

# CONNECTIONS

# 15



Welcome to the 2010 edition of Connexions, the magazine that links home and school, keeping you in touch with the activities, events and people that have made the headlines during the year.

The cover photograph was taken during our Hollywood-themed Movement Evening. Read about this, and much more, inside.

# ABLE, ACTIVE AND QUALIFIED

Oh dear, we're repeating ourselves. But we've no choice. Just like last year, the only way to start is by congratulating our record-breaking students. 71% of our Year 11s who took their examinations in 2009 gained 5 or more good GCSE grades (A\* to C), and we were able to report that our Year 13 students obtained top A or B grades in 52% of the A Levels that they sat – two records for the school and two magnificent achievements. Well done students, well done staff and well done parents, for all your hard work and support.

So, have we spent the past year with our feet up enjoying this success? Of course not! The GCSE target for 2010 is an even more challenging 75%, and we've all been working hard again to ensure that we hit it.

Our mission as a school is to prepare our students to move on confidently in life by helping them to be Able, Active and Qualified. We hope you're convinced about the Qualified part, but what about Able and Active? Read on!

## FROM THE OLD ...

We're always looking to move forward as a school, but this doesn't mean that we want to forget our past. The history of the school and of our community is very important to us, and you may have noticed that a reminder of that history – from the Manvers Complex – now stands proudly near to the main school gate.



## ... TO THE NEW

The facilities which were new last year have been getting a lot of use, and it's already difficult to remember a time when we were without the all weather sports pitch, the leisure centre or even the greenhouse.

This year's additions to the school have been smaller, but no less important.

We now have interactive whiteboards in every classroom – a massive aid to both teaching and learning. The digital screens which have been installed in the social areas have improved communication with students by carrying key messages (no more excuses for missing practices!) as well as providing a new and exciting way of displaying work and achievements. Last, but certainly not least, our new website is up and running, enabling everyone connected with the school to keep up to date with our news. Give it a try –



[www.wathcomp.org.uk](http://www.wathcomp.org.uk)



## ROCKING DOWN TO RIO

Question – Which of the following are musical instruments: surdo, pandeiro, ganza, agogo bells? Answer – They all are, in the Wath Comprehensive School Samba Band.

Funded by the Wentworth North Area Assembly Community Chest, EMI, our local Councillors and the Language College, the instruments arrived in time for the start of the school year in September. Mrs Shaw has been using them in lessons to help students to develop their sense of rhythm and their ability to play together. Outside of lessons, a group is practising regularly in the hope of being able to perform at local events. We're looking forward to hearing them.

## LANGUAGES – IN OUR OWN BACK YARD

One of the biggest challenges facing Mr Bemrose (our Language College Director) and his team is how to demonstrate that language skills and an understanding of foreign cultures are important in everyday life and not just when we're travelling abroad. Once again, though, the team have responded to this challenge.

The main event of the year came early in the year – European Day of Languages on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Many students and members of staff joined in with a range of activities designed to show how useful it is to be able to speak a foreign language. Frances Leeson and Joseph Holroyd (both from 7PM) won the competition to design a postcard from a foreign country. The House Euro Quiz for students in Years 7 and 8, organised by Mr Longley, was

won by Rome. Some staff came to school wearing national costumes, and the Super Staff Challenge invited members of staff to use a foreign language during their working day. The response was enthusiastic. Congratulations to the winners: Miss Benn (English), Mrs Fairman (RE) and Mr John (Geography). For many, though, the highlight of the day was the amazing European-themed lunch created by the superb team in Le Rendezvous. We were able to choose from Spanish paella, French quiche Lorraine, German sausages, Italian pizza, Greek moussaka and Swedish meatballs – oh, and English fish and chips! It was a day to remember.

Later in the year a group of Year 11 Language students visited Ventura, a local customer

service business, to see how important language skills can be in a British workplace. They were able to listen in to conversations in a number of languages, including Dutch, and they certainly now realise that language skills aren't only important when touring the world.

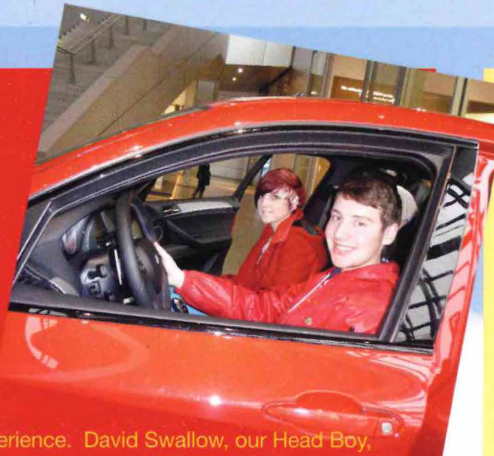
The Language College's adult education courses have been a great success once again this year, with classes in Beginners' and Intermediate Spanish and French on Thursday evenings as well as Beginners' German and Italian. In addition, the computer-based language learning programme has expanded to take in 32 languages. For information about courses beginning in September 2010, please contact the Language College Office – (01709) 879029 or e-mail wacsowen@rgfl.org.



## THE CAR'S THE STAR

Foreign travel is just one of many reasons for learning a foreign language, but an overseas study visit can really bring language learning to life. This is why we're always looking to extend our programme of visits. This year we've repeated successful visits from the past, to Paris, Munich and Riesa for example, and we've again given our older students the opportunity to take part in overseas work experience. David Swallow, our Head Boy, will long remember his week working in a primary school in Saint Etienne.

We have made some changes, though, including inviting Sixth Form Technology students to join in the Munich visit so that they could carry out research for their coursework projects by visiting the BMW Design Centre and museum. Vorsprung durch Technik as they still say (we think)!



## PLEASE HELP ME, I'M LOST!

This particular cry for help should soon be a thing of the past at Wath Comprehensive, with all our signs now being written in all the four languages that we teach to our students: English, French, German and Spanish. This will have been particularly appreciated by a group of business people from our German twin town of Riesa, who spent the October Half-term holiday with Mr Bemrose improving their English and getting to know the school and the local area.



## NEW DESTINATIONS

There were two additions to our list of overseas study visits this year, both of them to Spain. The first, in mid-March, was to Seville. As well as experiencing the culture of this famous southern Spanish city, including traditional dancing, our students used the city as a base from which to visit two world heritage sites: Cordoba and the palace and fortress of the Alhambra in Granada. (In spite of all this

history, culture and language development, the students insisted on being pictured at a favourite restaurant – Los Coloniales – so we can't show them all. Sorry!)

The people of Spain must have wondered what had hit them in March. No sooner had the travellers to Seville returned, than another Wath group was travelling out. Murcia is a city in south-eastern Spain, a short journey from the Mediterranean coast, and a group of our

younger students made their way there to take part in a wide range of activities. They visited the beach, the zoo and the harbour at Cartagena, they went on a city tour, were challenged to complete a Spanish treasure hunt and had hands on experience of Spanish cooking. The activities were all designed to improve language skills, and the students were encouraged to speak with local residents as well as having a Spanish lesson each day. This was a study visit with the emphasis firmly on study.



## GOOD WITH OUTSTANDING FEATURES

That's Ofsted's official verdict on our Citizenship education, following a short but very thorough inspection in March. Our students are interested in political issues and well informed about current affairs. They research topics thoroughly, think about them critically and communicate well through debate and discussion. They consider important issues such as prejudice, inequality and human rights, and they are keen to learn about the environment and sustainability. The highlight of the inspection report, though, and the thing which makes us most proud, is that our students are recognised for the outstanding contribution that they make to their school and local communities. (These are the inspector's words.) As one student said during the inspection visit, making a difference to the place where you live is what Citizenship is all about. How wise, and how true.



### MOVE OVER, MR CAMERON

One issue to which the Ofsted inspector paid particular attention was our students' political understanding. So, do they take politics seriously? They certainly do. Earlier this year young people from all over Rotherham voted to elect two Members of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (MYPs) and two Deputy MYPs. Of the four successful candidates, three were from this school. Well done Emily Green (Year 8), Joe Hyde (Year 10) and Chloe Shaw (Year 11). Emily was surprised but pleased to be elected, saying 'I really want to do something to make a difference and help make life better for young people in Rotherham'. This is what the Youth Parliament is all about. The members organise events and projects, they meet with local and national decision-makers and they campaign on issues which affect young people – issues such as the cost of bus travel and university tuition fees. The climax of the year is the Youth Parliament Annual Sitting, when the 600 MYPs from all parts of the UK come together. We look forward to hearing more from our own MYPs about their achievements.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE – IN THE COMMUNITY

On one very special day in December it was almost impossible to walk through the Reception area in school. The floor was covered with Christmas hampers, full to overflowing and beautifully decorated. It's very quickly become a Wath tradition for every Tutor Group to put together a hamper to be delivered, as a Christmas gift from the school, to someone in the local community. It's something which the Tutor Groups look forward to doing and, judging by the letters and telephone calls of thanks, it's something which our neighbours really appreciate.

A very different, but equally important, contribution to the local community has been made by the Strathmore Park Action Group. Some of our Year 8 and 9 students heard that Strathmore Park in Wath was going to be redesigned. They felt that young people should have a say in the new design and so they formed the Action Group. The group worked with Groundwork Dearne Valley, a local charity involved in environmental improvement, to approve the plans for the new park, and members are visiting regularly to monitor progress. We hope that this willingness to work for the local area is something that these young people will take with them into adulthood.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE – TO THE WORLD

OK, not even Wath Comprehensive School can save the world on its own – but we can play our part. A major development in school this year has been the formation of the Green Group, where students and staff work together to encourage every member of the school community to show more concern for the environment.

One of the Green Group's first projects was to encourage everyone to put waste paper into our new recycling bank rather than into the bin. To make this easier a collection box was put in every room in school, and Tutor Groups were encouraged to get into the spirit of recycling by decorating the boxes with recycled materials. (The picture shows the effort from 7BS – scary!) But this was only the start. In February members of the Green Group attended the Rotherham Schools Climate Challenge at Brinsworth, and came away with a lot of ideas which could improve our environmental record even further. The group is now looking at other materials that we might start to recycle and at the possibility of using some form of renewable energy in school.

The climax of the year came in March, when the Green Group joined with the Comenius Group to run 'Green Week' in the hope of raising awareness about green issues even further and recruiting some new members. The PHSE theme for the week was 'green', there was a competition linked to Earth Hour (when people around the world are encouraged to switch off their lights for an hour to show that they care about climate change) and students paid 50p to dress appropriately for a 'Wear It Green' non-uniform day. The money raised, together with that from a massive cake sale (thanks Miss Benn), came to over £800. This will be our students' money, managed by the School Council and used to support student projects.

No, we can't save the world on our own, but we can make a difference.





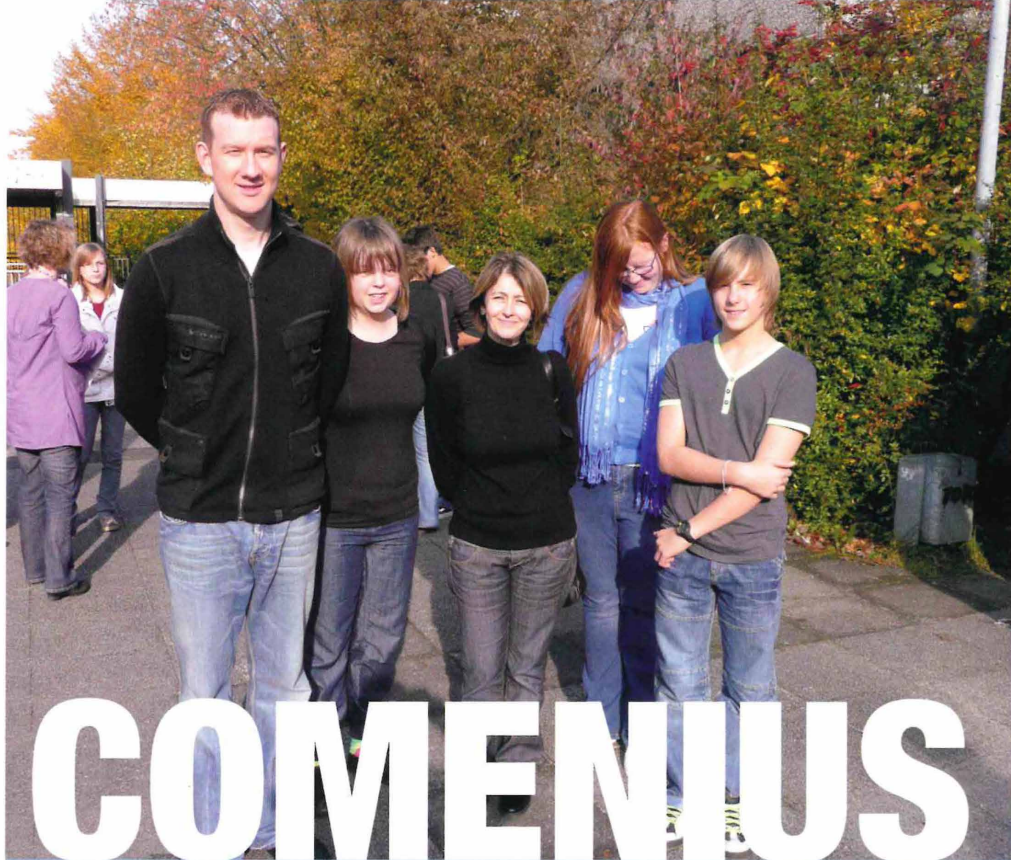
## MAKING A DIFFERENCE – IN SCHOOL

Do you remember the Bully Courts? They were introduced at Wath in 1994, to enable students to take the lead in tackling bullying by investigating cases and reaching decisions. The students tell us that Bully Courts have made a difference (and we agree), and yet we've got rid of them. Why? The answer is that our students wanted us to take the best features of the Bully Courts and use them to create something even better. That something is Resolve.

The old Bully Courts had been effective in dealing with some situations in school, but many students felt that they had become too concerned with punishments and had sometimes failed to tackle the original cause of the bullying. Resolve uses a different system, known as Restorative Practice, which means that the aim is to repair the harm which has been done and to bring the problem to an end. Another important difference between Resolve and the old Bully Courts is that a wider range of issues are dealt with – friendship issues and classroom disruption, for example, as well as bullying.

Resolve consists of students from Years 9 to 12 who have been trained in mediation. There are four teams, with six students in each team. Anyone can take a problem to Resolve and put their point of view to one of the teams without any fear of being intimidated or victimised. A Resolve meeting often ends with a Contract of Behaviour being drawn up, in which the students involved agree how to move forward. This system has already been successful in combating bullying and finding solutions to other problems on a number of occasions.

Running alongside Safe Havens, which was featured in last year's magazine, Resolve is an example of students taking the lead in making a difference to the school community. *Mr I Grayel*



# COMENIUS

## A NEW BEGINNING

This has indeed been a year of new beginnings for Comenius, the project which aims to improve awareness of different cultures by bringing together students from different countries to work on projects of common interest. For a start the Wath Comenius Group has a new co-ordinator – yours truly, Mr Minshull. We also have two new partner schools, from Bochum in Germany and Barcelona in Spain, and we have a new project to work on. The title of the project is 'Making a World of Difference' and its aim is to investigate, and hopefully reduce, the carbon footprint of the schools.

The project began with a meeting in Bochum during the October Half-term holiday. Sam Hyde, Amy Keeton and Shona Hayes-Mackenzie from Year 10 represented Wath and were able to experience German hospitality and family life first hand, staying with students from the Albert Einstein School. Working alongside the German and Spanish students, they produced a joint logo and manifesto for the project and discussed initiatives they could introduce on their return home. Sam, Amy and Shona also gave a presentation on the English education system and school life at Wath Comprehensive. They took the opportunity to join in lessons at Albert Einstein School, and were surprised that some were taught in the English language – most impressive. As ever our students were great ambassadors for Wath and our German hosts were excellent. It was a productive and most enjoyable five days.

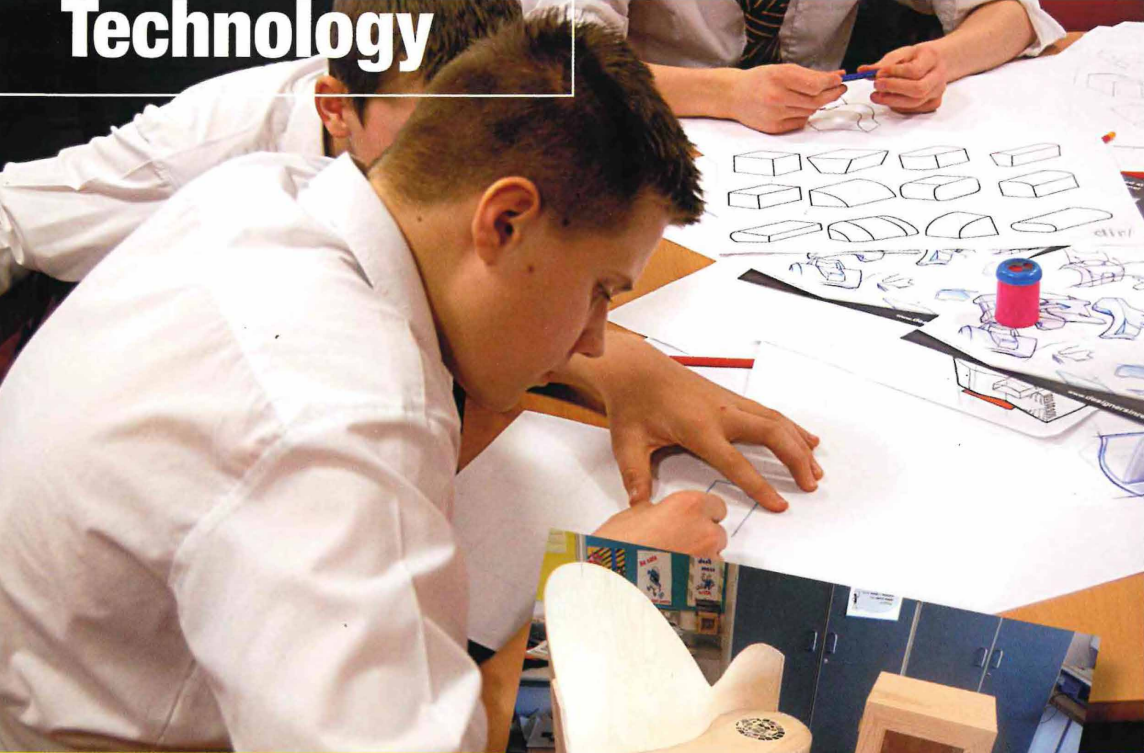
Back at Wath we were delighted to find that the Comenius project was closely linked to the work of the school's Green Group, and the two groups have been working together throughout the year. *Mr C Minshull*

## THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

In the October Half-term holiday, Amy Keeton, Sam Hyde and I went to Bochum in Germany. I stayed with the Draspa family: Petra, Michael and Carolin. We did many things together such as visiting Carolin's horse, going to a friend's party and shopping. We also went Trick or Treating which was very different from Trick or Treating here in England. Everyone dressed up, and we were given lemons as well as sweets! The Draspa family were very welcoming and friendly, but they didn't speak much English and so I learnt some German words. The food was different from what I'm used to, but it was lovely - a lot of bread and cheese and spaghetti. I enjoyed meeting all the students at the Albert Einstein School as well as the two students from Barcelona in Spain who were really nice. I have kept in touch with the friends I made. *Shona Hayes-Mackenzie*

During October Half-term I was in the group that Mrs Gracey and Mr Minshull took to Bochum in Germany to work on our project for Comenius. We spent some time in lessons in the German school, we were taken on a tour around the school and we worked on our project manifesto and logo.

The school was very different from ours, not as modern and with less equipment. There were two separate buildings and quite a lot of land. The lessons were also very different. Each subject was taught for a double lesson, and there was a five minute break in the middle during which the students could leave the classroom to eat a snack. As the school day ends at one thirty there is no proper dining hall on the school site, just a hall which is used for dining. Meals are prepared at the local university and the dining area is managed by parents and the Sixth Form. Sixth Form students volunteer to do the washing up and get paid for this. Looking around the school in Germany made me realise just how lucky I am to have all the resources and equipment that we have at Wath. *Amy Keeton*



## TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

We really appreciated the chance to spend a whole day working with two professional designers. They started by giving each of us an A3 sheet full of shapes and asking us to use the shapes to make 3-D objects. This helped us to understand how designers do things the other way round – how they produce good designs for real objects with only a flat piece of paper to work on. We then had to design two products: a toaster and an i-pod docking station.

All the time our visitors were showing us different techniques that they use to improve the quality of their work. They also picked some good examples from what we were doing so that we could learn from each other. It was a really useful day. It showed us just how important it is to produce good work if your pay depends on it, and it was great preparation for anyone taking Technology as an option next year.

*Ben Knight & Alex Pepper – Year 9*

## TECHNOLOGY – A LOT TO OFFER

In last year's magazine we promised that Connexions 15 would tell you more about the work of our Technology Department. (Oh, yes we did! If you've kept last year's magazine, look at the very last article.) But where do you start when a department does so many different things? As well as teaching every student in Years 7, 8 and 9, Technology offers six (yes, six) different GCSE courses. With students can choose from Electronics, Engineering, Food, Graphics, Resistant Materials and Textiles. There's also an A Level course. The work of the GCSE and A Level students was on display in classrooms recently whilst being marked, and was a wonderful reflection of both talent and hard work. If only there was space to show you more of it.

(Editor's Note – Resistant Materials includes what some of us remember as woodwork and metalwork, and a lot else besides.)

Six GCSEs, an A Level and lessons for all our younger students – and yet both staff and

students clearly want more.

The Sixth Form visit to BMW in Munich, mentioned in the Language College section, was just one of a number of visits organised for Technology students. After school sessions aimed at encouraging healthy food preparation and cooking as part of the 'Lets Get Cooking' programme have once again attracted an enthusiastic audience. As you'll read elsewhere on this page, the visit of two professional Designers in Residence was a great success. With all this and more, Technology does indeed have a lot to offer.



## SCIENCE WEEK 2010

Science is another subject in which Wath Comprehensive students of all ages have been able to join in a series of special events. These events came to a climax in Science Week in March. Let's work through the year groups.

Year 7 students took part in a series of practical activities, including a memorable 'flaming hands' demonstration. In a piece of true cooperation between departments, this experience was then used in English lessons to stimulate some creative writing and poetry. This year group also worked with Marilyn Brodie and Nicky Fuller from Sheffield Hallam University to investigate links between numbers and the natural world. They found many examples of numbers in the Fibonacci series (where the next number is always the sum of the previous two – 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, etc), including flowers with these numbers of petals. They finished by each making an eight-petaled Fibonacci flower.

Moving upwards, Year 9 students took part in a study of animal genetics led by Mr Frank van Eeden of the University of Sheffield. They completed a practical task to extract and analyse the DNA of strawberries. Year 10 moved outside the laboratory to work with a team from The Army on a bridge building project which combined scientific and engineering skills. Finally, Sixth Form students and staff joined together to watch a presentation by Dr Louise Robson, again from the University of Sheffield, on the role of the human genome in the development and function (and sometimes the malfunction) of the human body. Thank you to the staff of the Science Department for organising such a stimulating week.



## A COLOURFUL DISPLAY

While Technology work was on view in classrooms, the efforts of our GCSE and A Level Art students were adding colour to the corridors.

### FIVE PORTIONS A DAY?

Year 8 students weren't left out of Science Week, as a member of that year group explains.

When the lady from Sheffield Hallam University (Dr Christine LeMaitre) came in to teach us a lesson, we had a really good time. Our topic was fruit, vegetables and cancer. She showed us what fruit and vegetables contain, what causes cancer and what can help to prevent it. I had no idea how many things can cause cancer. The lady then juiced some carrot, some beetroot and some red cabbage. We had to drop a couple of drops of juice onto filter paper, and when it dried we could see all the different colours that had been mixed together to form just the one colour. It was a really good lesson.

*Rebecca Marshall*

## AN ALPINE ADVENTURE

It was Sunday, February 28th, just after midnight and freezing cold. Why had 36 young people just arrived at school? Why were they so excited about being there? What were they looking forward to? The 2010 Wath Comprehensive ski visit, of course.

The journey was long and tiring – by road to Gatwick Airport, a flight to Grenoble and another coach journey to our resort of Valloire – but our spirits lifted (and our cameras came out) when we saw the French Alps. Even so, it was as much as we could do to eat soup and sandwiches, get measured for our skiing gear and explore the local area, before getting a good night's sleep in preparation for the exciting day ahead.

What a day it was, and the next, and the next. Breakfasts of orange juice and pastries were followed by ski lift and cable car rides with amazing views. We then had sessions with Christina, our instructor, who taught us how to set off, turn and stop (snow plough turns are great), after which it was onto the runs – green at first, then blue, with red and black to follow for those who made most progress. It was great to hear the group clapping and cheering when someone completed a run for the first time.

Great days on the snow were followed by great evenings. We had dinner together, ice skated, watched some expert skiers and snowboarders performing, joined in a karaoke and waited eagerly for Mr Wesson to announce the Skier of the Day and the Donkey of the Day. (I'll not embarrass the Donkeys by naming them, but thank you to the girl who knocked down a group of Sixth Formers, to the girl who forgot to get off the ski lift and to all the others. You gave us some good laughs.)

Saturday came all too soon. By now we were without one of the group who'd had an accident. But she was looked after really well and made a special journey home, accompanied by Mrs Ward. The rest of us had one final day of skiing, and then we had to give back our helmets and poles knowing that we wouldn't see them again. There was still one last evening to enjoy, though, and we all received certificates for what we had achieved. Then it was bed, to be woken at 5 am by Mr Wesson to start the long journey home. We were tired, but what a great time we'd had. Thank you to all the staff who made it possible: Mr Evans, Mr Greaves, Mrs Ward (who made sure we used our French) and Mr Wesson. It was definitely a trip to remember. *Kelly Jarvis*



## A NIGHT WITH THE STARS

It was only a few weeks ago that the film industry came to Wath. The annual Movement Evening took 'Hollywood' as its theme, and sell-out audiences on three nights marvelled at performances of dance, gymnastics and acrobatics inspired by some of the great movies

and movie stars of all time. In keeping with the theme there was a cast of thousands – well, almost. Over 200 students and staff from Wath Comprehensive took part, along with pupils from many of our feeder schools: Brampton Ellis Infant and Junior, Cortonwood Infants, Our Lady and St Joseph's, Wath Church of England, Wath Victoria, Wentworth and West Melton. Special mentions must go to Vicki Bell, Jody Heathcote and Emily Sowerby, Year 13 students who

have taken part in every Movement Evening since joining the school, to Jonathan Hays and Elliot Ormondroyd who were masterful Masters of Ceremonies, and to the staff of the PE Department who put the programme together. But everyone who took part deserves congratulations for helping to ensure that the Movement Evening will remain one of the highlights of the Wath Comprehensive School calendar for many years to come.



At 7 am on Wednesday, 31st March a group of 18 incredibly smart Year 8 students and 4 members of staff (not all of them quite so smart) set off on a football tour to St Quentin, Rotherham's Twin Town in northern France. After a long bus journey we arrived in St Quentin late at night for a meal in a restaurant.

The tour wasn't just about football, and on Thursday we were shown round the town. We visited a big church, and a bug museum where we held some dead spider skins. We then had a swimming competition, went shopping in a shopping mall and had another tasty meal in a restaurant. There was a real buzz at breakfast

on Friday as everyone was so excited about the day ahead – Disneyland! We managed to get on all the best rides, including the 'Tower of Terror' which was great. We finished the day with pizzas in our Youth Hostel.

Saturday came, and with it the football part of this football tour. After breakfast, with kit and track suits on, we were taken to a local football club. We were in a 7-a-side tournament so we had two teams: The Mud Dogs managed by Mr Powell and Mr Taylor and Team Bobby Bushé managed by Mr Boyd and Mr Rolling. Both teams played their hearts out, resulting in a Wath v Wath final which The Mud Dogs won.

We then took part in a penalty shoot out involving members of all the teams, and Lewis White made sure that there was another Wath victory. After the football we had lunch with the other teams and watched a match between two local sides. On the final evening we went out for an incredibly sophisticated meal in a posh restaurant which finished off the tour very well.

The St Quentin tour was a fantastic experience. If anyone is given the chance to go on the trip in future I recommend that they take the opportunity. This is a football tour that isn't all about football. It's also about the experience of being abroad with your friends and having a good time. *Jack Anderson*

## SAINT QUENTIN FOOTBALL TOUR

## MUSICAL NOTES

On Thursday, 19th November family and friends gathered in the Hall to watch a Musical Extravaganza, produced by music teacher Mrs Shaw and performed by students from Year 7 and Year 8. The evening included Fame Academy, the first public performance from the Samba Band and much more. Students played brass, string and keyboard instruments, and sang numbers such as Fame, Stand By Me, Man In The Mirror, Never Forget You and Tomorrow.

The Musical Extravaganza was enjoyed not only by those who came to watch, but also by the students who performed. For some it was their first ever opportunity to perform in front of an audience. *Madelaine Casswell – Year 7*

Congratulations to the following students who have been successful in practical music examinations this year:

George Bailey	Bassoon (Grade 3)	RMS
George Bailey	Tuba (Grade 5)	ABRSM
Billy Blunt	Trumpet (Grade 2)	RMS
Charlie Ludlam	Piano (Grade 4)	ABRSM
Anna Sharp	Clarinet (Grade 1)	RMS
Abigail Sherwood	Cornet (Grade 2)	RMS

## AND FINALLY ...

In this election year we couldn't leave out this photograph of Wath staff and students in London, entertaining guests from our Comenius partner school in Germany and showing them the sights including the 'Mother of Parliaments'. To find out how the Comenius project 'Making a World of Difference' progresses, watch out for Connexions 16.

