shooting and defending throughout the game, the girls managed to win easily 15-9. They followed this with comfortable victories over Brooksbank and Hipperholme Grammar. The girls played outstandingly well in the Semi-Final defeating Holy Trinity 19-9. The Final was a real battle. Brighouse were determined to retain their title and played much better than they had in the group stages. After full time, the score was 8-8 so the game went in to extra time. NHGS managed to go one goal up in extra time and held on to their lead until the final whistle.

This is a fantastic win for the girls. Every player in the squad played outstandingly and was a real credit to the school

### Well Done!!

The results were as follows:

#### Group Stage:

NHGS 15 9 Brighouse  
NHGS 22 5 Brooksbank  
NHGS 20 11 Hipperholme Grammar

#### Semi Final

NHGS 19 9 Holy Trinity

#### Final:

NHGS 10 9 Brighouse

KJH



**CHRISTMAS FAYRE,  
SATURDAY 28  
NOVEMBER 2009  
10.30 AM TILL 2PM**

*A great way to do some Christmas shopping as well as a chance to have a good look around the brilliant new Darwin Sixth Form Learning Centre which parents helped to fund. There will be a wide variety of stalls with some fantastic gifts and offers as well as a café serving delicious hot lunches and snacks.*

*We still need a few volunteers, please contact Sue Kneller on 01422 365285 if you would like to help out.*

### Year 7 Mummies Nights are Back!

We know that it can be hard to settle in and make new friends and contacts. We also know that many of our new parents would like to meet up with others in their child's form. Following last year's brilliant events and feedback from the New parents Welcome Evening, the PA has organised another networking opportunity for all Year 7 Mums.

The Brasserie at the Bull  
Bull Green , Halifax  
Tuesday 10 November, 7.30p.m.

Dress is informal and dependent upon your menu choice the cost will be in the region of £10-15. Don't worry if you don't know anyone or are coming alone, the friendly PA chaperones will be on hand to make everyone feel welcome. You will definitely go home after a relaxing evening feeling much more informed and with a lot more friends.

Places are limited so if you would like to attend please email Janet Wilson at [jancoulthurst@gmail.com](mailto:jancoulthurst@gmail.com) or call 07791 534155 by Monday 2 November.

**LRC News**

This year the LRC is as busy as ever with a host of activities already arranged for this term and next.

This is my fourth year as a student librarian and the third year in which I have run Year 7 Book Club. Book Club is a group which meets weekly on Wednesdays at 12:30 in the LRC. As well as reading, discussing and reviewing books, we complete a variety of activities on the books we have read. Last year included some popular activities which involved students: designing their own book cover; re-writing the blurb; inventing their own opening to a novel; creating posters on a book they liked and designing and testing a board game relating to a novel of their choice. New members are always welcome at Book Club; if any Year 7 student wishes to join please speak to me in the LRC.

Congratulations must also go to Danielle Rowley 8(1), Harriet Rowley 8(1) and Haleema Baker-Mir 8(3) who attended every Book Club session last year.

This year I have also launched a Year 8 Reading Group in continuation from last year's Year 7 Book Club. We are going to be shadowing the Booktrust Teenage Prize among a range of other exciting activities.

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009 was National Poetry Day and to celebrate this I organised a poetry quiz which was on sale all that week. Many students gave a donation and took part in the quiz; 58 copies of the quiz were sold in total, which raised £13.80! Congratulations to Ellie Crossley 7(5), Kiera Crossley 7(5), Harriet Rowley 8(1), Haleema Baker-Mir 8(3), Eleanor Foster 8(3) and Alfie Finan 8(3) who all impressively scored full marks! There was also a display of poetry books in the LRC throughout the week.

The week commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> November is going to be the school's annual Book Week. Activities will take

place all week in the LRC including a *Guess the Author* tombola and a quiz.

All funds raised from LRC events this term are being put towards funding a visit to our school by author Alan Gibbons to celebrate World Book Day 2010.

**Adam Dewhirst 11(1)**  
**Senior Student Librarian**

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## COMENIUS VISIT TO ESTONIA

On Wednesday November 18<sup>th</sup>, Mr Jervis, Craig Holroyd, Mark Holmes, Ella Dixon and I travelled to Estonia for an interesting and rewarding third meeting of the Comenius project. We were joined by representatives from Turkey, Ireland, Germany and Spain. There are two Estonian schools in partnership so we were lucky enough to spend time in Parnu and Kehtna. Parnu is located on the south western coast and is known as Estonia's summer capital. It has a warmer climate than other regions in Estonia and is famous for its glorious sandy beach. Kehtna is a village in a rural county and is located about an hour to the south of Tallinn, Estonia's capital. Our students stayed with host families in both locations. We spent time in both schools and were treated to musical and dance performances. We very much enjoyed the tours of each school as it allowed us to gain a unique insight into the life of a student in Estonia. Whilst in Parnu we presented the results of our pedometer work. In the summer term a group of students in 9(1) carried pedometers for a day and the UK walked the highest number of steps of all countries involved in the project. In Kehtna, the film about Halifax that Mark, Ella and Craig had made with the assistance of Robert Frost received its premier and it was well received. Whilst in Estonia, we also visited an agricultural museum, were given a walking tour of Parnu, saw glass making demonstrations and walked in a bog. A fifth of Estonia is covered by bogs and wooded swamplands. On the final night there was a party where each country showcased a dance from their country. Mark, Ella and Craig taught the other students and teachers the 'Gay Gordons' and then joined in very enthusiastically with the other dances! The visit was very enjoyable and we all learnt a great deal about Estonia. The next meeting of the Comenius project is in Ireland in November and we are looking forward to meetings in Spain and Germany next year.

**CJM**

"Apart from having a great time I have seen an insight into a culture that differs greatly from

ours in the UK and my perceptions of the country have changed."

**Mark**

"It was a brilliant experience and I got to experience the culture and find out about Estonia's history first hand."

**Craig**



If any of you are given the opportunity to be involved with the Comenius project then definitely say yes! We had a fantastic four days in Kethna, Parnu and the capital of Estonia Tallinn.

Staying with hosts in Estonia made the experience what it was; I know we've all made friends who

we're planning on keeping in touch with in the future.

None of us had even thought of travelling to Estonia before so learning about the culture and the people first hand was a great and unique experience.

Thank you to Miss Morgan for looking after us and keeping us organised and Mr Jervis for getting us to Stansted (after all the trains were cancelled!) and of course keeping us all on our toes with quizzes and jokes...

**Ella**

"It was quite daunting having three Estonian teachers coming to stay at my house for the UK Comenius meeting in March – would they speak English? Would we get on? As it turned out we all got on brilliantly and it was great to go back to Estonia to visit them. The most impressive aspect about our visit was the immense pride the Estonians had in their country. It was fascinating to find out so much about a country that was occupied by the Soviet Union only 18 years ago. The visit was a wonderful experience for all involved!"

**PAJ**

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## **GEOGRAPHY COURSEWORK TRIP**



## TO SHEFFIELD

On 24<sup>th</sup> September two coaches full of Year 11 students went to Sheffield for our GCSE Geography coursework fieldwork.

The aims of this year's coursework are to perform a comparison of CBD (Central Business District) and out-of-town shopping environments and to study the effects of an out-of-town shopping centre on CBD shopping environments. We are doing this relating specifically to Sheffield, due to the expansive CBD and the close proximity of the Meadowhall regional shopping centre.

We made a prompt start on the Thursday morning and arrived in Sheffield for approximately 10:30am. After spending two hours in the CBD we took a short journey to Meadowhall where we also performed many of the tasks we did in the CBD, before taking the return journey to school and arriving back at approximately 4:15pm.

Our first task on the day was a Retail Shopping Transect for which we had to record the type of each shopping facility on the main streets in the CBD using a classification prepared previously in class. We can use this to compare the types of shopping facilities in both environments and how similar shops are clustered together. The Bi-polar environmental survey involved scoring several areas in both locations on different aspects of the environment including the building design, noise level and safety, and not-surprisingly Meadowhall generally scored higher here. We had to stand at the side of the street in six different areas in both locations and count the number of people who walked past our view in five minutes for the Pedestrian Flow Count. We also had to note their gender and approximate age which allows us to compare the number of different people using each location on a weekday. Another task involved what was a daunting experience for some students of stopping two CBD users and performing a short questionnaire on them. Many students put their photography skills to practice by taking several pictures of both locations which can be used to support conclusions in our coursework and make visual comparisons. We also had the chance to be inventive by designing our own task to perform on the day. For my group this involved recording and comparing the prices of a number of items which can be purchased in both the CBD and Meadowhall.



Many students also had the opportunity to fit in some shopping when they had finished all the set tasks which added even more enjoyment to the busy day. The day was enjoyable for all and thanks go to the geography staff for organising an interesting and worthwhile trip which has provided a valuable contribution to our GCSE qualification.

**Adam Dewhirst 11(1)**

## PA Meetings – New Times

Monthly PA Meetings have a new start time and, by popular demand, a fixed end time! From now on, meetings will run from **7.30-9.30pm**. Forthcoming meetings are on:

**Wednesday 4 November**  
**Wednesday 2 December**



## CALLING ALL CAKE BAKERS!

Are you fab with fondant fancies or a genius with Genoese sponge? Or maybe you can just about manage a few Fairy Cakes. Whatever your skill level, your contribution could really help the Christmas Fayre cake stall. If you could supply a cake or cakes on 27/28 November, please call Sue Kneller on 01422 365285 or fill in the tear off slip at the end of this newsletter.

**NHGS Parents' Association  
Concert, 7PM SATURDAY 21  
NOVEMBER 2009,**



A PA fundraising event in the school Hall with a fabulous evening's entertainment provided by the school music department. Supper, bar and raffle. Tickets on sale through ParentPay, or complete the tear off slip at the end of this newsletter. £6.00 adults, £4.00 concessions.

**PILOT CHANGE TO APPEARANCE  
CODE**

In the survey carried out in March 2009 the students were asked about school discipline and the weighted score was 78.6% an increase of 2.9% on 2007 which placed this issue in the exceptionally high category compared to national performance. Whilst students hold a generally positive view about school discipline at NHGS they are concerned about some issues particularly in relation to uniform. School uniform plays a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of the school and setting an appropriate tone. Most schools in England have a school uniform or dress code and other rules on appearance. The DCSF strongly encourages schools to have a uniform as it can instil pride; support positive behaviour and discipline; encourage identity with, and support for, the school ethos; ensure students of all races and backgrounds feel welcome; protect children from social pressures to dress in a particular way; reduce 'sartorial competition' between peers and nurture cohesion and promote good relations between different groups of students. School uniform can underpin a visibly collective approach to learning at TEAM NHGS. The governing body decides the school uniform policy and other rules relating to appearance. Comments made in the survey and representations made by students have encouraged the school to re-consider the rules about make-up. Hitherto all make-up was banned. This rule was flouted by girls, particularly in the Upper School, and it was difficult to enforce unless the make-up applied was obvious. In 2009-10 we are piloting a change to the rules about make-up for students in the Upper School (Years 9, 10 & 11). Mascara, lip balm, concealer and natural foundation may be applied but subtly. This will be monitored by the staff. Year Group Leaders and the Upper School Leader will review this with a student committee half-termly through the pilot period. A decision about whether to make the change permanent will be made after consulting staff, students and parents in the summer term of 2010. In order to support this change the school organized for a beautician to deliver a master-

class on applying discrete make-up to all the girls in the Upper School on September 16<sup>th</sup>. We are very grateful to Allison Smithies from Estee Lauder at Harveys of Halifax. This was well-received by students and the response so far has been broadly acceptable. It should be noted that other aspects of the uniform policy have not changed. Nail varnish must not be worn and girls can only wear a (ONE) SMALL STUD in the lower lobe of each ear and no other jewellery other than a wristwatch.

**GPM**

**Parents' Association Prize Draw  
Winners**

**Special Prize Draw**

1st	£250	143	J P J Ambrose	Rishworth
2nd	£150	74	Christine Cliffe	Northowram

**September Prize Draw**

1st	£150	142	T Gray & Mrs T Macrory	Shelf
2nd	£75	141	Abigail Gregory	Hebden Bridge
3rd	£25	66	Ms S Hardman	Norwood Green

**Parents Evenings 2009/10 5pm to 8pm**

<b>Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>	<b>L6</b>
<b>Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>	<b>Y10</b>
<b>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010</b>	<b>U6</b>
<b>Thursday 28th January</b>	<b>Y11</b>
<b>Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February</b>	<b>Y7</b>
<b>Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>Y9</b>
<b>Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>Y8</b>

Apologies for incorrect dates in last month's newsletter.

**NATURE, NURTURE OR NEITHER?**

Have you ever wondered why we act in certain ways? Why we look different? Why we think the way we do? Can everything we do, everything about us, really be controlled by our DNA? Or does our environment determine what we will become? Well these were the questions which the recent "Nature, Nurture or Neither?" debate at The University of Bradford attempted to answer. The event was part of the International Darwin Conference, a range of lectures and debates

intended to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of his book "Origin of Species" in which he put forward his world changing theory of evolution and natural selection.

The lecture itself was given by Professor Steve Jones, the Professor of Genetics at University College London, and a world leader in his field. The talk covered a diverse range of examples: Siamese cats' fur, aggression, obesity in both mice and humans, and even the genetic disorder Porphyria. Professor Jones highlighted the fact that though both our DNA and our environment influence our behaviour, in reality it is the interaction of these two things that truly dictates our behaviour. In the words of the professor himself, "Many people feel that their fate lies in their DNA; or that their lives and health can be divided into a segment called Nature (the genes), and Nurture (the environment). I will show that, from cats to mice to people, nature and nurture always work together and that it is meaningless to try and separate them."

**Morrison Brown U6(9)**

## **WHAT PARENTS CAN DO!**

I have written elsewhere in this Newsletter about the results from the most recent survey of parents carried out earlier in 2009. I have also been investigating ways in which we can help parents to support their daughters and sons more effectively in their learning. NHGS enjoys a remarkable level of parental support (88% overall rating in 2009) which makes a tremendous contribution to helping the school achieve its aims for all the students who attend. However recent research suggests that there are benefits from reviewing the traditional ways in which the school seeks parental help.

Currently when students join the school we ask students and parents to sign a Home-School Agreement.

The home-school agreement explains the aims and obligations of the school. It spells out the responsibilities of the school and parents and what the school expects from students. Parents are not obliged to sign the agreement and nothing can happen to them or their son/daughter as a result of them not signing. Subsequently the Agreement is

published in the Handbook for years 8 and above. It is set out below:

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### **The student**

I will:

- uphold and follow the school rules
  - show proper respect for people and property
  - attend school regularly and on time
  - bring all the equipment I need every day
  - wear the school uniform and be smart in appearance
  - conform to the lesson code of conduct and do my classwork
  - comply with the school's Internet Access Policy
  - complete my homework to a high standard and on time
  - keep the school free from litter and graffiti
  - make the most of the opportunities available
  - do my best at all times
  - try to be a credit to the school
- 

### **The parents/guardians**

I/We will:

- see that my daughter/son attends school for the required session times and days each year
  - ensure that my daughter/son arrives punctually and properly equipped
  - inform the school if my daughter/son is absent through illness on the first day of absence
  - inform the school promptly of any changes in circumstances (address/telephone number)
  - make the school aware of any concerns or problems that might affect my daughter/son's work or behaviour
  - support the school's policies and guidelines for behaviour
  - support my daughter/son in implementing the school's homework policy and other opportunities for home-learning
  - endeavour to attend parents' evenings and discussions about my daughter/son's progress
  - support and try to become involved in the opportunities, activities and events at the school.
- 

### **The school**

The school will:

- care for your child's safety, security and happiness
- provide a balanced, challenging and accessible curriculum which meets the individual needs of your child
- encourage your daughter/son to achieve her/his full potential intellectually and physically as a valued member of the school community
- provide opportunities to develop particular talents and abilities
- stimulate and develop your child personally, socially, morally, spiritually and culturally
- promote high standards of work, examination performance and behaviour through building good relationships and developing a sense of responsibility
- keep you informed about your child's progress and general school matters
- be open and welcoming at all times and offer

opportunities for you to become involved in the life of the school.

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In 2007 the DCSF published, *'Every Parent Matters.'* This paper reported that parents of teenagers want more help in supporting their children. Many parents expressed bewilderment at sudden changes of mood and challenging behaviour. Many said that they were unsure about how to manage the fine balance between fostering independence and relaxing boundaries while remaining warm and authoritative. Some 40% of young people claim that they receive little help from their parents to make informed choices about different risks that they are exposed to during adolescence. Although a teenager's peer group does become more significant parents' influence remains important throughout adolescence. It is crucial that parents continue to support their daughter or son's learning. This combined with parental warmth, stability, consistency and boundary setting are vital to enable a young person to develop. Research indicates that parental involvement in a child's schooling between the ages of 7 and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family and the level of parental education. The corollary is that educational failure is increased by lack of parental interest in schooling; in particular, a father's interest in a child's schooling is strongly linked to educational outcomes for the child. It is clear that a positive relationship between teenagers and their parents protects young people against a number of poor outcomes – low educational attainment, poor mental health, low self esteem, substance misuse, youth offending and homelessness. Frank and unembarrassed discussion about risk taking also helps young people develop skills to make safe and informed choices. For example, teenagers who can discuss sex and relationships with their parents openly, and without embarrassment, start having sex later in life and are more likely to use contraception. However 35% of young people report that they talk about "things that matter" to their mother less than once a week and over half say they talk with their father less frequently than that. Boys fare worst – with mothers talking less to sons than daughters, and fathers communicating least of all ([Every Parent Matters](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)) available at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>

In August 2009 the Nuffield Foundation published a report on parenting. It concluded,

*'Despite public concern about declining family life, the work funded by the Nuffield Foundation has found no evidence of a decline in parenting over recent decades, based on available youth and parent self-reported data. There was no evidence of parents being more selfish about their own time use, or neglecting supervision and control. The only trend in the opposite direction related to a slight decline in the frequency of family meals, but more information is*

*needed on the adolescent age group in this regard. In many more ways, the data suggest evidence of improvement in parenting' (Time Trends in Parenting) available at <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org> .*

So if parents matter in children's development and if parenting continues to be strong what strategies should the school pursue to support parents? Guidance is provided by some research published in 2007. This reported that the provision of a home environment that stimulates learning, parental involvement in children's activities and parental beliefs and aspirations all have a significant effect on children's levels of educational achievement. Parental involvement in learning at home throughout the age range is much more significant than any factor open to educational influence whereas parental involvement acted out in the school confers little or no real benefit on the individual child. Similarly parental involvement which takes the form of in-school parental activity has little effect on individual attainment. The research makes it clear that parents working in schools have no tangible contribution to the academic attainment of individual students. The most recent review of the literature concludes that studies have *'safely established that parental engagement in the form of interest in the child and manifest in the home as parent-child discussions can have a very positive effect on children's behaviour and achievement'*. It was clear from the research literature that what makes the difference to student achievement is not **parental involvement** in schooling but **parental engagement in learning** in the home.

What the school has done traditionally is to promote parental involvement. Parents have been enlisted in a voluntary capacity to help the school do its work through the home-school agreement which seeks parental support for what happens at school (attendance, behaviour etc) and for extending the reach of the school into the home through homework. Whilst this helps the school in its learning agenda for students it does not support parents in the home. **Parental Involvement** with the school may include responding to phone calls, attendance at parents' evenings or meetings, responding to reply slips or questionnaires, signing homework diaries, support of parent associations or governing bodies, as well as attending school functions. What students seek from their parents is not presence in school but rather their **engagement and participation in their learning**. Parental engagement is not the same as parental involvement. Engagement considers parents as an essential part of the learning process which takes place out of school [Engaging Parents](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research) available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research>

What the school needs to do therefore is to support parents in helping their child(ren) with their learning.

For example the school could organise informal, comfortable, non-threatening events in which parents might discuss family and learning related issues with other parents and teachers. We could move to re-drafting the Home-School Agreement so that the parents section might look something like:

### ***The parents/guardians***

I/We will:

- take an interest in the learning that my daughter/son is involved in at school
- ask her/him questions about their learning on a regular basis
- where appropriate support any learning tasks that they have to complete out of school
- talk to her/him about their options in Years 8, 9 and 11
- promote activities outside of school that enable them to develop their concentration and sustain their focus
- encourage and support her/his involvement in team activities
- encourage her/him to get involved in physical activity on a regular basis
- help support the school in encouraging him/her to eat a healthy diet
- engage in talking to her/him about the joys of adolescence including relationships and the risks such as substance abuse
- take an active interest in her/his on-line activities to ensure that she/he adheres to safeguarding guidelines
- discuss issues relating to society, work, politics and the environment that will contribute to their citizenship education
- take an informed and active interest in discussing career options

We will undertake some research into this in the next half-term to try and determine whether parents are supportive of this development. In the mean time if you have any comments then please write or e-mail me at the school ([mail@nhgs.co.uk](mailto:mail@nhgs.co.uk)).

The current involvement of parents in school including the work of the Parents' Association is much appreciated and valued by the school community and we want that to continue but that generally supports students' learning in school. This initiative is about supporting students' learning in the home which is not necessarily determined, controlled or monitored by the school. Over to you!

**GPM**

## **WHAT PARENTS THINK!**

In March 2009 the school enlisted the services of an external company to survey parents. This is

undertaken biennially. The results of that survey have now been returned to the school. The report measures the levels of satisfaction among the students' parents for a range of criteria, which have been previously identified as being important to the parents of school students, as well as for the core subjects, taught at the school. The report measures the relative importance of the criteria surveyed, as well as providing results that identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school in the year to March 2009. The report also measures performance with regard to overall satisfaction and improvement. Questionnaires were distributed to all students' parents. Questionnaires were sealed with a letter of explanation requesting help, and a reply envelope. Completed questionnaires were returned sealed, to the form tutor. Anonymity combined with the level of response means that we can have confidence in the validity of the results. The questionnaire asked parents to give a score of between 1 and 5 for each subject offered by the school as well as for a list of identified parent priorities.

428 completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 38.9% (525/49.3% in 2007). The survey produced an acceptable overall response from the parents, who gave good performance scores for most of the academic subjects and the chosen performance criteria. The response meant that statistically reliable data could be drawn. For the sake of assessment in most schools, questions receiving a score of 70% or over should be considered a success for academic subjects, with 65% being a realistic target of attainment for non-academic criteria. These scores are based on average figures gathered from 30 similar schools across the country. Scores of 80% or more for the target scores in the academic subjects and 75% for the non-academic issues are considered exceptional. Scores below 65% for the academic subjects and 60% for the non-academic subjects suggest room for improvement.

The parents gave an excellent overall performance score of 88% (87% in 2007). For parents whose children were not in their first year at the school 20% said the school had improved over the last year (34% in 2007) while only 3% thought that the school's performance was worse (4% in 2007). Of the parents of new students, only 6% felt that the school had not lived up to their expectations (3% in 2007) while 29% said the school was better than they had expected it to be (28% in 2007). The figures in the last two surveys have remained remarkably stable. The lower figure for improvement in the last year may be attributable to the lengthy disruption associated with the building of the Darwin Sixth Form Learning Centre which opened after the survey had been completed.

All the following subjects were scored above the benchmark of 70%; Biology, Chemistry, Design Technology, English, French, German, History, Geography, ICT, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Physics, PSCHEE, Religious Studies, Science and Spanish. The only subjects below the threshold were Art and Latin. In 2007 the only subjects below the threshold were Geography, German and ICT. At that time the school was experiencing difficulties in staffing in ICT and Geography which have since been resolved and these subjects were in the top three most improved in the last two years. German has also improved but not so significantly. Art and Latin have both experienced some staffing changes in the last two years which have now been established. The scores from Year 8 students in both these subjects, who have been less affected by the turnover in staffing, are both above 70%.

The scores for the following non-academic criteria were all rated exceptional, at above 75%: school communication, transport to and from school, truancy control, quality of school management, developing moral values, encouraging and listening to parent views, school discipline, school security, treating all students fairly and equally, developing confidence, developing potential, social health education, community spirit, control of bullying, ensuring students do best & make good progress, happiness of child, caring teachers and explaining to parents how to help their child. The following all scored above 70%: exam results, choice of subjects, levels of homework, teaching quality, availability of resources, tailoring workload to child's needs and ability, extra-curricular activities, transfer from previous school, careers advice and promoting racial harmony. Only two issues scored below 70% which was computer access and the only issue rated below the 65% threshold, school facilities. In 2007 the only two issues that were rated below 65% were computer access and school facilities. The score for computer access has increased slightly but the score for school facilities has decreased further. Clearly these two issues are linked to resources. In the last OFSTED report the inspectors agreed that funding was an issue

*'Funding of the school is comparatively low. This limits the extent to which improvements in accommodation can be made and places particular burdens on the capacity of the senior leadership team. Despite these difficulties, the school has taken effective steps and made progress since the last inspection . . . The school provides excellent value for money'.*

The school continues to receive the least funding per student in the Local Authority and because of careful management we just break even. The school was in deficit from 1998-99 to 2004-05 and has only just

managed to maintain a marginal surplus in the last four years. The combined efforts of the school, parents and students have brought improved accommodation with the opening of the Darwin Sixth Form Learning Centre and the designation as a high performing languages school which has enabled further investment in ICT. The average scores for schools nationally in this survey were 74.7% (NHGS 67.7%) for computer access and 68.2% (NHGS 57.6%) for school facilities so both of these issues will continue to be priorities. We are currently trying to secure funding to improve our remaining laboratory that is yet to be re-furbished and also to improve the school's sports facilities with the creation of an all-weather surface where the tennis courts are currently located.

We ask prospective parents who attend our open evening each year to complete an anonymous questionnaire. We usually manage to secure a good response and this year had 293 questionnaires returned. One of the questions asks parents to rank the factors that are most important to them in deciding whether to send their daughter or son to NHGS. We have undertaken this survey for well over a decade and the factor which consistently is ranked highest by parents (by over 90%) is exam results. The school's reputation is cited by about half the parents and the curriculum and support from staff by about a third for each. Other factors are cited by less than 20% of parents. It is interesting that when parents of students at the school are asked to assess their priorities the following rank order results:

1. Teaching quality
2. School discipline
3. Happiness of child
4. Developing potential
5. Caring teachers
6. Developing confidence
7. Exam results
8. Developing moral values
9. Control of bullying
10. School communication

Exam results is only the seventh most important after teaching and factors that relate to the more rounded development of their child. We try to respond positively to this agenda and do try to organise experiences, opportunities and challenges that will contribute significantly to students' happiness and their personal development in gaining confidence and realising potential. With regard to these ten priorities parents scored eight of them over 75% with only exam results (74.6%) and teaching quality (74.2%) just under the exceptional threshold of 75%. This shows that we are trying to deliver what parents think is important in the education of their child(ren).

We are very grateful to all those parents who responded to this survey; it provides valuable feedback to the school. We will be surveying parents this term about their engagement with their children's learning which is discussed in another article in this Newsletter. Please get involved.

**GPM**

*Coming soon ...*



Book, Music and Lyrics by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey.

**November 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 2009**

Tickets, priced at £4, available from 5<sup>th</sup> October.  
Book early for the best seats.

Tickets will be sold from the following outlets:

**Lower Foyer between 8.00am and 8.20am**

**Learning Resource Centre at Break and  
Lunchtime.**

However, you can pre order your tickets by filling in the reply slip at the back of the newsletter and bringing the slip and payment to the LRC in an envelope at any time.

This is an amateur production by arrangement with Samuel French Limited.

## **HPV IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME**

All parents of female students in Year 8, and Years 10 to 13 should have received a letter from NHS Calderdale, outlining the immunisation programme planned for this year. The programme will start in the next few weeks and students will be issued with consent forms. Parents of students in Year 8, 10 and 11 will need to sign the consent form on behalf of their child(ren), and students in Years 12 and 13 have the right to sign the consent form themselves. There is also a letter attached to the consent form outlining the arrangements. Further information can be found on the website: [www.immunisatino.nhs.uk/hpv](http://www.immunisatino.nhs.uk/hpv). Consent forms will be issued on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November and we ask that they are returned by Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November.

This is a government led initiative and all schools are being asked to co-operate in the organisation of the programme. The vaccine will be administered on school premises. If you have any concerns about the vaccine you should contact the school nurse on Halifax 01422 367168.

The North Halifax Grammar School

*Please return to the LRC*

Presents

# GREASE

11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Form: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s) for Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November

I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s) for Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November

I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s) for Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November

I enclose cash/cheque (made payable to NHGS) to the value of £ \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ parent or guardian

The North Halifax Grammar School  
Parents' Association

## Christmas Fayre – Baking Volunteers Saturday 28 November 2009



Name: ..... Tel No: .....

Item(s) to be baked: .....

Name of student contact..... Form .....

Please return this slip FAO Mr Jervis  
Thank you.

# The North Halifax Grammar School Parents' Association Concert



*Please return to the Parents' Association*

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November  
7.00pm**

**£6.00 adults, £4.00 concession**

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Form: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to purchase \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s)

I enclose cash/cheque (made payable to NHGS) to the value of £ \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ ticket(s) and have paid for these on ParentPay

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ parent or guardian