



# WINDLESTONE MATTERS

*Christmas 2007*

## Head Teacher's Notes

The school reopened after half term with a temporary gas boiler providing the heating. The staff from Service Direct worked very hard to ensure that re-opening was not delayed. It is anticipated that the school will return to using wood chips as a fuel once the problems with their storage on the school site have been solved.

The school still has a number of building "snags" or omissions from the design brief still awaiting rectifying 15 months after we moved in. Some are so important that the school has given up waiting and has decided to finance the faults from its own resources. Workshops without a hand washing facility, and a laundry without sinks for steeping are examples! At first these snags and omissions were grumbles now they are irritating and taking up too much of staff time.

However, many people from other authorities are visiting the school. They leave with the message that the users of the building must be involved in designing the "footprint" of the building and that users include the students and young people. All our visitors remark on the "hub" and how it provides a wonderful meeting and social space. The idea for it originated from students at the Hall.

Since moving from the Hall the school has tried its best to be neighbourly to all those who live nearby and in Chilton as a whole. Although things have gone wrong from time to time and the view to The Plantation from the homes on Denebridge Row will never be the same again I am sure that residents' worst fears have not been realised. The school is seeking to become a genuine community school and has ideas how it can achieve its ambition. Recently a dozen of our students helped at a party for aged people at the Club. They were not hand picked but volunteers. When they returned their enthusiasm for their involvement was overwhelming.

I am very pleased to say the school is as well chosen by parents as ever. Lauren, Leanne, Rebecca, and Stephanie joined the school after the half term holiday.

Mary and I are spending Christmas Day by ourselves and intend going for a walk and picnic! Our sons, their wives/partners and the grandchildren are coming on Boxing Day. It'll be just like school ... hectic.

Have a good Christmas & New Year.

**PJ**

## Back to School

The school re-opens for students on Wednesday 9 January 2008

## "A Practical Way to Learn, A Positive Way to Achieve", Prince's Trust XL Club

The Prince's Trust is the UK's leading youth charity helping youngsters to maximise opportunity, develop self esteem and improve life skills in order to get into work and have a positive future.

Our year 10 students are now embarking on this challenge. Although a number of Windlestone staff have completed training to become XL advisors the emphasis is on the students developing skills independently.

When the students complete the course in year 11 they will not only have gained a qualification worth the equivalent of two GCSEs but will have increased their motivation and confidence in their own abilities.

The students have made a positive start to the course and have taken part in activities involving citizenship and community awareness. Students have already been involved in:

- The 'Dial-a Ride' project for aged shoppers
- creating gifts and flower arrangements for older members of the local community
- helping at a party for aged persons
- listening to reluctant readers in a local primary school

The students are already more aware of their role in the community and their potential impact on the lives of others. The course is still in its infancy but it is hoped that when completed in 18 months time our students will leave school ready to play a full role in society as independent, mature young adults.

**Jennifer Burt**  
LSSA

## Extra Training Day

The school will be closed to all students on Friday 25 January 2008.

The department for Children Schools and Families has granted all secondary schools an extra training day this year so that staff can prepare for the curriculum changes which will occur in September 2008.

**Lynn Laird**  
Bursar

## Snow White

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 12 of us went to see Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at Darlington Civic Theatre.

It was very good. There was a loud bang at the beginning and it made me nearly jump on Mrs Colledge's knee. My favourite part was at the end when the cast had their sparkly costumes on. I want to see a different pantomime next year.

**Lauren Ferguson**  
Yr 8

## The Farm

Things are generally quite quiet on the farm at this time of year as winter closes in. The tup has been busy, it looks as if all our sheep are pregnant and lambing will be in the middle of March next year. We are hoping to have around 60 lambs next spring.

The litter of 15 piglets is doing well and they are nearly ready to go to market. Our next sow is ready to give birth. We have just purchased a new farrowing ark (where pigs give birth) which will be more spacious and easier for our sows to get in and out of than our current one.

As previously mentioned we are about to increase our pig herd to four females. They are due to arrive next week although it will be a little while before they can run with the boar as they are too small at the moment. We hope to have the pig unit running at its maximum potential within the next 6 months.

In the last newsletter I mentioned our Environmental Trail which was in its early stages of creation. The students have begun putting up a new fence to separate an area off from the rest of the farm so it can grow wild naturally. We have also moved several bits of fallen tree which will be left to rot to encourage insects and small rodents.

With the wet weather we have been having we are almost at the stage of bringing our cattle into the barn for winter. Although cattle are quite hardy animals and can cope with the cold they are so heavy that when the fields get wet they tend to plough up the grass and make it a boggy mess. This kills the grass and stops it growing as well the following year, leaving us without enough grass to fatten up our lambs and calves.

Unfortunately we have had a visit from a fox and he killed several of our hens including some of the chicks we reared this year. Although it is very frustrating we have to accept that it is part of living in a rural area and on occasions things like this will happen. However we are hoping to set up a new hen unit with high fences and lockable gates to keep out unwanted visitors!

The visit of the fox is the only negative thing I have had to report throughout the year and overall I am delighted with the progress we have made. Our animals are in superb condition, they are producing healthy offspring and in good numbers. The students have worked hard throughout the year and have shown great care and consideration to the livestock. I thank them and the staff who have helped for their efforts and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and will report on the new litter of piglets in the New Year.

**Richard Jameson**  
Rural Science Teacher

Editor's note: *The sow still has not had her litter of piglets*

## Light Pollution

Earlier in the year the school reviewed its exterior lighting timing programmes following requests from some of the residents who live opposite the school.

Early morning lighting comes on for 15 minutes just before 6 p.m. to light up the footpath so that staff can walk to school safely and then goes off until later. In the evening it comes on automatically with receding light and was turned off at 8 p.m.

Unfortunately the school has had to keep external lighting on past 8 p.m. because of a small number of youths entering the school grounds.

Now that this seems to have stopped the school will review the situation in the new year.

**Andy Pickering**  
Site Manager

## Formula 24 Challenge

Windlestone School is hoping to enter a team of students into a prestigious national competition. In the Formula 24 Challenge, students aim to design, build and race an electric powered car in a series of sprint and endurance races held throughout the year and culminating in a grand final at Goodwood Racing Circuit.

The school is looking to raise four thousand pounds through sponsorship from local businesses, in order to construct their vehicle. It is hoped that the team's electric car will be ready to take part in the 2008 - 09 season.

The challenge will be a great learning experience for our students. They will learn valuable technical skills as well as working as a team and gaining self-esteem from competing in a vehicle that they have built.

If you would like to find out more about the Formula 24 Challenge visit the organisers' website at [www.greenpower.co.uk](http://www.greenpower.co.uk).

**Darren Langthorne**  
Technology Teacher

## Godspell

In October the main school was closed to have the heating repaired. We had some lessons on site in the residential building and went on educational visits.

My class went to Darlington Civic Theatre to see Godspell. At first I wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy the show. Once the music started I began to think "this could be good". The story was about the life of Jesus and some of the stories he told. He had male and female disciples, which was different. It was a show that made you laugh. We really enjoyed the show and left singing Day by Day and Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord.

**Joe Barton**  
Yr 9

## Photocopying Service

Sometimes it is important to have a photocopy. The school will make a single, black and white, A4 photocopy of a letter, bill, or document etc for Chilton residents at a cost of 5p. The service will be available while you wait, during school hours, after the Christmas holiday.

**Lynn Laird**  
Bursar

## PE

This term in PE the students have been heavily involved, during curriculum time, in developing their skills in football, rugby, badminton, table tennis and trampolining. Some students have been trying these sports for the very first time and with no little success. The year 7 and 8 groups have excelled in rugby, despite the cold weather.

The older year groups have started to take to the idea of recreational time and have been using their PE lessons to choose an activity which they enjoy. An established group of year 11 girls have been making excellent progress in their weekly trip to Newton Aycliffe leisure centre to use their fitness suite.

In GCSE PE the year 11 group have enjoyed and made good progress at an indoor climbing wall where they have been learning some valuable lessons in trusting and communicating with each other, as well as improving their climbing skills.

Outside of the curriculum, the school football team has continued to play a fixture almost every week with high levels of success. Mark Gallagher, Yr 11 has done a particularly good job as captain. Our new football strip was gained with funding from the Football Foundation as part of the package that came with achieving FA Charter Standard for Schools last year.

For the first time ever we have also managed to get a girls football team out in a fixture with Broom Cottages PRU. Although we lost hopefully this will be the first of many to come.

Next term the students can look forward to basketball and cross country competitions as well as the annual Sedgfield partnership dance festival. We will also be selecting girls to take part in a 'girls in sport' workshop along with students from all over the area and Dame Kelly Holmes.

Our year 8 students will also be participating in the 'Living for Sport' programme (sponsored by Sky Television), in which they have been given £400 to spend on organising activities of their choice over a term, a scheme which is supported by a series of visits from an "athlete mentor", ours being Craig Heap, Olympic and Commonwealth gold medallist gymnast. Hopefully this will motivate and interest those students involved and others who want to be.

**Dave Holman**  
PE Teacher

## Flat 1, Denebridge View

"Deck the halls with boughs of holly, 'tis the season to be jolly" (or should that be manic instead of jolly?). I'm sure that last Christmas I made a promise to myself to be totally organised this year. At this stage, I now know that I am totally NOT organised again!

I thought about having a festive fast before the binging begins, particularly in view of the fact that I'm still the shape of a Christmas pudding. But hey, who cares? Me!! I think it's something I've been using like that 'I can't believe it's not butter'. My preferred choice is "I can't believe it's middle aged spread!"

Maybe I will take up the sound advice of my fashion gurus Trinny and Susannah and invest in a pair of magic slimming under garments. However, I fear they may push any excess elsewhere! Not a pretty sight.

Anyway, that is enough about me. Life at Denebridge continues to be fun. We've had problems with the heating, so in the event of total breakdown we have all invested in thermals. We are presently quite warm but in my experience technical problems usually arrive around Christmas Eve.

I am again endeavouring to cook Christmas dinner for the extended family this year. I have been hunting through my vast range of cookery books looking for inspiration from Delia, Nigella or Jamie for something to do with sprouts. They range from involving pancetta, chestnuts and sizzled seasoned breadcrumbs. I'd probably get more enjoyment throwing them at my husband! Oh well, I'll keep looking.

I assembled and decorated our super slim tree yesterday evening, and must admit it looks very tasteful. On the other hand however, Lucy's room looks like Santa's Grotto, not quite as tasteful but as long as she's happy... The Christmas list has been written and sent to Santa, I wonder if he'll send extra funds?

Well, I will now take the opportunity to wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year! Ho Ho Ho!

**Jill Jameson**  
Child Protection & Welfare Coordinator

## OAPs' Christmas Party

On Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, some of the year 10 and 11s community work group went to the OAPs' Christmas party at the Chilton and Windlestone Working Men's Club.

Some of us were a bit nervous. We helped serve out the food and the wine. There were lots of prizes being given out, and there was a man singing to all the nanas and granddads. Over all, I think that it was a good party, and the elderly people seemed to enjoy it.

**Tom Boyd**  
Yr 10

## Horticulture

Over the autumn term the students in the school have helped to develop the horticulture. They have produced pot plants for 25 residents of the Rosewood sheltered accommodation centre. This is to be followed up with bowls of hyacinths that have been planted and the pots decorated by the students who do community work.

9JT have also taken advantage of the use of the greenhouse to successfully develop a mini-enterprise project. The group of four boys researched plants and materials and put together a development plan to work from. The boys produced 36 large pots and 30 Christmas baskets that were so successful the boy had to put a limit on the amount they could produce. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the students that have helped and all their hard work in beginning to develop the horticulture in school.

**George Soppitt**  
LSSA

*Editor's note: The school is developing its horticulture facility. It already has a heated green house and raised beds, but is planning cold frames and a poly tunnel. It is hoped that horticulture will be an option subject for YR 10 and 11 students in the next academic year.*

## Parents Groups

At Windlestone School we try to keep in contact with and support all our parents and carers. In a further attempt to improve our service I am attempting to arrange parents groups to chat and exchange information.

I am also hoping to have more focussed discussions where outside professionals offer advice and further information on a range of subjects like ADHD, health, sexual health, anti-smoking, drinking issues, being safe, coping with stress etc.

If you feel this may be useful or you would be interested, please contact school on Tel. No. 01388 720337 and leave your name, stating you are interested in participating in the parents group and I will get back to you.

**Jill Jameson**  
Child Protection & Welfare Coordinator

## Drawing with Scissors

9RS were involved with the Bear Park artist Barry Ormesby at the DLI in December. Students attended a half-day workshop, looking at the work of the artist Matisse. The young people involved experimented with a range of media, creating a 6 metre long piece of artwork that included collage, paint and charcoal. The work will be completed during the spring term and it will then be displayed in school.

**Caroline Whittaker**  
Art Teacher

## Anti-bullying Week November 2007

Windlestone students and staff participated in a number of events, including a theatre production and workshops tackling the difficult issue of bullying and isolation. Students had the chance to act out improvised snap shots that illustrated the seriousness of bullying and the effect it has both on the community and its victims.

During the week the school worked towards raising awareness of bullying issues and students were encouraged to think about ways to make people feel welcome and how to express friendship and kindness.

The visit from Evergreen School was a huge success and students from both schools had a smashing afternoon, working together on a number of arts based projects. The children from Evergreen were also treated to musical rendition from the year 10 music option, who performed live, singing with accompaniment to a current pop song chosen by Carl Davison. We are hoping to visit Evergreen school in the New Year to continue developing this partnership.

The culmination of the week's work was celebrated in the forming of a massive blue paper chain that was linked around the school covering over 278 metres. Students and staff took part in the production and linking of the chain and messages of friendship and support were written on the links. The chain will form part of further activities within school which will help carry on the good work already started.

**Caroline Whittaker**  
Art Teacher

## What I want for Christmas is .....

### A selection of wishes from students:

- a lifetimes supply of chocolate, and the world's best laptop
- a new PC and X Box games
- I would really like my Mum and Dad to get back together
- to go to all my family's houses and get loads of nice presents from them
- my real family and my other family to be all together for Christmas
- to go home for just a week to my Mams
- a MP4 player, a bike, & a Newcastle United top
- money
- a new Helly Hanson coat and Rockports
- to go back and live with my Mum
- a Nintendo Wii, a new mobile, new clothes, and loads more stuff

### and one from staff:

- a good nights sleep

*Editor's note: very different wishes best left anonymous except for Mr Holman's who has two sets of twins, boys aged 2, and girls aged 6. I don't think he'll get his wish!!*