Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

Welcome to the last @Oakwood of the school year and it is certainly action packed!

There has been a plethora of activities, trips and competitions that have been hugely rewarding for our students.

My message is one of thanks to the hardworking staff who give selflessly of their time to make all of this possible. We have an impressive range of exceptional learning opportunities that are the envy of many schools and I am sure that you all appreciate just how much time it takes in planning and organisation. So congratulations to all the students who are in the pages of this latest edition but let us hear it for the staff as well!

With thanks to the Publicity team who have produced the high quality @Oakwood this year.

With best wishes for the summer,

Mr K.W. Moody - Headteacher
Between the 26th and 28th of June, physics students from Year 12 had the opportunity to visit the large Hadron Collider in Geneva as well as the United Nations headquarters and many other sites of importance around Geneva.

The large Hadron Collider is an important scientific research institute where ground-breaking discoveries have been found such as the Higgs Boson; the particle that gives everything its mass. On the Tuesday, the students were given a lecture by a doctor of particle physics and were able to visit the buildings above the ATLAS particle detector as well as seeing many examples of different machines used in the detector, including coolers, which were cooling gases to temperatures lower than the vacuum of space.

Students were also given time on the Tuesday to look around the city of Geneva with interesting sites such as the world's longest bench; La Treille, a massive metal chair called the Broken chair and a massive water jet known as the Jet d'Eau.

On the Wednesday, the students visited the United Nations Headquarters and were able to visit the conference rooms used by the Conference on Disarmament and World Health Organization to name a few, allowing the students to see the significant work undertaken by the UN.
After a very early start on the Saturday morning, we arrived in Rome in the late morning.

Our group were stunned by the Trevi fountain, which was the start of our treasure hunt (and surprise, surprise, the geographers triumphed: winning their first taste of Italian ice cream). En route we also saw the Arc de Constantine, the Spanish Steps and the Capitoline Hill.

On the second day, we had a tour of Fascism sites (the focus of our OCR A Level course), and were enthralled by the extent of Mussolini’s E.U.R district. We also made use of the free sporting facilities installed by Mussolini by running 400 metres of the track constructed by the Duce (Logan Thompson coming out the victor). Fosse Ardeatine memorial was our next stop. This memorial is to commemorate the 335 Italians brutally slaughtered by the Nazis after an Italian ambush upon 35 Nazi officials. For every 1 Nazi official killed, 10 Italians were killed (the age range being from 14 to 70). After this very interesting but sad visit, we went on to visit the Santa Maria Maggiore, where they hold the crib of the baby Jesus. We also saw the near endless Trajan’s column, which like the Colosseum has withstood the test of time.

Day three was dedicated to Ancient Rome. On this day we visited the Trajan market, which according to George Bradford only had fishmongers and butchers!!! We also saw the Pantheon, which was redecorated by the Christians (the only Roman resemblance left was the statues of Neptune (God of the sea) and Jupiter (God of all Gods). The Colosseum was our next port of call which was as breath-taking and more stunning than I could have imagined it would have ever been, with seating up to 65,000. After making Mr Morrice battle with the tigers blind folded we headed to the Forum, where we saw where the senate was held and where the Romans went to pray to Jupiter. We then climbed up the Palatine hill for an emperor’s view of the Circus Maximus. This was also the night where the brave climbed to the top of the Santa Maria Aracoeli.

Day four was where we went into the Historical Museum of the Liberation where any form of Roman resistance was stopped by the Nazis. Originally the German embassy, it became the SS headquarters from September ‘43’. Examining the relationship between Hitler and Mussolini is a key component of the A Level course. Mr Morrice also talked in vast detail about the geography of the Tiber and the seven hills, which was extremely interesting. We then passed over into
the Vatican State. This included the immense Sistine chapel and Saint Peter’s basilica. Here we also learned of the power of the Catholic Church and the influence of the painters and sculptors it inspired. Again the brave climbed the 300 steps to the dome rather rapidly. That evening, we went shopping around the Spanish Steps and Trevi fountain (Which surprisingly no one was late back for).

The Janiculum hill was the ultimate presence of day 5. It’s height was enough to scare the most valiant of climbers, so when all of us climbed it, immense pride filled our veins. After witnessing the cannon go off at 12, we headed to lunch in the square, where I personally had the best carbonara ever. We then headed to the Bocca where Miss Ryan was lucky not to get her hand cut off, but at the end of the day cheats don’t prosper. After the Bocca, we visited the Santa Maria Cosmedin (Another church, which held Saint Valentine’s bones). Then, it was time, for the re match between Pringle and Thompson. Two Men, one Circus Maximus, One lap, one aim; to become the fastest man in Rome. Thompson won easily, and Conroy was stone dead last (maybe the Circus isn’t the place for him).

Rome is a city filled with history and culture. Since its foundation in 753 BC this city has experienced everything, dictatorship and republic, Monotheism and polytheism, empires which have risen and fallen and artists painting and sculpting way before their time. I adore Rome because of its versatility (Historically and culturally) and the fact that it never ceases to amaze me. It is true that all roads to lead to Rome, because not only was it the centre of one of the most powerful empires in the world, but it is still the centre of our civilisation. We have learnt so much from the city and its inhabitants. So much so that without it, humanity would not be where it is today. So in my experience, Rome is not just a city, it is what we as humans should aspire to.
Year 12 Politics students who had taken part in the mock election, or who have worked hard as part of the school community this year, were rewarded with a trip to the Foreign Office and the Supreme Court in London.

The magnificent Whitehall building shone in the sun as we were shown the various wings that made up what we now know as The Foreign Office, but which were once the offices from which the British Empire were run. The imperial history of the building was very apparent from the inside as we went up grand staircases decorated with murals depicting the various nations paying homage to Britannia. Our guide, a junior civil servant from Maidstone, pointed out that these controversial murals are left there as a reminder of how far we have come as a society in terms of race relations.

Ms Stewart, who was about to spend two years in Georgia advising on their new democracy, also introduced us to three of her colleagues who spoke to us about their role in the foreign office. Students learnt about the various unusual postings that they had been on and their challenges. This included advising the Columbian government on their peace negotiations with the FARC and working with reconciliation programmes in areas where war had led to sexual violence.

After taking a close up peek of the door to Number 10 and a sunny lunch by the Thames, we went to examine the third branch of our government, the Judiciary.

In the Supreme Court, students exchanged views over recent judicial decisions on monitoring terrorists and on whether owners of private hotels can refuse gay couples. We then sat in on a hearing in Court Two which showed us the level of detail senior appeal barristers have to go into when facing a bench of six Supreme Court judges.

Year 12 students studying AS level politics have visited Parliament, The Executive and The Judiciary. Hopefully these trips will stand them in good stead for their AS examination in June.

As for the results of the Mock Election, the Conservative party gained the most votes, meaning that OPGS would have a Conservative MP. If however, we had used PR, OPGS would also have had representatives from Labour, Lib Dem and The Greens.

Year 12 Politics students watched the 2017 General Election result with interest. OPGS parents voted the same way as their sons and daughters.
On Wednesday, 15 Year 7 students went to Canterbury Christchurch University. We had a murder case and had to work out who did it.

Finger prints
First we used finger prints to find the killer. The crime scene mark was a radial loop. To find out who had Radial loops, we used fingerprint powder and “the wand.” The wand was magnetic so the fingerprint powder was stuck to it. Then we had to rub a greasy part of your body, (rub your forehead or run your fingers through your hair), and press down on a sheet of paper. Then you get your wand, with fingerprint powder on it, and rub the wand gently up and down the piece of paper where you think that you put down your fingers. Finally, the fingerprints showed up but wouldn’t last long out in the open. To conserve them we put special easy tear tape on it to keep the evidence for later.

Crime scene
Next, Oakwood Park visited the crime scene. There was blood on the curtains and the weapon, a rolling pin, was found in a bag in the bin. There was also lots of cigarettes. Police officers can find out who smoked them because there is their saliva on them. A purse was found on top of the fridge and loads and loads of beer and wine bottles were empty and around the room. One such bottle had a fingerprint, made out of blood, on it!

Luminol
After lunch, we went to the luminol laboratory. Luminol reacts to blood so police officers use this substance to find out if there is any blood present at the scene. The bread bin, which we found in the room where the victim was murdered, was tested to see if there was blood present. If it reacted it would turn bright blue when it was on that surface. It did!

However, Luminol reacts to other things such as horse radish, bleach and dog urine! By then we had an idea who it was. We thought that of the four suspects, Tamara Simmons was our criminal.

De-brief
At the de-brief they told us that it was actually Tamara! We had got it right. Then we went back to Oakwood. It was so much fun!
On Friday 10th March, 19 Year 10 students participated in the 2017 Biology Challenge. This is a national competition to find the UK’s best biologists.

The Biology Challenge is an online competition which took place in schools across the country with students supervised by their teachers. Questions were set on the school curriculum but the Biology Challenge also rewarded those students whose knowledge of the subject has been increased by reading books and magazines, watching natural history programmes, taking notice of the news media for items of biological interest, and are generally aware of our natural flora and fauna. The Challenge consisted of two 25 minute papers and a chance of gaining a winning score resulting in the award of a Bronze, Silver or Gold certificate. The results have just been published and students from OPGS gained an impressive 7 Gold, 3 silver and 9 Bronze awards.

Reality Bites

Year 12 Sociology hosted a group of young women with lives very different from their own in their classes in May.

The ‘Reality Mums’ came to tell the young sociologists about what life was like for young women with an unplanned family. Students heard moving stories from the women who covered difficult issues such as homelessness, overcrowding and bereavement. They also had the opportunity to conduct group interviews with the women on the topic of gender and poverty. The ‘Reality Mums’ also led a discussion on sexual consent, social media use and budgeting on a low income. The sessions benefitted OPGS students who could further their understanding of the effect of social policy on the lives of those in receipt of state help. It also benefitted the young women who had the opportunity to gain an accreditation for a social care qualification. Their assessor said that the friendliness and warmth of our pupils had made the ‘Reality Mums’ confident. They all passed!
On Monday 22 May, Year 7 students took part in the Local History Enrichment Day.

They visited Bodiam Castle and as well as having great fun exploring the ramparts and grounds, also sketched the castle and labelled all the defensive features they had learnt about in lessons this year. After this, we moved on (and backwards in time) to the world-famous Battle Abbey where students stood at the exact spot where King Harold was killed in 1066 - was it really by an arrow to the eye? We may never know for sure, but whatever the answer, his death did mark the end of Anglo-Saxon England and the beginning of the Norman era. Students looked out over the battlefield, peaceful in the summer sunshine but they were discussing the scene they would have witnessed in October 1066 and the huge impact the events had on the nation.
The Class of 2017 said their final farewells to OPGS with a sporting competition, a bouncy castle and frozen confectionary.

As is OPGS tradition, the battle of The Kings of Oakwood raged in searing heat while the weak and cowardly looked on in awe. OPGS First XV and First XI brought their combined skills of ‘ball management’ to the pitch. As decreed by tradition and by Mr Devonald’s expert refereeing, the two teams drew.

This was followed with a barbecue served by Year 12 Prefects, enslaved by the Year 13s for this purpose. (They will then go on to enslave the generation below them, thus passing on another venerated OPGS tradition.) At the end of the day, plucky Year 13 students, emboldened by burgers, took turns to run the ‘gauntlet of fire’. This involves throwing yourself into the scalding, cavernous bowels of the giant bouncy castle, possibly never to return (certainly not without being given a full body wax on the way through).

With shirts covered in the obscene salutations of their peers, the Class of 2017 disappeared into the sunset, never to be seen again.

Well, not until the post-exam Sixth Form Ball. (The author, for one, is looking forward to sharing the dance floor with Kamal, the only student who has won the awards for both The Most Likely To Cure Cancer and ‘The Rear of the Year’. Boogie on down! )
The Sixth Form Team sadly bade farewell to the Year 13 class of 2017 at the end of June.

After the three course meal and before the sun went down, the senior prefect team had formal photographs taken to celebrate their amazing fund raising for Mind and Mencap Charities. (Pictured.) They have worked hard over the year to raise an amazing £5500 for these charities. Although the outfits were certainly the best, some of the worst dancing that the Sixth Form Team had ever witnessed was soon on display. Soon after that, many students decided that they had, in fact, had enough and disappeared into Maidstone in a fleet of taxis.

The next time the Sixth Form Team and Year 13 meet will be under completely different circumstances at A level results day. But there will be more hugs then, and final farewells before Year 13 move into the freedom and responsibilities of adulthood.
Tuesday 20th June, blue sky, the sun was shining and all was quiet on the OPGS field!

That was until the annual question of 'Where does this pole go?' rang out across the track! Yes, the best day of the year was upon us, Sports Day 2017! The PE department challenge of erecting the score tent began at 7:30am however, what I think became the record; it was up and in situ in the quickest time ever. Was this a sign of the beginnings of a successful day!

8:45am and the first students started to come to the field, some dressed in house colours, some with warrior face paint, some like Miss Beeney wearing her true colours, that of Hazlitt house (much to the disgust of Miss Ryan). Mr Keeling-Jones welcomed all to the day and gave a short briefing about how the day would run. Then at 9:10am we heard the delicate tones of Mr Housden ‘Take your marks, Set, Go’, the clapperboard clapped and the Year 7 100m race began!

As we progressed through the day, the atmosphere grew, students were cheering for each other, Year 7 supporting Year 10, encouraging students to do their best for their house. The ice cream van queue grew ever longer trying to keep up with the demands of competitors who required the ‘99’ with a flake to provide some energy for their next event! The shouts of ‘heave’ rang across the field as the tug of war teams battled out for the title of 2017! Whilst in the more sedate corner students were challenging their mental capacity in speed chess, concentration and thought, you could almost hear the brains trying to figure out the next move!

The results started to come to the recording table, staff were frantically trying to input the data and add up those scores! Oh, who would have thought that this would be a difficult task for some of the Maths department – 'I'm new to this event, patience may be required' states one of newer members of the department!

It was to be a year of records! This was part due to the fact that the track had changed and therefore all track events were new records, so congratulations to all track competitors! However, there are a few athletes to commend for their performance, Rez O’Sullivan taking the long standing Discus record for Year 10, now standing at 28m. Luke Bodium, Henry Gillespie, Jack Wilkins and Callum Duffy all hold the first 300m records for the school, as 400m is no longer run at these age groups. Jack Hatfield, Yr 8 Wilberforce now holds the 800m record taking over 4 seconds off the previous one set. Alex Stone in Year 7, Wilberforce house, broke the record for the Javelin by 16 centimetres, now standing at 22.78m.

The final events held on the field were the 4 x 100m races, the fastest students from each house, in each year group were to battle it out for the title! We were not disappointed! Most races were extremely close, tenths of seconds split each team! The whole school at this point congregated in their house areas along the finish straight in order to maximise the atmosphere! Year 7 set the standard with only 2 seconds covering 1st to 5th, Hazlitt coming out eventual winners. Year 8 had a hard act to follow! Whilst the race was not as close, the finish was amazing! Sadler came home clear winners in a record time of 54.54secs! As with Year 7, only 2 seconds covered 1st – 5th in Year 9 and the eventual winning house being Hazlitt. We were promised some good things from Year 10, some outstanding athletes took their places. Anticipation filled the track – will we see another record! ‘Clap’ went the clapperboard and like a flash, the Houses were on the finishing straight! Sadler just in the lead from Fisher (a trend that seemed to follow throughout the day!) A win for Sadler by two tenths of a second!
What a way to finish the morning events! So followed the afternoon activities of rowing and the penalty shoot-out. As is always the way, these events in a confined space bring out the best in the students! Cheering, clapping, shouting filled the sports hall, at time the groans of disappointment of a missed penalty could be heard! But I don’t think an OPGS sports day would be the same without these two final events bringing the whole school together! A special thanks goes out to Mr Avis our football referee, for controlling the penalty shoot-out so professionally and Mr Bain for your own style of control on the ‘water’ with the rowing!

After an hour, the final results were in and it fell to Mr Keeling-Jones to announce the winners of each year group and then to announce who, if anyone, had managed to take the trophy from Miss Ryan’s Fisher house!

See Below

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Sports Day 2017 was one of the closest fought contests for many years, but the overall Sports Day points were as follows:

- Broughton – 551 points
- Wilberforce – 591 points
- Hazlitt – 610 points
- Fisher – 705 points
- Sadler – 711 points

May I congratulate all on their fantastic performances, those record breakers well done your names are now part of OPGS history, and of course all the staff for their wonderful support on the day!
The OPGS Athletics teams have experienced great successes this season – indeed it has been our most successful season on record.

The year 7 athletes entered the ‘Super 8s Athletics tournament’ for the first time. This is a fast format of athletics, which requires each individual to compete in 3 separate events – as such it promotes the importance of being an ‘all-round’ athlete. The OPGS boys team won at the Maidstone district round, and were joined to the Valley Park girls team to represent Maidstone Schools at the Kent County event. The pool was very strong and we came up against the exceptional athletes of Dartford Grammar and the Judd School. Overall, we placed 10th out of 14 districts, but we had great fun along the way and learnt a lot for next year. The team comprised of Callum Duffy, Alex Stone, Owen Jenner, Isaac Frais, Elliott Banham, Scott Bain, Josh Fiksen, Callum Rawlinson and Timo Collins.

The next day saw OPGS compete at the Maidstone Schools Athletics tournament at the Julie Rose Stadium in Ashford. We were reigning cup holders for our junior team, but had never won at intermediate level before. Both teams went with confidence, having performed very well throughout the season in the weekly athletics meetings – we felt we were peaking at the right time. Though the day was long, we knew we were in with a shot going into the final event and the relays – it was all down to our sprinters. The Junior sprinters were hindered by a last minute injury to Junior Effiom, so Jonny Bentley stepped in. Fears of an untested combination were allayed when the team brought home a comfortable win. The intermediate team were not just focusing on a win, but felt confident we could be in with a shot of breaking the Maidstone Schools record, which stood at 47 seconds. The Valley Park sprinters are a fine outfit, so really, it was between them and us. Harvey Weed had a blistering final leg and took the win from Valley in the closing stage of the relay. Two wins to OPGS and the combined relay cup was ours. They narrowly missed the record by under one second.

Therefore, it came down to points total – the junior team retained their cup beating second place by a clear 9 points. The intermediate team came in with 91 points, which made them joint winners with Valley Park – the relay win clearly being the difference for us. So two Maidstone Athletics Cups coming to OPGS for the first time since the formation of the games, rounding off a very enjoyable season.
On Wednesday 28th July from 4-6pm and Thursday 29th July from 5-7pm, there was an eclectic collection of a range of students work from GCSE and A Level on display in the Centenary Building, to mark the successes of the students’ achievements, demonstrate their creative skill and technical ability in the products and designs, which made up the exhibition.

Product design is a continually evolving subject: the purpose of the exhibition was to showcase the students’ work to help inspire, motivate and inform younger students of the kind of production pieces they could be aiming for in years to come. Indeed, some of the students’ pieces encouraged people to stop and reflect as they blurred the boundaries between art and design. Some of the final products combined intriguing shapes and materials with extensive research; the aim being for this exhibition to question our preconceptions of colour and embraces its imperfection and experimentation. Many of the DT pieces saw the students consider aesthetics as well as the ergonomics, practicality and sustainability of their designs. Art saw some students take a more thoughtful and at times introverted look at an expression of self: Zohra Soorma’s piece of the girl’s fist smashing through the glass was symbolic of feminist ideals and visually breaking down ‘the glass ceiling’ by challenging gender roles and expectations of 21st century. Graphics students took inspiration from their time on the Venice trip, and manipulated photographs of the gondola-strewn waterways and Venetian masks as marketing for their own café bistro and biscuit brands. Likewise, in Media Studies, students explored issues of representation of gender, class and again tried to subvert the boundaries of cultural norms and expectations in their innovative productions pieces.

The students’ pieces were put under scrutiny, as those who attended the exhibition filled out their voting slips, in each of the different subject categories. Some of the votes were close but we are delighted to announce that the winners of this year’s design exhibition were:

Design and Technology – Carol Mealin Vazquez
Art - Ryan Gathorne
Graphics - Jack Lord
Media Studies – Mya Punter Bradshaw's DVD and film poster of ‘The Session’; this piece is representative of the genre conventions of a coming of age music drama inspired by her experience of a friend’s up and coming band.
This was the question put to prospective OPGS Sixth Formers at our taster day by Iain Roden from Lend Lease, the company responsible for delivering the new London headquarters for the tech giant.

Judging by the amount of work students put into the competition to win a week’s work experience with the international engineering and construction firm, the answer from students was a resounding YES.

In preparation for the competition to design a future city, students attended lectures in their particular subject specialism delivered by academics and professionals who are friends of OPGS. For example, Chief Inspector Neil Parker spoke on how to create a city with low crime rates, and Dr Steve LeComber from Queen Mary University of London, described how to use graph theory to model a city’s logistics. These were just two of the 8 workshops, including those on drama, architecture, design technology and politics, run by academics and professionals designed to give students the knowledge to work as a multi-disciplinary team.

This was the first time that many of the students taking part had met each other, but they soon bonded over the task and got down to planning their utopian city. We heard some very unusual ideas such as a city powered by gym activity, a swimming pool above a supermarket and graphene structures. Following the gruelling task of giving a one minute pitch to our professional judges and 150 of their peers, three finalist teams faced probing questions from the judges about their design.

The winning team answered questions on budget, arts provision and sustainability. Congratulations to the most successful team led by Thomas Place which includes Harrison Sims, Jessica Paramour, Sam Driver, George Rose, Talia Walby-Patino, Joshua Purvis and Scott Miller. These students will head off to work with LendLease in the autumn term. Where is the current project located? Why not Google it?
OPGS students Natasha Kinsman and Ben Regan were declared unanimous winners by the panel of judges at Chartwell, Winston Churchill’s home.

Working as a team, the two Year 12 students gave passionate responses to Churchill’s comment that ‘A nation without a soul is a nation that cannot live.’ Our first speaker, Ben, a Brexiteer, developed the theme that supporting the Leave vote did not rule out humanitarian intervention. Natasha, a Remainer, responded by arguing that Churchill would have voted to stay in the EU and that we must not turn our back on refugees by putting up borders. The judges, including the Director of the International Churchill Society and a ministerial speech writer, responded to the thorough research done by students into Churchill using the archives at Churchill College, Cambridge which OPGS visits once a year.

Morgan Sands and Will Newmarch (Year 10) also took part and, although they didn’t win the GCSE shield, they were commended by the judges for their memorable speeches. Morgan told us how his grandfather bound the books that are now in Randolph Churchill’s library and Will described his struggle for life as a four year old. Ms Hern has told them to stand by as they will be back to reclaim the shield next year!

OPGS Sixth Form have developed many links with the International Churchill Society through their victories at competitions run by them. Ms Hern is currently working with Churchill College, Cambridge to set up a history-based debating competition to take place at the archive. She is hoping that our OPGS students will be able to win there too!
Yr 10 Geography students visited 10 sites in the upper and middle course of the River Tillingbourne, as part of their exam case study, focusing on these parts of the river because the lower was too dangerous and wide to go in.

Due to the popularity of the course, the students had to visit the site across 2 days at sites which included Abinger Bottom 1&2, Crossways Farm 1&2, Abinger Hammer, Gomshall 1&2, Shere and Albury. On the fieldwork days, we went to Juniper Hall. Here, in their educational centre, the staff gave us a run through of the day as well as a river characteristic booklet with Tillingbourne facts to help our introduction write up. At the river we measured (in groups of around 5) width with a tape measure, depth with a ruler, velocity with a hydro prop (better than a ball flowing down river), load size with callipers and discharge by multiplying cross sectional area with velocity. When we finished our 3 sites, we went back to the hall and they told us what to include and how to structure the write up of our method. At each site, students had drawn sketches including the impact of human influence, features, time, weather (so we know if we came back what the conditions were like), and width.

We also did an all-important risk assessment (falling trees, water too strong, trip ext.).

In the introduction, we wrote about how we expect the river to change downstream including discharge predictions, features and flood risk. Students also took care to describe the location of the river and sites involved in our data collection with notes on any anomalies and overall trends.

This is extremely relevant and, in fact, a necessity for our exam topic as we will be asked questions about any part of our write up where we will write it in less detail. The exam will ask us for detailed examples of our aims, method, results, and evaluation in relation to Tillingbourne.

Our group was the most efficient at collecting data and so we had more time to explore! We got out of the day experience when collecting data. This will help us on our future case study at the coast in year 11 (We learnt about rivers and coasts theory in class). In addition, we learn about these features in class but never see them. Seeing them has helped us to understand how they form even more and how they may not be as big or small as we thought. We saw an oxbow scar and we never thought that grass would grow over it in the way it did. However not seeing the whole river meant we did not get a full representation of the long profile. We enjoyed getting cake at the end from the hall. Human influence was much bigger than we thought, we also learnt about new types including widening the river to make the water shallower (it was in a park and flooding had to be avoided) and bank erosion.

By Morgan Sands
On Tuesday 4th July, school finished at 2pm in order for the staff and students to get ready for our annual Presentation Evening, to celebrate the students’ successes across the year including: academic achievements, sports colours, music and drama ties as well as the appointment of the senior prefect team. In order to receive a prize, pupils must have received at least three nominations from staff across the curriculum for their continuously excellent academic performance.

The staff gathered in the LRC for a delightful summer reception in which we discussed the highlights of the year and the progress of our exceptionally minded and most outstanding students who have endeavoured to be the best they can be in this last year.

There was a musical interlude in which the students who are performing in our up-coming school show ‘Schools Will Rock You’ sang Queen’s ‘Somebody to Love’ in a theatrical and riveting manner which was enough to lift the room’s emotional energy and see just how talented our students are in so many diverse ways. The main shows took place on Monday 17th and Tuesday 18th July and were a great success.

The hall was also bewitched by the roll of honour video presentation, in which the accumulation of success stories across the last academic year were displayed on the big screens. This acted as a visual reminder of what our students can achieve within the school, local, national, and for some, international community as representatives and ambassadors of the well-rounded individuals our students grow to become.

The guest speaker Brian Lightman, who is an educational consultant and former general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders. Mr Lightman, who has held the position since 2010, will set up an education consultancy, but has pledged to continue supporting school leaders. Mr Lightman told Schools Week: “It’s been a privilege to represent ASCL and the more than 18,500 school leaders. It’s been a time of great change, but I’ve found it a great honour. I feel ASCL has been listened to as an authoritative voice for school leaders and we’ve always tried to be proactive as leaders in providing solutions.”

When asked about the biggest challenge now facing school leaders, he said: “In the face of many changes and financial challenges, keeping hold of their vision for education and making sure they are not distracted from why they all came into the job – to enable all young people in our care to achieve the very best.”

Our speaker was surely perceived as a formidable role model, with his engaging speech on striving to do well as an individual no matter your circumstances or background but using your ambitions to look forward to a future shaped by your own determination, resilience and strength.
The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award has steadily grown in popularity over the past 6 years. This year saw 79 students sign up for the Bronze Award with a further 16 undertaking silver at present.

The award, which requires the young person to commit to and complete a voluntary, physical and skill based activity for a combined 12 months, closely mirrors our school ambition to provide character building opportunities to our students that push them out of their comfort zones and challenge them to achieve outside of the classroom. 70 of our Bronze level applicants went to Cranbrook last weekend to complete their final assessed expedition and we are happy to report that all were successful. A further 6 Bronze level students will hopefully be completing their award in September, delayed through injury, along with our Silver Level entrants. We hope to see a number of our successful Bronze Award students come back to complete their Silver Award next year, and for the Silvers there will be the opportunity to sign up to Gold – now that really is a challenge!

Thank You

Please can the OPGS Parents Association thank everybody for their support this year. With the help from many generous parents and students, we have managed to raise the money to complete some amazing projects in the school this year.

The tables and seating in the new quad have made a real difference to the school, not only as an additional space to eat and socialise at lunchtimes, but also for outside classroom work in years 7-11, and as a nice study area for Year 12s and 13s. We have also raised the funds for planting the area around the new Centenary Building, making the area a really lovely place for students to be.

In addition to this, we have also raised the money to help fund a Defibrillator Unit in the school, and the training needed. Whilst we all hope we never need to use it, it's very good to know it will be in school if needed!

Your help has been vital in providing these amazing additional resources at OPGS, and the school send their heartfelt thanks to you all, as do we at the OPGS PA.

Please can we ask you to keep supporting us next year. We have some fantastic events going on, and your support really does make a difference! The list for next year is below. You can also find details on our webpage www.opgspa.org.uk or Facebook profile Facebook.com/OPGSPA. Details of how to make a donation, or signing up for Easy Fundraising (where companies donate money every time you shop on line with them) can also be found on the website.

One final request….. If you have a little free time, and would like to join the OPGS Parents Association, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact us at hello@opgspa.org.uk if you can help in any way. Alternatively, all our details are on our website.

OPGS PA Events 2017/2018:
Friday 8 September – New Year 7 and Parents’ BBQ
Friday 23 February – Race Night
Saturday 24 June – Summer Fayre
Non-Uniform Day: 16 March

Friday 13 October – Quiz Night
Spring Ball (Date TBA)
Cake Sales: 16 November, 14 March, 15 June
On Tuesday 11th July, students from Year 8 ventured through the Eurotunnel for their residential in France. On the first day, students were given a detailed guided tour around one of the 193 coastal fortresses, which line the beaches, hidden behind the sand dunes, in Northern France.

The students who explored Leffrinckoucke were able to see what a vital standpoint such military bases were during Operation Dynamo, just a few hundred metres from the English Channel. Fort des Dunes is about 3.5 miles east of Dunkirk; built from 1878 to 1880, it served as part of the Séré de Rivières system of fortifications that France built following the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Although it played no part in World War I, it had a significant role in both the beginning and end of World War II.

The chosen site was both served by and a place of protection for the coastal railway and canal. It occupies a sandy hill 27 metres high, and is itself protected by as many as 6 metres of sand cover. The rectangular fort is surrounded by a dry moat defended by caponiers that provide a protected firing position to sweep the length of the ditch with gunfire. The main fort is accessible by a drawbridge over the ditch. The Fort des Dunes was armed with a variety of artillery over its history, initially mounted on the fort's surface. These fortifications were modified as artillery technology developed, making fixed open-air gun emplacements untenable. During World War I the fort's primary armament was two or three 90mm guns on the ramparts. Several 120mm anti-aircraft guns were positioned in the area surrounding the fort. The fort's barracks and service areas are recessed into the surface and covered with soil and turf. The walls are built of brick and stone masonry. It was initially armed with about 25 artillery pieces, served by 451 men; the in house bakery providing 200 loaves of fresh bread each day to sustain the men, who stayed there.

Next on our journey around the coastal region, we stopped at Boulogne-Sur-Mer to walk around the old town with the city wall lining the cobbled streets, the Town Hall and the garden exhibition which changes year on year. This time, there was a display of different film sets including Alice in Wonderland and the Mad Hatter’s tea party, Mon Uncle, Edward Scissorhands and a maze with some of the infamous props from the horror film The Shining.

The historical significance of Boulogne also has strong links to WWII which the students found extremely interesting. For example, just one of the war stories includes the fact that on 22 May 1940 during the Battle of France, two British Guards battalions and some Pioneers attempted to defend Boulogne against an attack by the German 2nd Panzer Division. Despite fierce fighting, the British were overwhelmed and the survivors were evacuated by Royal Navy destroyers while under direct German gunfire. On 15 June 1944, 297 planes of the Royal Air Force bombed Boulogne harbour to suppress German naval activity following D-Day. Some of the Lancasters carried Tallboy bombs, and as a result, the harbour and the surrounding area were completely destroyed. In August 1944 the town was declared a “fortress” by Adolf Hitler, but it succumbed to assault and liberation by the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division in September. In one incident, a French civilian guided the Canadians to a “secret passage” leading into the walled old town and bypassing the German defenders. Indeed, the students enjoyed meandering through the streets, buying pastries or souvenirs, with some picking up some local culture with their purchases of berets. After this excursion, the students went to their
accommodation with one site in Calais and the other Dunkirk, each just metres from the beach. On Wednesday 12th July, students visited Ambletuese where there was a war museum and the Todt Battery on our itinerary for the day. During World War II, the area fell under German military occupation. There was a concentration camp built in the environs. Between 1941 and 1943, the German engineers of Organisation Todt installed bunkers for artillery at the fort as part of work on the Atlantic Wall. In the bay of the river, they also built sluices to flood the valley to prevent an Allied landing. After the Normandy Landings, Ambleteuse became the endpoint for the second “Operation Pluto” pipeline, fuelling the Allies from supplies in Kent. On the back to the beach, students stopped to visit a war cemetery in which they had to explore the graves and memorials to try to find the Queen’s Own West Kent Regiment. The students also found it particularly poignant that they found soldiers with the same family name as their own. This really bringing home to the students the great loss of life, which occurred during both World Wars.

On a lighter note, as the sun came out, students were able to spend a couple of hours playing organised games on the sandy beaches of Dunkirk, before stopping for dinner. We then took the students out again for a 2 hour long walk around the coast, harbour and the Old Town of Dunkirk with the promise of a chance to purchase some ice cream after soaking up some sights along the way.

On the final day of our trip, Thursday 13th July, the Year 8 students visited La Coupole, whereby they were shown a short documentary on the creation of the V1 and V2 rockets. Students then had the opportunity to complete an audio tour of the centre that is the home to some of the most transformative, and potentially dangerous, technological developments in our history. It was a tour through a dark tunnel where the sounds of construction site and bombardment resonate that one reaches the luminous dome of concrete. Two circuits were proposed: ‘The New Weapons V1 and V2’ (Circuit Rex) in the footsteps of Wernher von Braun, the German engineer behind the V2 rocket and the first steps of the Man on the Moon. The course ‘The North of France in the German Hand’ (Circuit Cinéac) looks at the great periods of the Occupation: invasion, exodus, daily life, Resistance, collaboration and Release. After this, students had a couple of hours to do some last minute shopping at Cite Europe in Calais before we journeyed home, thus bringing to an end our jam packed few days away in Northern France.
Oakwood Park Grammar School is partnered with Elmina JHS in Ghana and this year we are helping them to build their IT room.

Elmina JHS takes children from 11 to 19. Teaching there is hard as the students have little access to books or to the internet. So far, they have raised enough money to buy a laptop and a projector to use in the classroom and their local Rotary Club gives them money to pay for the internet ‘dongle’ every year. However, one computer is not enough for all those children. They now have a secure IT room, but no computers! The hope is that once they are able to equip the school the students will quickly pick up computer processing skills, which will in turn give them access to better learning aids and the ability to communicate with the rest of the world.

Most of the students’ parents live and work in the capital and access to the internet would allow them to communicate more easily and make living away from home a bit more bearable. When some of the Ghanaian teachers came to visit our school in 2016, they were moved to tears by how our students could research and bring their own ideas and knowledge into the classroom. We hope to give Elmina students the same freedom to learn about the wide world they live in.

Currently Elmina has a room but no computers! We have been working with London based IT businesses and Oakwood parents to get them to donate second hand computers, screens, keyboards etc and we are raising money at Oakwood to pay for them to be cleaned up, packaged and delivered to the school. Our goal is to provide them with at least 30 functioning computers and a projector in 2017 if possible.

To help start the fund raising off, Bruno Robinson shaved his hair off and raised over £200.

If you would like to donate the link is below:

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/oakwoodpark-grammarschool-ghana-it
Students from Oakwood Park Grammar School have been taking part in a range of enrichment activities this week.

Year 7 students went to Norfolk where they visited the Imperial War Museum, Holkham Hall and saw seals during a boat trip.

Year 8 visited Dunkirk to view the museums, war graves and buildings within the town.

Year 9 took part in a Science Rollercoaster challenge in which they had to look at and design their own rollercoasters. Part of this challenge involved a visit to Thorpe Park to see the rollercoasters in action.

Year 10 students took part in a Business Challenge week, where they were set tasks by local businesses to solve a real life problem. They had to present their ideas to the businesses at the end of the week.

A group of students flew off to Rome to explore the many wonderful sights and some are currently exploring Peru.

Read more in the next @Oakwood Magazine online to keep up with the latest adventures.