

# CONNECTIONS

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Welcome to the 2009 edition of Connexions, the magazine that links home and school, keeping you in touch with the activities, events and people that have made the headlines during the year. The cover photograph is from the Year 8 visit to Santander in Spain. Read about this, and much more, inside.

## A RECORD YEAR

The only way to start is by congratulating our students who took their examinations in 2008. Our Year 11s produced the school's best ever GCSE results – by a distance. And our Year 13s performed so well that the local press were able to name Wath as the best A Level state school in South Yorkshire. Well done students – and parents and staff too. It was a real team effort. In announcing the results Mr Powell said that we were allowed a week to celebrate. But then it was back to the hard work which, we hope, will lead to an even better performance in 2009.

Hard work doesn't only take place in the classroom, though, as you'll see if you read on.

## WHAT'S NEW?

During the past year the school has been able to make use of a number of new facilities. Some of these are small, such as the greenhouse which has appeared next to our Inclusion Centre and which means that our students can now study Horticulture without leaving the school site. Some of the new facilities are big, such as our all-weather pitch and Wath Leisure Centre – a very welcome neighbour. The PE Department are delighted that outdoor sport can now continue all year round, and that students can now spend their swimming lessons actually swimming rather than walking to and from the old pool in the centre of Wath!

Slightly further afield, the St Mary's Centre at Rawmarsh opened in December. The Centre, which is managed jointly by ourselves, Rawmarsh, Saint Pius and Swirton schools, allows us to support students who find it difficult to cope with a full week in a normal school setting. It is also a base for new vocational courses such as Catering, as chefs Kyle Molyneux and Steven Vickers are happy to demonstrate.

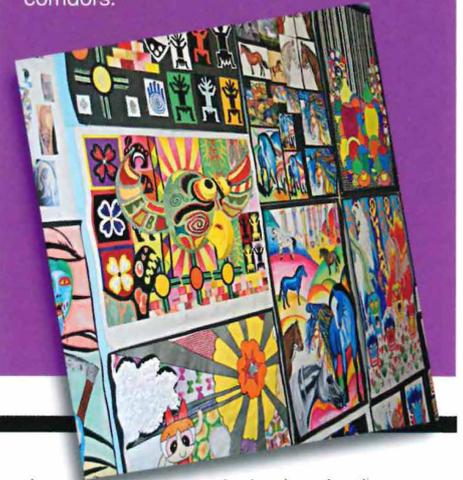


## WHAT A COLLECTION!

Whether we're collecting for sports equipment, books or computers, you always deliver the goods. The vouchers come into school in their thousands. But do they make a difference? They certainly do. Earlier this year, for example, we obtained a new laptop computer under the Tesco 'Computers for Schools' scheme. This means that we now have a machine which can be borrowed, by both students and staff, when there is a need to do IT work 'on the move' such as when carrying out experiments. Jack Willis, Katie Hirst and Mr Marsden can be seen here receiving the laptop from John Healey MP and Michael Cooke, Store Manager of Tesco in Wath.

## ARTWORK ON SHOW

As usual, the work of our GCSE and A Level Art students has brightened up the corridors.



# Spotlight on Science

## SHERLOCK BONES

A group of Year 9 students investigated 'The Mysterious Case of the Human Body' (or, more specifically, the forensic science of the human skeleton). The day, led by Dr Danyelle Thickett, introduced the skeleton as a whole and initially examined its function.

The students then investigated and tried to catalogue skeletal finds, identifying the missing parts and explaining why those parts might be missing. They learnt how to determine the sex and age of an individual from the remains of a body. According to Laura Parish, one of the students who took part:

'We grew in confidence in our practical skills and enjoyed ourselves. It was a really fascinating day.'

The day was rounded off by looking at some skeletons and trying to identify what conditions these individuals might have had, relating bone changes to arthritis, ageing and other illnesses.



## GETTING CLOSE TO NATURE

During the first week after the Spring half-term break, 90 Year 7 students visited the Old Moor Wetlands Centre. This visit tied in with the topics that the students were covering in the classroom. They investigated the relationships between the animals, their habitats and environments, looking at everything from meadow creatures and insects to the larger animals which live on the wetlands.

The day included a look at how the environment has been managed to become a safe haven for a large number of resident animals and birds, and also for those which pass through on migration.

The students also developed their group work and organisational skills in order to carry out various tasks. Activities included pond dipping, bird watching and observing the creatures of the woodlands and meadows.



## UNIVERSITY LINKS

Our Year 11 'triple science' students were invited to take part in a science poster competition organised by Sheffield Hallam University. The aim was to educate the students about how research science work is presented at universities and conferences, and to get them to present some of their own practical work in a similar way. This work was on top of their already heavy workload.

Dawn Hadden and Craig Fox, from the university, came into school on March 20<sup>th</sup> to judge the posters. Dawn and Craig were impressed by the high standard of both presentation and scientific content. The nine students who submitted entries all received Easter Eggs in recognition of their efforts and talents. Melissa Hutchinson was the overall winner, receiving a £20 HMV voucher. Well done to all those who participated, and particular congratulations to Melissa.

## OUT IN THE WILD

Students in Year 13 took to the great outdoors as part of their week-long field course, looking at the ecology of Malham Tarn, near Settle in North Yorkshire.

As part of their A Level course students are expected to study the practical side of ecology – and there's no better way than in wellies and the rain! The students investigated an upland limestone stream, the surrounding wooded area and the tarn's unique history which makes it a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Ramsar site – one of the few not only in Britain but in the world. They also learnt how the site is managed year on year so that it remains a valuable resource for the future.

On more than one occasion the students got extremely wet and cold, but remained in tremendous spirit with regular exhibitions of designer wellies and raincoats. They managed to master the techniques used in trapping mammals for study. Mainly vole and wood mice were captured – and released unharmed after many 'oohs' and 'aahs'.

The students managed to mix business and pleasure during the week, and they were a pleasure to be with.



## THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Once again, staff from Reading University visited the school to give our Year 12 scientists the opportunity to participate in Biotechnology experiments. Each student took part in a four-hour session where they were able to extract the genetic material from bacteria and perform a 'DNA' fingerprint using a gel electrophoresis technique. Dr John Schollar led the session, and the students appreciated his humour as well as respecting his knowledge and experience. As ever he was impressed with the attitude and manners of the students, and by their ability to perform practical work and broaden their knowledge and understanding of this area of Biology.

## DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE – COMENIUS GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

It's been another busy and successful year for the Wath Comenius group. Our final year on the teenage culture project 'Don't Waste Your Life' has seen Maria Fairbank-Azcarate, Megan Rees and Jessica Wood putting together a superb teen magazine focusing on good and bad role models. Thomas Andrews and David Pettinger researched the support networks available to teenagers in school and the local community, as well as looking at our students' aspirations – with some interesting results! Chloe Shaw and Katie Waddington compiled data on drug awareness for a comparative analysis with our partner schools.

The project ended with Charlotte Sandham-Mulholland and Scott Westoby representing Wath at a conference in Cosenza, Italy. The conference was attended by staff and students from our partner schools in Finland and Hungary as well as our Italian hosts. You can read Charlotte's own account of the experience, but I must mention Mr Rolling who wowed us with his culinary talents, cooking lunch for the English party at the home of the Italian coordinator Catia Mele. And yes, he did cook pasta!

The project may have ended, but Comenius most certainly has not. A new project for 2009-2011 will focus on raising awareness of the carbon footprint of our schools, staff and students. The title of the project is 'Making a World of Difference'. Wath Comprehensive will remain the lead school for this project, and our Year 8 students have already been researching into the culture and schools of our new partners from Barcelona in Spain and Bochum in Germany who will be joining us.

Finally, a big thank you to Laura and Charlotte Josephs in Year 11 who have been working on the Comenius website for the past year and a half. They have collated the work produced by students from Wath and our partner schools. The site will be linked to the official school website and can be viewed soon. Well done girls! *Mrs M Gracey*



TOURING  
THE CONTINENT

As Wath is a specialist Language College, it is no surprise that activities with an international dimension feature prominently in our school life. This doesn't just mean overseas study visits, but we do organise a number of these.

In November a Year 11 group visited Paris and saw such iconic sights as the Eiffel Tower, the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Sacre Coeur at Montmartre and the Louvre museum. The students competed to recreate the best Mona Lisa. The more adventurous tried snails and frogs' legs!

Santander in Northern Spain was the destination for some of our Year 8 students. Everyone had a great time in spite of the wet weather, visiting 22000 year-old caves, ancient villages and monasteries, taking part in Flamenco and Salsa dancing lessons and sampling the local cuisine.

The weather was kinder to the Year 9 group who visited Munich in March – although they did get to throw snowballs at each other when they visited the fairytale castle of Neuschwanstein. The Allianz Stadium, home to Bayern Munich FC, provided a contrast, but the most memorable experience was the Dachau concentration camp. The day there provided a chilling reminder of the dangers of intolerance.

By the time you read this, some lucky Year 7 students will just have returned from a week packed with exciting adventures – from zip-wire rides and assault courses to visits to the local market and chocolate factory – at Château Beaumont in Normandy, France. But we guarantee that the group will have been immersed in the French language and culture too.

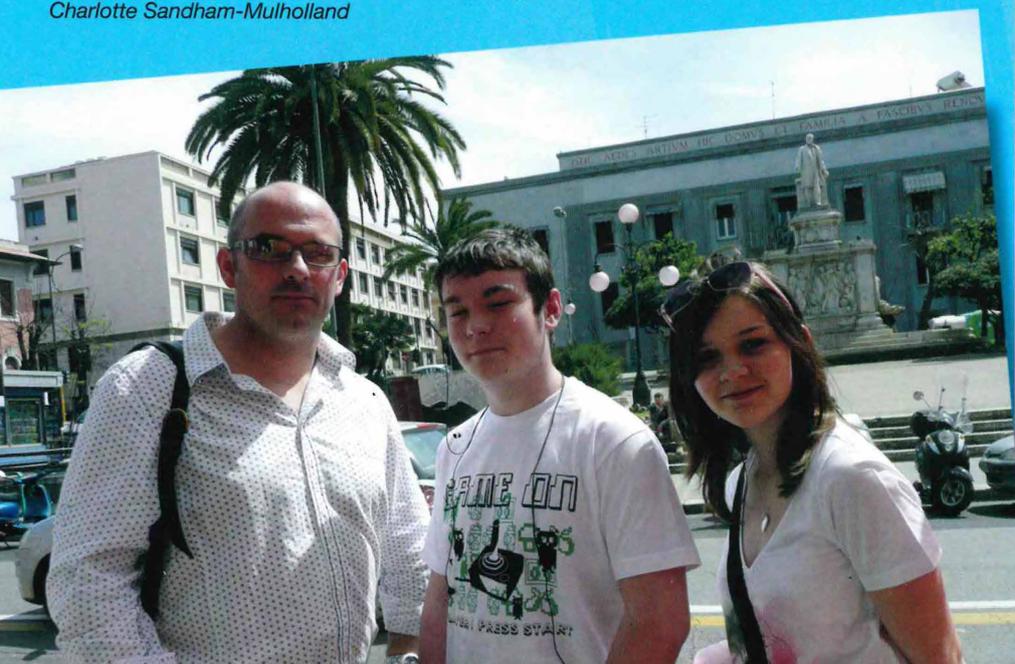
For our Sixth Form students, the opportunity to take part in international work experience is unmissable. Most return to school with a new-found confidence in themselves. This year our French students have worked in schools in Saint Etienne. One student, Charlotte Cowen, said, 'although there were times when we found it difficult to communicate with people ... we now know that it was definitely the best thing that we could have done in order to improve our French. After having been back into our routine of Sixth Form and of our French lessons, it is clear to see that we are all much better.' Our German students will have the same chance to improve their language skills when they go on work experience to Riesa in July. Riesa is twinned with Rotherham so we already have great links with the town. Next year we plan to add a Spanish work experience visit, so watch this space!

## COMENIUS – THROUGH A STUDENT'S EYES

For our Comenius project two representatives of our school's Comenius group – Scott Westoby and myself – were picked to accompany Mrs Gracey and Mr Rolling to Cosenza in Italy to share the information we had gathered about what people our age like to do in their spare time. Before we went we had to prepare a presentation of our information to show to the other schools.

When we arrived in Italy I couldn't wait to meet my host family. Luckily I didn't have to wait long. Viviana and her family were really nice and we spent the first afternoon looking around the shops. On the Tuesday we went to school with our hosts and had a tour of the school. The school was big and spaced out. The students finished at different times between 12.30 and 2.00 pm. There was no lunch break. Later that day my host family took me to a restaurant. On the Wednesday I met the students from our partner schools in Hungary and Finland before we gave our presentations to them, and we then worked together on a magazine. The magazine is called 'Teen Euro' and will be distributed to all the schools involved. Wath designed the front cover! On Thursday we all went on a trip to a museum of Greek antiquities, and then to the beach where we enjoyed the sunshine, before we went home on Friday morning.

Overall I had a fantastic time and I will definitely go back and visit Viviana and her family again. *Charlotte Sandham-Mulholland*



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# An Enterprising Year

## SAFE HAVENS – A STUDENT RESPONSE TO BULLYING

Sadly, very few schools can claim to be free of bullying. But at Wath Comprehensive we take the issue very seriously, and our experience is that the most effective methods of tackling bullying are those which involve the students themselves.

Safe Havens is a young person's mental and emotional well-being service which supports students aged 11 to 16 in Wath Comprehensive School. We offer support for a variety of issues and problems, especially bullying. The impetus for the project came as a result of serious concerns raised in the school community by young people, staff and parents regarding the nature, extent and severity of bullying in schools. Therefore this unique initiative was developed by young people, is led by young people and is for young people.

We are getting stronger and stronger. The service that we provide at Wath remains a significant gap in provision in some schools. Wath Young People's Centre, which is on our site, provides us with the space, staff support and resources necessary for us to undertake our work.

The Safe Havens Mission is to provide the best possible mental and emotional well-being targeted support to young people.

There isn't space here to list all the Safe Havens Objectives, but they include:

- Providing a safe and friendly place to go with something to do.
- Making young people feel good about themselves.
- Acknowledging and overcoming unnecessary and unjustifiable barriers which prevent young people from staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, achieving economic well-being and making a positive contribution.
- Empowering young people to enable them to lead fulfilled lives and reach their full potential.

Our current plans include expanding the scheme into eight other secondary schools. We are applying for funding and we will be delivering a Local Authority conference in July. We are also developing a website and other publicity materials, recruiting young people to become team members and starting an Anti-bullying Partnership Team at Wath. This will be made up of young people, parents/carers, governors, school staff, youth workers, etc. So, if you are a parent or carer and would like to be involved in this fantastic opportunity to shape school policy and improve the lives of young people, or if you would like more information, please contact Mr Staton at school or e-mail [wacssafehavens@rgfl.org](mailto:wacssafehavens@rgfl.org)  
*George Foster*



## AN ACTION-PACKED WEEK

We like to think that Wath Comprehensive is an enterprising school all year round. But the high point of the year is Enterprise Week in November. This year students of all ages took part in competitions, and our entry for the Rotherham Ready Enterprise Competition won first prize – and £200 to support enterprise work in school. Well done Year 7! Year 7 students also enjoyed attending an Enterprising Science Club, and members of the Sixth Form were able to meet people who have been enterprising (and successful) in the real business world. Finally, two teams of students entered the national 'Make Your Mark' Enterprise Challenge. Congratulations to our winners: Rebecca Bembridge, Jenny Cockrell, Jodie Hall, Abbey Thorpe and Jamie Tutill.

## CLASS OF 2009 START A TRADITION

During the Spring Term Year 11 students went on-line to upload photographs and write personal profiles as part of the first ever Wath Comprehensive Year Book. They have contributed their memories of school, voted for such things as 'Student Most Likely To Become Prime Minister' and been actively involved in decisions about the book's design. Thank you to all those who have contributed, and congratulations to Lauren Duke on winning the competition to design the front and back covers! Hopefully this will be a tradition that will continue at Wath for many years to come.

## YOUNG CHAMBER MAKES MUSIC

Five students have been working alongside Miss Little as part of our 'Young Chamber' – a name inspired by Rotherham's very successful Chamber of Commerce. Shannon Clayton, Rachel Hood, Miriam Mhlanga, Shannon Morton and Beth White received training from Jean Stewart, a business consultant, in different ways of advertising and catching people's attention through designing posters. As well as taking part in a national competition, they have used their new skills to organise a Year 8 and 9 Disco which is taking place in July. Well done girls!

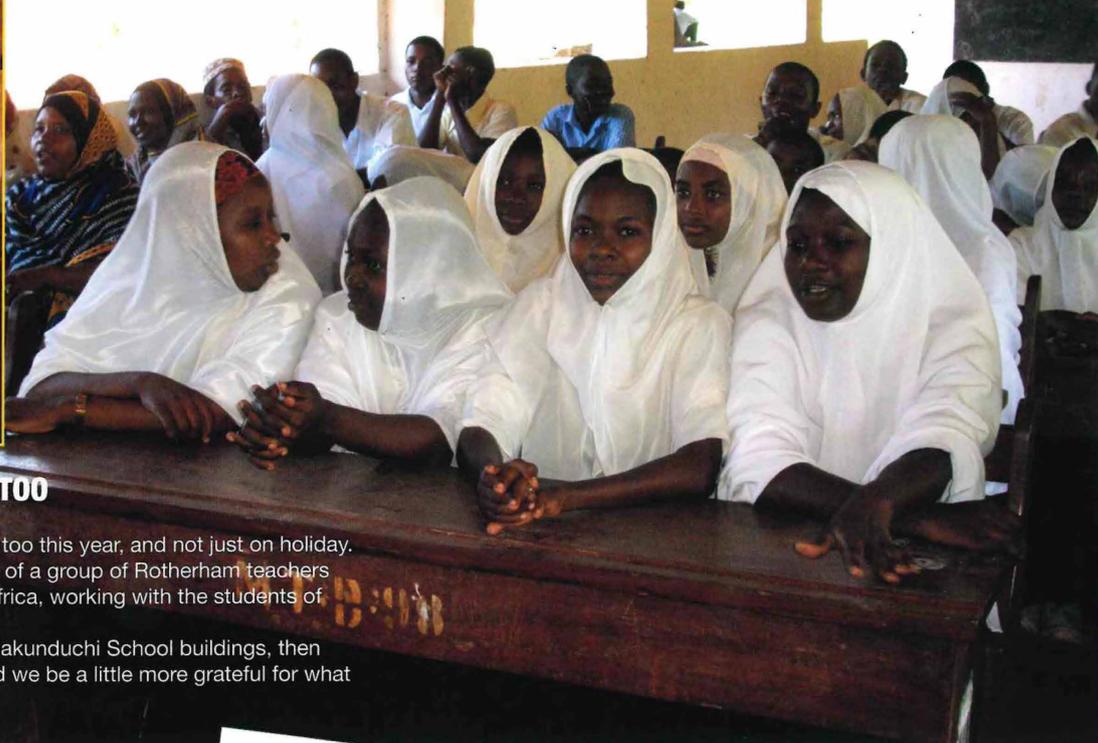
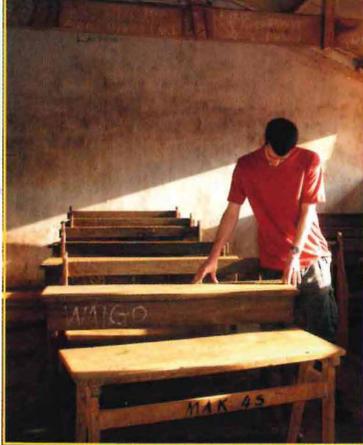


## YEAR 10 IN THE DRAGONS' DEN

In January, every student in Year 10 spent a day at the Dorothy Hyman Stadium in Barnsley. After attending workshops run by local businesses on finance, marketing and product design, teams had to create prototypes of new products and market themselves to the dragons, who then questioned them about their work. The questions were challenging; the students needed to persuade the dragons that their products would sell at a profit.

The winning team was from 10KL, and the runners up were from 10TR and 10LW. The most enterprising individual students were Maria Fairbank-Azcarate, Jordan Fairman and overall winner Holly Fisher – seen receiving their awards, back in school, from Joyce Tinker of Business & Education South Yorkshire.





## STAFF ARE TRAVELLERS TOO

Our staff have travelled the world too this year, and not just on holiday. Mrs Elston, for example, was one of a group of Rotherham teachers who spent their Easter break in Africa, working with the students of Makunduchi School in Zanzibar.

(EDITOR'S NOTE – Look at the Makunduchi School buildings, then look at our own buildings. Should we be a little more grateful for what we have?)

## ON THE SLOPES

It's been another year full of opportunities for students to take part in visits, and for those in Years 9 and 12 one of the highlights was the ski visit to Tignes in France. The high resort of Tignes is one of the best ski areas in the Alps, and we were fortunate enough to visit it in February which is one of the best times of the year for skiing there. The snow conditions were excellent and the daily lessons with ESF, the French Ski School, meant that every member of the group progressed quickly. By the end of the week many were able to ski red and black runs with their instructors and some also skied the high pistes on the glacier.

The week was thoroughly enjoyed by all, students and staff alike.

*K de Mengel*



## A FEAST OF MUSIC

Has there ever been a year in which so many Wath musicians have shown us their talents?

The audience at the Music Extravaganza in October were able to enjoy classical and contemporary performances from soloists and groups. There was even a little rock! Thank you to all who brought the stage alive with a colourful, energetic version of Fabulous from High School Musical 2, to vocalists including Helena Leather and Michaela Grisdale and to soloists including Anna Marshall and Suzy Beanland on the piano. The Celebration of Music took place on a bitterly cold November evening, but our Year 7 and 8 students warmed us up with their performances. Dance made an appearance on the programme: well done to Shay Murray, Laura Booth, Ria Steel and Kelly Jarvis. And Curtis Knowles – a rock star in training – will certainly be remembered for his awesome solo interpretation of 'Stairway to Heaven'.

The Christmas Concert was the best event of the year by far – full of Christmas spirit. The school hall was decorated and food was set out on the tables. It looked lovely. Smiling faces were everywhere, and this was before the concert had even begun! So many students were involved in this fantastic occasion, playing instruments from flutes to guitar.

There were solos, duets, ensembles and large groups on the stage that night. The superb brass band gave a rousing lead as always, entertaining us and giving us a chance to join in with well-known carols. The guitar and electric guitar groups, the instrumentalists and singers – there were just too many to name. But all the people who performed were great; it takes guts to play in front of a large audience! The concert went down a treat, just like the Christmas Concerts in past years, and we hope that next year will be no different.

If only there was space to tell you about the Rock Night, the concerts at Kilnhurst Church and Montgomery Hall and the BTEC/A Level Recital Evening. Thank you again to all who contributed to these events, and to our Music staff for organising them.

Finally, congratulations on successes in practical examinations:

Thomas Collier-Taylor	Clarinet (Grade 4)	ABRSM
John D'Silva	Guitar (Grade 4)	ABRSM
Emma Levin	Singing (Grade 3)	TCM
Laura Parish	Guitar (Grade 4)	ABRSM
Samantha Pearson	Piano (Grade 6)	ABRSM
Samantha Pearson	Trumpet (Grade 8)	ABRSM
Emma Simpson	Trumpet (Grade 4)	ABRSM
<i>Suzy Beanland &amp; Anna Marshall</i>		

## AN IRISH EXPERIENCE

Over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend, 30 of our Year 7 and 8 students visited Northern Ireland to take part in a 4 day rugby tour.

Based in the picturesque seaside town of Ballycastle, Wath faced the hard task of playing two games in two days against well-fancied teams from Coleraine and Malone. But this didn't prevent the students from having time to go to the beach, the swimming pool and on a visit to the famous Giant's Causeway. But back to the business of actually playing rugby!

Ahead of the first game Wath had heard about Coleraine's recent achievements, but with commitment and determination we were able to overcome an early onslaught before winning the game comfortably 52-7. Two particularly good performances came from Orrin McIntyre and Ioan Evans, each claiming a hat-trick of tries.

Wath weren't quite so lucky the next day. We had been warned about Malone's size and strength, but nothing could have prepared us for actually seeing them in action. The Malone team out-muscled our smaller, faster team for much of the first half, scoring a couple of tries in the process, before a Wath fight back in the second half, including a try from Jonathan Horrobin, ensured that the score line was respectable – a 48-7 defeat. Wath's fighting spirit shone through from all our players on a day when it would have been easy to hide.

All the members of the touring party came home smiling after what was a memorable trip. Hopefully the team can learn from both their successes and their disappointments, and go on to be even more successful in the future.

*Mr S Lines*



## HOUSE REPORT 2008-2009

This year has seen a surge in House activities and renewed interest in the House system.

Year 7 were quick to take up the challenge, and both boys and girls were 'blooded' in lunchtime football leagues organised by our Student Support Workers. Thebes topped the boys league, followed by Carthage. For the girls it was Troy who triumphed, with Sparta as runners-up. Not to be outdone, the PE Department organised cup competitions to introduce our Year 7s to House activity. Thebes boys again won the football, with Troy girls emerging as netball champions.

Year 8 sports competitions followed on from the Year 7 events. Sparta came top of the boys football league, with Athens close behind. In the cup competitions, Troy girls won the hockey and Carthage boys took the football trophy.

Year 9 sports events took place in March. Athens girls triumphed at basketball and Rome boys were the football champions.

Year 10 took part in a new activity – ball striking, organised by Mr Powell. This event tested kicking ability using football and rugby balls. The best 'big toes' belonged to Ben Haywood, Agata Szulc, Jordan Fairman and Danielle Shirtcliffe. Thebes were the overall winners, with Carthage claiming second spot. Other Year 10 activities, scheduled for May, had to be put back due to heavy rain.

Year 11 football was timetabled after school in December and played under floodlights on the new all-weather pitch. Over 60 students demonstrated superb skills in an excellent atmosphere. Carthage were the winners, with Thebes second and Athens third.

House activity isn't just about sport, and away from the playing field Year 7 and 8 representatives took part in the annual Euroquiz. Well done to the winning team from Rome.

The Christmas Card competition, organised as ever by the Art Department, saw Thebes take first place with the other Houses just a brushstroke behind. Individual winners were:

- Year 7 Bethany Pratt, Jack Taylor, Katie Walker and Curtis Holbrook.  
Year 8 William King, Lauren Smith, Connor Payne and Alex Williams.  
Year 9 Alysha Careless, Jordan Walton, Shaun Miller and Steven Gill.

The new Enterprise competition, organised by Miss Hyde, and House Drama, co-ordinated by Mr Troughton, both produced some outstanding individual performances.

With points given for positions in each event, it is Troy who currently lead the field, with Carthage and Thebes equal second, Athens fourth and Rome and Sparta equal fifth. But with scores still to come from the Science and English weekly quizzes, the Swimming Gala and Sports Day, the final outcome remains to be seen.

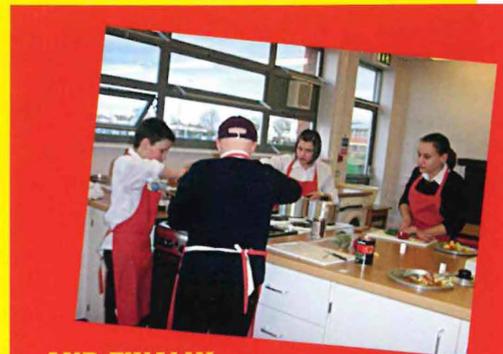
The Work Cup results, based on the motivation levels of every student, are now computerised, and Troy has led the race for this trophy since October. Tutor groups 7FR, 7LBE, 7CT and 8DC have had the most success. Individually,

congratulations to Maria Fairbank-Azcarate (Troy) who achieved a hat-trick of maximum scores in December, February and April.

Many thanks to all staff who have helped with House activities over the year, and particularly to Mr Demetriou who steps down from House work after six years and to Miss Benn for making sure that Rome hasn't been without a leader.

For the House system, the future's bright – the future's Orange ..... and Red and Green and Yellow and Blue and Purple. (Six Houses, six colours).

*Mr G D Longley*



## AND FINALLY .....

In our next edition, the spotlight will be on the Technology Department who have recently received the Good Practice Award under the Healthy Schools Scheme for participating in 'Lets Get Cooking'. To find out about this, and much more, look out for Connexions 15.