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Dear Parents

So another school year comes to a close. We began the year with some degree of trepidation as to what life would be as an independent, new style academy. We end the year convinced that it was the right thing to do, giving us the resources and flexibility to provide the best possible education for our pupils.

It is becoming somewhat of a routine celebrating our best year to date at the end of each school year, and this year is no different. We are expecting an exceptionally good set of examination results in August for our Year 10, 11 and Sixth Form pupils, building upon the very strong results in 2010. Clearly, we would not be in this position without the excellent work of teachers and support staff at the school whose dedication to providing the best for pupils is, in my view, truly exemplary.

Schools these days are judged largely by examination results, behaviour and various other government led targets. However, what really makes a school special is its ethos and culture. Examination results do not always show this. Last weekend our Young Farmers, of which there are a large number at the school, won the Kent County Show for best school club for the first time since 1974. What makes this such a special achievement is that to win this event takes countless hours of preparation, immense teamwork and total dedication from over 50 of our pupils and staff. Seeing the Young Farmers at work reminds me that school is not just about English, maths and science, although these are probably the most important things we do. It is also about enjoying the experience of education, teamwork, making new and often lifelong friends in an atmosphere which is safe, happy and secure. This is what we strive to do at Westlands, now and for future year groups to come.

I hope everyone connected with Westlands School has a happy, safe and restful summer break and I look forward to seeing you in September.

Jon Whitcombe
Headteacher

Miss Middleton's Year 8 science class joined forces with Mrs Smith in photography this term to explore the workings of the human eye. Did you know that the eye and the camera work in a similar way? Group 8T2 do. They built their own pinhole cameras with Pringle tubs and developed the images within the darkroom. They discovered how light reflects from objects, enters the pinhole and forms an upside down image onto light sensitive paper. Pupils had to take into account the aperture size and length of exposure to produce a perfect photograph.



Pupils at the school were also able to experience this phenomenon on a grander scale. A giant pinhole camera or camera obscura was built as part of the Creative Partnership exhibition. Pupils were invited to walk into the human eye!



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Tryangle Awards: Congratulations to the following pupils who have been nominated for a Tryangle Award : Sean Molloy, Jack Bonner-Pearce, Thomas Drury, Michael Goatham, Oliver Edwards, Tazmin Bricknell, Liam Peart, Samantha Inge, Jack Calder, Sarah Jacobs, Mikayla Rye, Seb Dunn, Nicholas Richardson, Sonia Emerson.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)

Events this year included a whole Year 7 trip to The Science Museum in September 2010. In December the Year 8s were invited to visit the Astrodome, a portable planetarium, where pupils took a journey around the universe and through the constellations, taking in sights including the Milky Way. In January, Westlands School was proud to host a STEM Careers Fair for Year 10s and 11s, where 7 local businesses including Cryallstyles, promoted the STEM subjects by introducing pupils to the variety of career possibilities available to them. Finally, in June, STEM and G&T teamed up to arrange a visit by Eagle Heights who attended with a selection of birds of prey, including Alaska the Bald Eagle who soared over the heads of the excited Year 9s!



Slick The Musical

On Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 July 2011, Westlands School drama department performed their version of the new musical 'Slick'. Set in Beechwood High School, Florida, it tells the story of how different groups within a failing school must pull together to save it with an obligatory underlying love story between new boy Danny (Simon Giles Year 13) and dancer Sam (Haylie Cinderey Year 13). Featuring songs such as Status Quo, Time Warp and I'll Be There For You, the audience enjoyed an uplifting and energetic performance which certainly ended on a high note.

The piece has tones of High School Musical, Grease and Glee and featured a cast from all year groups who, this year, had the difficult task of pulling together the three disciplines of acting, dancing and singing to carry this performance.

This year we are very sorry to say goodbye to our previous Year 13s who have been committed to school productions and drama throughout their time at Westlands School being a shining example to all. Jessica Sayer and Megan Shaw are going on to universities and colleges in Kent to further study their drama and Matthew Walton to branch into technical theatre. Well done to them and best of luck for their bright futures ahead. They will be missed.



Inter-community Cupcake Competition

This year pupils in all communities were challenged to design an iced cupcake. The best designs were chosen and 5 pupils produced their designs in the food technology department. The final cakes were judged by Stuart Major, Executive Chef at Leeds Castle. Results were as follows:

- 1st – Charlie Wilson T18 (for his Banoffee Cupcakes)
- 2nd – Fleur Peters T14 (for her Special Birthday Cupcakes)
- 3rd – Mawunyo Graham T22 (for her School Tie Cupcakes)

Congratulations to all who took part.

Supporting Charities

This term we planned a Pink Week to raise funds for Breast Cancer Care and the Bobby Moore Fund. We began the week selling pink food in the canteens and taking part in intercommunity competitions.

Congratulations to Miss Stephens' tutor group N17 who have been saving all of their loose change and have donated it to Help for Heroes.

Public Services At Westlands School

On a scorching week in April Sgt Houndsome of the Royal Engineers made his bi-annual visit to Westlands to run the Army Fitness challenges for all public service students. Students ranging from Year 9 to Year 12 took part in the personal fitness test of a 1.5 mile run and maximum press ups and sit ups. Some excellent times and scores were achieved by students as well as the public services team. Miss Pitt and Mr Hallam renewed their rivalry and Mrs Gibson took part to show that even senior officers still have to keep fit. A big well done to all who took part.

On May 6 the Year 11 and Year 12 public service groups descended on Bewl Water for their expedition and camp. The group enjoyed raft building, kayaking and team events as well as night manoeuvres and navigation exercises. Mr Molloy also demonstrated the art of shelter building and camp cuisine. A big thank you to Miss Benbow, Mr Molloy and Miss Taylor for their hard work and well done to the students who were outstanding.

On 30 June 2011 an elite group of Year 9 public service students took part in 'Army Live' at Aldershot Barracks. They sampled life with all the regiments of the Army, clambered over helicopters and tanks, watched motorcycle and parachute displays. The group also took part in judo, fencing and boxing, persuading Mr Hallam to train with the Army Boxing Team, whilst Mr Rook took tips from the chefs on the perfect curry. An excellent day was had by all and thanks to Mr Hallam and Mr Rook.



Parents' Forum

The Parents' Forum has met six times this academic year. When surveyed as to why they attend the forum they all felt it was a good way of being informed about the curriculum and events in school and they liked being used as a sounding board for ideas and being able to give a parental perspective. They recently enjoyed the Kenya Exhibition, a series of interactive booths that displayed the experiences of our pupils that visited the country in February as part of the Creative Partnerships initiative.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 28 September 2011 at 7:00pm.

An Author's Visit

On the 23 and 24 of June 2011 the library, science and English department welcomed an entertaining and inspiring children's author to the school. Mr John Townsend spent two days with gifted and talented English and science pupils and a literacy group, offering an insight into what it is like being a published author.

The science workshops focussed on Townsend's non-fiction publications and experience, as he explained how he sets about researching and writing books on a range of topics as diverse as crazy scientists to mysteries of the unexplained. Pupils were asked to share their own personal experiences of things they could not explain, with one pupil telling a chilling tale of a ghostly experience.

Gifted and talented pupils from the English department revelled in the chance to hear about Townsend's creative process as he develops a few initial ideas into a popular novel that captures the readers' imaginations. They were then given the chance to write the next chapter for one of Townsend's books, describing how the main character felt when falling from a tower block and creating an ingenious way for him to escape death!

The literacy group spent the Friday morning being entertained and inspired by Townsend's tales of action and adventure, complete with sound effects and graphic illustrations. They then endeavoured to retell one of the stories in a new format; a short film, an audio drama or a graphic novel. By the end of the day, the groups had produced exciting versions of the character Barney's mishaps and meanderings, using their own imagination, skills and knowledge.

Getting Ready for September

Many parents will be taking the opportunity of the summer break to purchase new uniform and equipment for the new school year. It may help parents to make note of the following:

- Pupils should have basic equipment – this includes 2 pens, pencil, ruler, eraser and sharpener.
- Hoodies are not to be worn in school.
- Jewellery is not allowed – if parents allow their child to have their ears pierced, please do so at the start of the holiday so that earrings may be removed before we return to school.
- Haircuts should be 'business-like' and again we ask that any extreme cuts and styles are allowed early in the holidays so that pupils can return to school as normal.
- Please make sure that names are on all articles of clothing.
- Trainers are not allowed in school, even with a medical note.

Holidays in School Time

Would parents please note that it is not the school's policy to authorise holidays in term time. As a school, we have a duty to provide the required days of education and we are also directed by government to ensure our pupils attend. Although parents may put requests in writing to the Headteacher, please note that holiday requests will only be authorised in very exceptional cases.

Pupil Safety

We would be really glad if all our pupils can return to school in September safely. We have had Year 8 and 9 assemblies about safe conduct on and around the railways to deter accidents and we also urge pupils to be sensible around water and roads throughout the summer.

The School Site During Holidays

During the summer break it is important that pupils do not come onto the school site for any purpose, whether it is recreational or otherwise.

Transition Weeks

Westlands School has recently had a visit from 315 primary school pupils, who are joining the school in September. Although the children were quite nervous to begin with, they soon began to find their way around with the help of our staff and pupils. They took part in tutor groups and enjoyed the opportunity to study new subjects. They made many new friends and left at the end of each week, far more confident about starting their secondary education and looking forward to meeting their new friends again in September.

**Absent?****Late for School?****TELEPHONE : 412944**

Please note that pupils recorded late before 08:45 may receive a lunch-time detention, but any unauthorised lateness after that time may result in an after school detention.

Key Dates in 2011

Thursday 1 September	Staff Development Day (closed to pupils)
Friday 2 September	Start of new term – Year 7 & Sixth Form Enrolment
Monday 5 September	Start of term for all other pupils
Tuesday 6 September	Sixth Form courses commence
Friday 16 September	School photos (Years 7, 9,11)
Wednesday 28 September	Parents' Forum (7pm)
Thursday 6 October	Open Evening (school closes at 12:40pm)
Tuesday 18 October	Stuart Prize Giving evening
Wednesday 19 October	Norman Prize Giving Evening
Thursday 20 October	Tudor Prize Giving Evening

Term Dates 2011 - 2012

Term 1	02/09/11 to 21/10/11
Term 2	31/10/11 to 16/12/11
Term 3	04/01/12 to 10/02/12
Term 4	20/02/12 to 30/03/12
Term 5	16/04/12 to 01/06/12
Term 6	11/06/12 to 19/07/12

Staff Development Days (TBC):

25 November 2011
12 March 2012
29 June 2012
20 July 2012

Can parents who drop off and collect pupils not block the residential driveways, even for a few minutes. Please respect our neighbours.