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ACHIEVEMENT AUTUMN 2015  
ISSUE 6

# Switch on



Saffron Walden  
County High School



In this issue of *Switch on* we celebrate this summer's examination results, and all that our students do to achieve their personal best.



Sixth form student traces family history at Verdun



Year 7 students performing with a professional theatre company



Scaling the climbing wall in Activities Week

# From the Headteacher



## EVERYONE AT SWCHS WAS THRILLED AND DELIGHTED WITH THIS SUMMER'S EXAMINATION RESULTS.

Arguably, when considering our students' achievements at both GCSE and A Level together, the overall performance levels were the best in the school's history. Furthermore, it is worth emphasising that these outcomes have been achieved at a time when the examination boards (encouraged by the government) are constantly looking for every opportunity to raise the standards required to achieve specific grades. Later in Switch on, Mrs Cox (Director of Sixth Form) and Mr Gosden (Year 11 Achievement Co-ordinator) celebrate some of the outstanding achievements of particular students, as well as pointing to a number of very pleasing aspects of the results overall for their respective cohorts.

For me, the most notable features of this year's examination results were: the narrowing

of the gap between boys' and girls' outcomes at GCSE (and it is important to note that our detailed analysis shows that this was in no way due to the girls making less progress – in fact, the "value added" scores for both genders were very similar); the performance of our most able students at both GCSE (40% of all grades were either A or A\*) and A level (nearly 100 students secured entry to Russell Group universities, including 10 to either Oxford or Cambridge); and the significant narrowing of the gap between the performance of students from "disadvantaged" backgrounds (for whom the school receives a pupil premium grant) at GCSE compared to others.

The achievements of 2015 were driven by the combined efforts of our incredibly hard-working and highly committed staff team, who believe passionately in the school's overriding aim that each pupil should fulfil their academic potential and achieve their personal best. It is of course a little more complicated than that!

The slight dip in the overall performance reflected in the 2013 GCSE results (and to some extent those of 2014) led us as a teaching team to go back to basics in terms of analysing the key factors which determine a student's academic success. During the last two years we have sought to focus very hard on improving the quality of our teaching and the effectiveness of our intervention strategies with pupils who have been identified as being at risk of under-achieving.

Underpinning an array of specific initiatives we have introduced in the two areas mentioned above has been the school's long-standing commitment to establishing and maintaining a happy and harmonious school community for both students and staff. Delivering great pastoral care for our students and doing everything we can to support their wellbeing remains an absolutely key priority.

I have no doubt that prioritising students' happiness and wellbeing is a vital prerequisite for high academic performance.

It's hard to believe, but I am about to start my final half-term at County High! Leading SWCHS for 12 years, and more recently developing the Saffron Academy Trust, has not only been an enormous privilege, but also a professionally joyful experience. Nothing would have been achieved during the last decade without the brilliant, creative, determined, and extraordinarily conscientious staff it has been an honour to lead. I must mention particularly my senior colleagues: across nearly 19 years of headship I have never had a more talented and dedicated group of professionals working alongside me. The school is very fortunate to have them.

I would also like to mention the great support and encouragement I have always received from County High's parent body. Collectively, our parents make a tremendous contribution to keeping us grounded and focused. Equally, the school's governors have been enormously supportive without ever forgetting their role to question and challenge.

Finally, our students; it is their academic achievements and their personal qualities that leave me with a great sense of confidence that they will become young men and women capable of making their own very positive and distinctive contribution to our society. My greatest hope is that when they leave County High the motivation to pursue excellence will remain with them throughout their adult lives. I wish all of our students, all my colleagues, and our new Headteacher, Ms Derbyshire, every success at this marvellous school. I shall miss being its Headteacher very much indeed!

**J Hartley**



Katie Manby, Matthew Barrett and Tom Moran won the local heat of the Rotary Club Debating Competition



Music tour to Venice 2015

# Awards Evening

## SWCHS AWARDS EVENING RECOGNISES STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Saffron Walden County High School celebrated its annual Awards Evening on Wednesday 23rd September, with around 250 students receiving awards across two separate Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 events. Saffron Hall was filled with students and parents enjoying the opportunity to join the school in recognising and rewarding excellence across many different areas. Ex-student Joe Barrs had been invited to deliver an address to students and parents.

The award winners and their parents were treated to canapés, drinks and music from the school Jazz Band before the formal part of the evening got underway. Sixth Form hosts compered the event, which saw each year group giving a presentation on the previous academic year. During these, students spoke of memorable trips and experiences, as well as developments in terms of their studies. Certificates were then presented to each year group by the visiting guest speaker. The majority of these were academic and were awarded by subject teachers for progress or excellence in specific subjects. Year Achievement Coordinators and other staff



were able to nominate students for excellence or improvement across the curriculum or for contributions to the school community.

Joe Barrs gave his address as guest speaker for the evening. Joe spoke of his experiences during the 'Pan-Andean Challenge' which he completed earlier this year. During the course of this, Joe 'landsailed' over 2,500 miles in 50 days from the tip of South America to Santiago. Joe also got very close to reaching the summit of Mt Aconcagua (6962 m) before

poor weather forced him to descend. Joe spoke powerfully about the ups and downs of his amazing adventure and ended his address with some well-considered advice to the students present: encouraging them to be inspired, challenge themselves and break the mould. Joe completed the challenge to raise money for the Ann Dodgson Foundation; a charity set up in memory of his mother, which helps young people to travel abroad and experience new cultures. For more information on the trip and charity, please visit [www.thepanandeanchallenge.com](http://www.thepanandeanchallenge.com).

As students and parents filed out of Saffron Hall it was clear that all had enjoyed this special event. Mr Hartley commented that "This was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the excellent achievements of a large number of our students". It was a huge pleasure to welcome Joe back to school and I am sure that his words will have made a significant impact on our students.

**M. Vaughan-Shaw**



Year 10 prize winners, from left to right; Birdie Hills-Wright, Alice Featherstone, Mr John Hartley (Headteacher), Mr Joseph Barrs (Guest speaker), Mr Tony Ardin (Year 10 Achievement Coordinator), Jasmine Cairns, Joshua Kimber





Waiting in line for the results

‘With the right attitude and work ethic, a student really can achieve amazing results’

# GCSE Success 2015

## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

On results day, one family had more to celebrate than most. The Langworthy triplets (Adam, Holly and Ellie) recorded a truly outstanding 22 A\* grades between them, with a further 11 A grades. This was testament to their hard work and also demonstrated that excellent grades can be achieved whilst taking a full part in other aspects of school life. Both Holly and Ellie are keen sportswomen and play key roles in the school Hockey, Netball and Athletics teams. Adam has taken part in numerous extracurricular activities, including the Alan Turing Cryptography Challenge, which shows that it is possible to balance these activities with academic study.



## RECORDS BROKEN

The whole year group secured wonderful results. In fact 40% of all grades gained by Year 11 students were either A\* or A, which is a County High record. Looking through students' results, it is clear that they worked hard and were incredibly well supported by the staff – it goes to show that with the right attitude and work ethic, and through actively responding to teacher feedback, a student can really gain amazing results. Special mentions must go to Mia Bird, Ruby Aronsohn, Natalie Johnson, Caitriona Quigley, Sophie Reynolds, Bryce Starks-Browning, Hattie Warr (who all received 10 A\* grades and 1 A), Owen Eddershaw, Liam Goddard, Christian Shaw (9 A\* grades and two As) and Luke Cornwall-Jones (Nine A\* Grades and one A).



## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Last academic year was one we can look back on, from a Year 11 perspective, and feel incredibly proud of what was achieved. In my position as Year Achievement Coordinator for the year group, I look back now, sitting at my desk at the beginning of a new school year, and allow myself a smile. The students really did work incredibly hard, and I was delighted that nearly every single student achieved the grades they needed to continue their education - wherever they wanted to. Alongside this, the commitment the year group showed to the school through sporting endeavours, musical performances and drama shows was outstanding. I hope that if any Year 11 student is reading this they too can look back and feel a real sense of achievement. For those not in Year 11, I implore you to look at what this year group achieved and think how you can make the most of every day here at Saffron Walden County High School. We hope that, when you finish Year 11, you too will be able to look back and think to yourself... "Mission accomplished".





A nerve-wracking wait

# Good luck class of 2015!

## BOYS' ACHIEVEMENT

We often hear the Media talking about a "gender gap" and that the "boys need to catch up with the girls". However, here at SWCHS this is clearly not the case. A key performance indicator used by the Government to measure the success of a school is the number of students gaining 5 A\*-C grades, including Maths and English. At SWCHS this year, boys actually outperformed the girls. That is not to say the girls did badly, it was incredibly close, but the boys really did secure some excellent results.



## STUDY SUPPORT

Every student in the school has their own target grade to aim for. At SWCHS, we believe that is essential that every student gives their personal best. Behind all of the statistics are examples of students who worked incredibly hard.

A student who certainly achieved her best was Molly Clare. She either met or exceeded all of her target grades, but if we look back in time to the start of Year 11 this did not appear to be on the cards. Molly is a wonderful individual but had a tough end to Year 10 and a tougher start to Year 11. However, she was happy to join the Study Support programme (taught by Ms Sims) and was on our 'In-school study leave pathway'. During Study Support the students completed extra Maths and English work and learnt more about the study skills needed for success. In addition, during the revision period they would revise in school, using classrooms equipped with all the resources they would need. Molly worked very hard in these sessions, took on board advice and made the most of her time. As such, she is now entering SWCHS 6th form on the Green Route (taking 4 A Levels of her choice) and has an excellent set of GCSE results above or equal to her targets! It goes to show that if you engage fully with the school's intervention programme it will pay off – Well done Molly!

## BEYOND THE RESULTS

Alongside these wonderful academic results, Year 11 made an incredible contribution to the school.

The Year 11 students have been great role models through their commitment to taking part in many enrichment activities. For instance, a group of students competed in the Modern United Nations – beating many other schools. We had two prize winners in the most recent music festival (George Withers and Frances Patterson), nine members of the year group performed in the school production of Oliver, and the Drama enrichment class performed at the world renowned Barbican Theatre. At the same time, the boys and girls sports teams have been incredibly successful both this year and, in all honesty, every year before that. I'm sure we'll now see many of them playing for the 1st teams. Finally, we have had students who have given their own time to raise money for charity. One example of this is Paige Bashford who completed a sky dive for charity.



## 2015-2016 and beyond

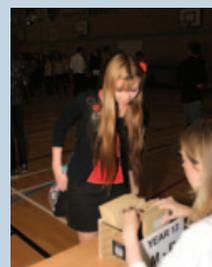
Looking back on all that Year 11 achieved shows that by working hard and making the most of every opportunity offered by the school, every student can be successful and achieve their personal best.

For any 2015 Year 11s reading this... really well done!

J. Gosden

# Another record breaking year!

'We are enormously proud of the achievements of all our students'



Handing out examination certificates

## A Level Success 2015

### WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE CLASS OF 2015?

There was some trepidation for the Year 13 students waiting to collect their results, but for most of them this soon changed to relief and excitement.



The Sixth Form team were very proud to share the tears of happiness with their A Level students on results day this year. As a result of their outstanding results, 226 students will be heading off to University, which forms 84% of our cohort. With a record 15% of students achieving an A\*, and 36% gaining an A\* or A grade, it's not surprising that 75% of the students were accepted into their first choice of university, with 46% of students going to one of the Russell Group universities (Russell Group represents the twenty four leading UK universities).

### HOWEVER, IT IS THE STUDENTS BEHIND THE STATISTICS THAT TELL THE REAL STORY OF RESULTS DAY.

Sarah Rees is off to study Medicine at Cardiff University this year, and Ishbel Luke looks certain to follow her next year after her outstanding results. They will be joined by Lydia Warren and Natalie Wood, with Alex Croft choosing to study veterinary medicine at Cambridge.



Three of our cohort are going into Nursing and two into Social Work, so we are doing our best to support the health of the nation!

Forty six students achieved at least three A or A\* grades. Ellen Paterson, Emily Dan and Rebecca Tomlinson achieved four A\*s each and are off to study History at Durham, Architecture at Cambridge and Classics at Cambridge respectively. Overall, 10 of our students earned places at Oxford and Cambridge.

Leeds University was our most popular destination for the second year running with 14 of our students heading north, including Josh Charge who is off to study Geography and Geology combined honours. Tom Burke will be studying Film at De Montfort University and Harry Clarke will be studying Politics and International Relations at Loughborough University. These are typical of the wide range of directions taken by our students: from the more vocational Quantity Surveying at Notre Dame University London, to Physiotherapy at Cardiff, and finally the more esoteric Modern and Medieval languages at Cambridge.

Not all of our students are heading straight to University and some have got exciting gap

years planned. Freddie Mussard wanted to study Business and ultimately work in the City - however, after sixth form he also wanted to take a gap year. So, rather than simply going travelling, he successfully applied for a one year internship at Schroders Asset Management,





one of London's largest institutional investors. He has now joined the other commuters for what should be a fascinating year. We also have our usual group of students spending a year skiing and travelling prior to University or employment.

An important minority of our students have gone straight into employment, with Alex Barnes achieving a place on the prestigious trainee management scheme at Harrods. Below I have included an email from Shaun Fenwick who is starting an apprenticeship:

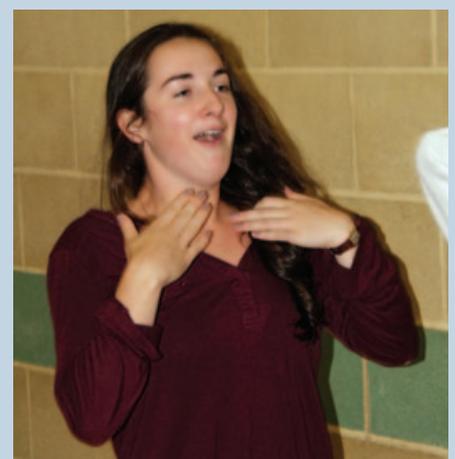
*I had an interview for an apprenticeship with Bidwell's in Cambridge. It went really well and I'm pleased to say I got the apprenticeship and had my first day today. It's an accounting*

*apprenticeship in their Land & Business sector. I will be working and going to college one day a week. It's a level 2 AAT apprenticeship so after the first year, if I pass all my exams, I will hopefully be a qualified bookkeeper. I can then continue to study to complete the level 3 & 4 AAT qualification. Thank you for the reference you gave me, I think it was a real help in getting me the job. I'm sure I will be using lots of what you taught me regarding accountancy in the future, so thank you.*

We are enormously proud of the achievements of all our students. On an individual level many of them exceeded our expectations and as they head off into the next phase of their lives we hope they will remember their time at

SWCHS's sixth form with affection, as we will certainly remember them.

H. Cox





Enjoying being creative in the Cross Arts Project



Year 9 students taking aim on the Normandy trip

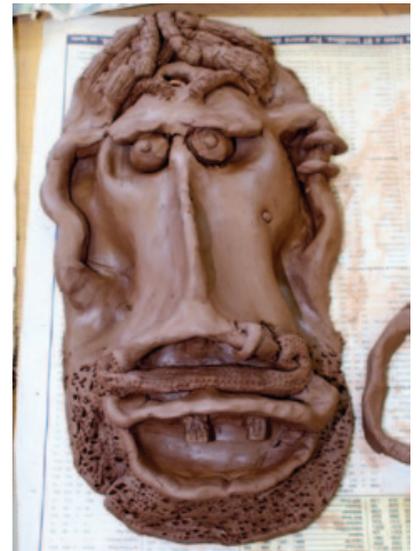


Experiencing French culture on the Normandy trip

# Activities Week

Activities Week took place at the end of June and was an exciting opportunity for our students to try a range of new activities and experiences. Students in Year 7 were able to work with Trestle Theatre Company to learn more about mime, try their hand at sculpture and fabric dyeing, and make some noise in a drumming workshop. Year 8 students were able to hone their teamwork skills by participating in an inter-form sports activity and competing against each other to win the 'Design a School' project. Year 9 students also participated in team building activities whilst also going on a trip to the Outdoor Activity Centre on Mersea Island. Year 10 students took part in WOW (World of Work) and RAW (Raising Aspirations Week) which allowed them

to attend a carousel of speakers on a wide range of progression and career options, and attend Universities and Colleges. The week was topped off by a lecture from Evan Davis, BBC presenter of Newsnight and Dragons' Den.



'A day that brings the whole school together'

# Sports Day

A traditional, competitive, end of summer term Sports Day has been a feature of the County High summer sports programme for many years, and the 2015 event was as successful as ever. Delayed by 24 hours because of inclement weather, the event eventually got under way and was well worth the wait. Year 7,8,9 and 10 students took part in the full range of track and field events, superbly organised by the PE staff keen to showcase some of their lesson and athletic club work.

The students taking part demonstrated real talent, enthusiasm and endeavour. They were well supported by their tutor groups and teachers. The final event was the ever popular Staff Relay which took the students to the peak of excitement, before the day ended with the presentation of trophies for the winning forms, and the 'Sportsperson of the Year' award for each year group.

A great way to end the term.

C. Edwards



# Don't miss...

The Farm Club Xmas Fayre and Carols in the Barn  
Sunday 22nd November, 12.00pm - 4.00pm

## SWCHS News

### YEAR 6 DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY 'BUILD A BIRD BOX' WORKSHOP

In June, 22 Year 6 students visited SWCHS to take part in an exciting Design and Technology workshop. Students were given the opportunity to take part in the RSPB 'Giving nature a home' campaign, by designing and manufacturing a wooden bird box. Students found the day highly enjoyable and were very proud of their achievements!



### GERMAN EXCHANGE YEARS 9 AND 10

Our Year 9 and 10 pupil set off for the return visit of our German Exchange programme with the Huffert Gymnasium in Warburg over the May Half-Term Holiday. They were fully immersed in German family and school life, and they followed a very busy programme of cultural and social engagements. The visit was organised by Miss Bunte and Mr Vaughan-Shaw - Mr Woods and Mrs Schwiening were the accompanying staff. The teaching staff were

also able to observe teaching at the German school and exchange expertise and knowledge.

### BETH SANDERS HAS RECEIVED THE JACK PETCHEY AWARD

Having raised over £300 for the Motor Neurone Disease and William's Syndrome Charity, as well as her tireless support for the local residential home. Beth was given a Jack Petchey Medal as well as £200 which has been used by the guide group.

### OVERSEAS LANGUAGE TRIPS

In June 44 history students from Year 8 and Year 9 spent four days in Northern France and Belgium on the annual WWI Battlefields trip. They visited cemeteries, memorials and museums to deepen their understanding of the events of the conflict and enjoyed modern Flemish culture as they explored the city of Ypres.

Towards the end of June, a group of 31 Year 9 pupils took part in a language immersion course in Normandy. They participated in activities ranging from canoeing, abseiling, cycling, and rock climbing, to bread making and a visit to a wonderful goats' farm; all under the instruction of French tutors. Students made terrific progress in their language skills. Mr Snaith led the trip, accompanied by Mr Ardin and Ms Lister.

A group of 40 Year 7s set off on a visit to the beautiful Rhineland accompanied by Ms Schwiening, Miss Bunte, Mr Taylor, and Mr Wilson. The pupils enjoyed a visit to Cochem Castle, a river trip on the Rhine, swimming and Phantasialand. There were plenty of opportunities to speak German at the ice cream café and whilst shopping for souvenirs.

### 7 GO WILD AT WHIPSNAD

Activities week saw the Science department maintain their unbroken record of no Year 7 students eaten at Whipsnade Zoo! This year, the new butterfly enclosure rewarded the students' patience with insects landing on outstretched hands, whilst old favourites the Birds of the World and the lemurs (who have now



### ATHLETICS SUCCESS

The Year 10 girls have had an amazing summer season, winning both the North West Essex District Athletics and the Bishop's Stortford District Athletics. They also won the Bishop's Stortford District Rounders, beating Helena Romanes School, Freman College, Friends' School, Bishop's Stortford College, Hockerill, and Herts & Essex schools. Well done girls, you have had a truly amazing summer season.



Year 7  
Rhineland trip



Year 9  
competitive  
spirit during  
Activities  
Week

figured out how to take selfies!) taught our budding naturalists about conservation. Then, when it got too hot, the sea lions helped cool us down with a good soaking!



### EVAN DAVIS VISITS SWCHS

On Thursday 9th July, renowned BBC journalist Evan Davis visited Saffron Walden County High School and gave two thought provoking talks to Year 10 and 12 students. Famous for his role in Dragon's Den, and having recently taken over from Jeremy Paxman on Newsnight, Davis talked with the two year groups on topics ranging from his favourite Dragon to his observations on the Greek crisis.

### EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES

Once again we celebrated the European Day of Languages on the 25th September. Whilst taking the register, pupils said hello in five different languages - from Portuguese to Swedish. Students also took part in form time in a challenging and rather different type of quiz, looking at False Friends in different languages. For example you would not want a "Gift" in Germany as this is poison! Finally thanks to those parents and students who took part in the European Brands quiz! There were some terrific answers!

### STUDENTS RAISING AWARENESS

Ten student volunteers from Years 10 to 13 gave up their time to support the Saffron Walden Dementia Alliance on Saturday 26th September. Our school is supporting members of the Alliance to make Saffron Walden a dementia friendly community by raising awareness of the initial signs of this debilitating disease and the sources of support available. Our students handed out awareness raising

leaflets to members of the public who were visiting the market and even managed to get Jamie Oliver to take one!

### STUDENT VOICE

The first ever Student Voice Election has taken place at SWCHS this autumn term. 124 students from Years 7-11 submitted manifesto statements applying to join one of the school's Student Voice Committees. There are three committees: Blue, responsible for teaching and learning; Purple, responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of students in the school; Green, responsible for the environment and links with the local community. 60 students were voted on to one of the committees and attended a training day at the end of September. During the training day they experienced workshops on the topics of project management; budget management; how to chair a successful meeting, and effective public speaking skills. We would like to congratulate all students on being appointed to these prestigious committees.

### NEW LOOK COMES TO COUNTY HIGH

During the summer term Year 9 D&T Textiles students took part in a competition to design and make vest tops for the high street chain New Look. The competition was judged by the Chief Creative Officer of New Look, Roger Wightman.

The winning group were Chloe Tilbrook, Adele Blows, Yasmin Hunnings, Ishbel Garrett-Sinclair and Antonia Overend.

Comments from Roger Wightman:

- They have taken a traditional fashion trend and given it a new twist
  - Really great attention to detail
  - Good use of different techniques and trims
- Winning students received a £35 gift card from New Look. Runners up received a £15 gift card.

This project was a wonderful opportunity for students to work with a high street fashion retailer and we would like to thank Roger Wightman for generously sponsoring this competition.



## MEET THE GOVERNORS

Governors will attend the following parents' evenings;

**Year 10, Thursday 3rd December, 2015**

**Year 8 (W Half),  
Thursday 3rd March 2016**

**Year 9, Thursday 30th June 2016**

This year, governors will be asking parents for their views on their child's experience at SWCHS. They will of course also be available for you to talk to them about any ideas, suggestions or concerns you may have. Please feel free to come along on one of these dates, regardless of whether or not you are attending the particular parents' evening.

**Barbara Calland, Chair of SWCHS Local Governing Body**

## 2015-2016 TERM DATES

### AUTUMN TERM:

Tuesday 1st September 2015 –  
Friday 18th December 2015

*Monday 30th November:  
SWCHS day (school is closed)*

*Half Term: 26th October – 30th October*

### SPRING TERM:

Monday 4th January 2016 –  
Thursday 24th March 2016

*Half Term: 15th February – 19th February*

### SUMMER TERM:

Monday 11th April 2016 –  
Thursday 21st July 2016

*Half Term: 30th May – 3rd June, and  
May Bank Holiday: 2nd May*

### TRAINING DAYS:

Friday 29th January 2016

Monday 11th April 2016

Monday 6th June 2016

Term dates can also be found on the school's website;  
[www.swchs.net](http://www.swchs.net)

## OUR FRONT COVER STUDENTS



From left to right: Bryce, Jarno, Florence, Sarah, John Hartley, Hollie, Millicent, Bartosz and Charles.

Sarah Morton (Year 8), 99% attendance and has achieved all Learner Scores of 1 in her summer report. Millicent Wolter (Year 9) has achieved all Learner Scores of 1 since Year 7. Jarno Longaretti (Year 9) won 'Sportsman of the Year' and represents the school in a number of sporting disciplines. Charles Stanton-Stock (Year 10) received the Jack Petchey award for raising money for the charity CMT. He is also now a qualified Paralympian and is hoping to represent England. Hollie Minet (Year 11) is a conscientious student who has made exceptional progress during her time at the school. Bartosz Atter (Year 11) came to SWCHS in Year 9 from Warsaw – he regularly achieves Learner Scores of 1 and is an active member of the Scouting Community. Florence Pulfer (Year 13) has achieved academic excellence in Chemistry and is hoping to read this at Oxford University.

## SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Severe weather procedure for Parents/Students:

During periods of severe weather the school will make a decision to implement one of the following options and communicate this decision before 7:30a.m.

1. Open as normal
2. Open but operating on a reduced timetable
3. Closed

Any decision will be communicated via the website and via In-Touch (our email service to parents)



### PHOTOGRAPHS SUPPLIED BY

Mr J Ions, Mr Paul Wilson, Miss C Wilson, Mrs K Magiroos. Our thanks go to all members of staff who have kindly submitted photographs.

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