

Mill Hill County High School

Head's Newsletter

2003-4, Issue 9

25th June, 2004

90% Rate MHCHS Good or Very Good

KIRKLAND ROWELL, the firm which carried out the recent parental survey, has presented us with its findings. We await the outcome of student and staff surveys.

700 questionnaires were distributed to parents at random in March 2004. 248 or 35% were returned. This represents 15% of our 1700 families. If the 248 responses represented a genuinely random sample, they would be far more than would be needed to draw statistically valid conclusions about the views of the whole parent body. The trouble is that although the parents surveyed were selected entirely at random,

the respondents cannot be regarded as a random sample and may not be representative of the parent body as a whole. For example, parents who are particularly pleased with the service we offer, or, alternatively, parents who have reason to be dissatisfied with some aspect of our service, may have had greater motivation to respond than the norm.

If more of the parents surveyed had responded, we could have placed more confidence in the validity of the findings. As it is, much of the value of the exercise depends upon our repeating it over a number of years, in which case it would serve as a barometer

of parental approval/disapproval.

I would like to thank those parents who did respond. The responses make very encouraging reading for the School. I summarise the main findings below and overleaf and perhaps they are actually more representative of the parent body than statisticians would allow us to conclude from the non-random nature of our sample. If you did not respond and if you feel that your views are not represented in the following summary, then it would be especially helpful to have your participation in any future survey.

Survey Summary

90% rated the School "good" or "very good"; this is exceptionally high by comparison with the 300 schools nationwide which use this survey. Levels of homework, textbook availability, school discipline, school facilities and developing student potential were all rated well above the national norms and no Performance Criterion was rated below the 65% satisfaction level, the market research industry standard below which there are indications of the need for significant improvement. 77% said that the School had improved over the last year, while only 13% thought that it had not improved. 67% of parents of new students

thought that the School had lived up to their expectations and 17% thought it was better than they had expected; only 6% felt that it

93% of you thought that your children were never pushed too hard; 7% disagreed.

30% of you thought that your children were not pushed hard enough; 70% disagreed.

98% of respondents have a computer at home and 94% have home Internet access.

17% considered another school; 83% only considered MHCHS.

88% expect their children to go to University.

had not lived up to expectations. (10% did not know.)

The questionnaire asked you to rate 28 different aspects of the

School, on a 1 to 5 scale and then it asked you to choose which 10 aspects you thought most important. The table overleaf shows the percentage of respondents who placed a particular aspect in their ten. It then shows where that aspect ranks in terms of how well you think the School does it.

It is important to remember that if you rank 20 items, something must be at the bottom of the list, but this does not necessarily mean that it is unsatisfactory. The approval rating for the item ranked 20th, *Developing moral values*, was

(Continued on page 2)

	% of respondents who included item in their choice of 10 (i.e. Importance indicator)	Performance Ranking
Teaching quality	90.2%	14 th
School discipline	80.9%	3 rd
Happiness of child	80.5%	12 th
Caring teachers	69.5%	9 th
Developing potential	69.1%	5 th
Control of bullying	66.3%	6 th
Developing confidence	65.9%	17 th
School communication	59.3%	16 th
School facilities	52.8%	4 th
School security	52.4%	10 th
Exam results	51.6%	15 th
Developing moral values	43.5%	20 th
Levels of homework	43.1%	1 st
Choice of subjects	35.8%	7 th
Careers advice	30.5%	13 th
Textbook availability	28.5%	2 nd
Community spirit	24.4%	18 th
Computer access	22.8%	11 th
Truancy control	19.9%	8 th
Social health education	13.0%	19 th

(Continued from page 1)

66.6%. The disparity between your placing *Teaching quality* as your top priority, while ranking it at 14th in terms of our performance, might suggest that we have a problem, yet 75% of respondents rated *Teaching quality* "good" or "very good" and only 2.6% of respondents rated it "poor" or "very poor"; it is simply that the approval rating for other items was even higher.

It is also important not to interpret the percentages in the table as the proportion of parents who think each particular item important. Presumably all parents think that *Teaching quality* is important, not just 90.2%; likewise, the fact that only 20% of respondents ticked "Truancy control" does not suggest that parents regard truancy control as unimportant, but rather that the vast majority of MHCHS parents have little fear about truancy in the case of their own children.

There were no significant differences between the order of importance placed on the different aspects by MHCHS parents and by parents nationally.

The average number of hours of homework, according to parents, is 8.9 hours per week, compared to 6.5 hours nationally. Boys do 7.6 hours on average and girls do 10.3. Average hours per year group are 6.4 hours (Year 7), 6.9 hours (Years 8 & 9), 8.8 hours (Year 10), 10.2 hours (Year 11) and 11.8 hours (Sixth Form). The difference between girls and boys in the Sixth Form is 14.2 hours per week (girls) and 9.6 hours per week (boys). **According to parents who responded, girls do 48% more homework in the Sixth Form than boys!**

With the written report, we also received all the anonymous written comments which parents had made. The report lists comments which came from several

parents, but it does not properly quantify them and although we will carry out this further analysis, there is not time to do it before the print deadline for this Newsletter.

According to the report, you were enthusiastic in the number of comments which you made and the comments were very diverse in nature. Many of you commented upon how happy and confident your children had been since starting at MHCHS. A lot of you said how pleased you are with the School and its standards. A number of you would like parent/School communication to improve. The new telephone system appears to be unpopular with complaints that calls go unanswered; this is alarming and if parents wish to drop me a brief note giving precise details of any unanswered calls, I shall certainly investigate them. Despite the fact that respondents rated homework levels more highly than anything else, some comments raised questions about the allocation and marking of homework and about the use of diaries; I was delighted by the high rating, but I would not have claimed that the School's approach to homework and diaries was absolutely beyond further improvement.

At the time of writing, I have had the 70 page report for 3 days and I have not had a chance to evaluate its usefulness properly with other colleagues. It does not seem to have told me very much that I did not already know or suspect, but there is merit in an exercise which tests an institution's beliefs about itself, even if it confirms them. Even so, it may be that such a survey would be more useful in a school where significant numbers of parents had major concerns of which the school was unaware. I shall be very interested to know whether you find the above summary interesting or useful. I should make it clear that the survey was not very expensive, as such things go.

Motorcycles/Mopeds/Scooters

MY staff have had to deal with a number of incidents involving students in the current Year 11 coming to School on motorcycles, mopeds or scooters. We have had complaints from local residents about irresponsible behaviour, including races along Worcester Crescent and Ramillies Road. The departure of Year 11 on Study Leave is an opportune moment to take action to establish new expectations for next year's

Year 11.

The problem is more or less restricted to Year 11, since unless a student is in the wrong year group for his/her age, it is during Year 11 that students reach their 16th birthday and are able to acquire provisional driving licences for small capacity motorcycles, mopeds and scooters. Quite apart from the aggravation of irresponsible behaviour, it seems to me to be most unwise for even the most

responsible 16 year old to be allowed to drive a motorcycle through rush hour traffic on a daily basis. In the interests of the would-be motorcyclists themselves, of the 1700 students who travel to and from the School each day, many on foot, and of the local residents, Year 11 students will not be allowed to drive motorcycles, mopeds or scooters to School in future.

Uniform

THE complete transformation which has been achieved in respect of uniform compliance was threatened by the arrival of two sunny days. No-one denies that formal clothing can be mildly uncomfortable in warm weather, but comfort is not the prime purpose of this school's uniform. If it were, the uniform would consist of tracksuit bottoms or shorts, T-shirts, sweatshirts and trainers. If there is exceptionally hot, air-

less weather, then I shall relax uniform requirements as appropriate.

When students use the School field or the hard play areas at break and lunchtime, uniform regulations are relaxed. Before leaving the field or hard play area, students are expected to button their collars, tuck their shirts in and make sure that their ties are in place. In sunny weather they do not have to wear blazers out of

doors, but students must be correctly dressed in every detail on entering any School building. Particularly in hot weather, teaching staff normally permit students to remove jackets in classrooms, but students should ask permission first.

Uniform compliance is part of a larger drive for improved student behaviour, which will benefit all students; I look to parents for their support in this.

Dangerous Parking

THE Headteacher of Courtland School has alerted me to a problem outside her School.

The road at the front of Courtland (Courtland Avenue) has a raised red area for crossing. It is very near to the corner with Hankins Lane. This is a very busy corner at the beginning and

end of the school day.

A number of parents – from Courtland and Mill Hill County High School – are in the habit of parking on this crossing. This is extremely dangerous, forcing pedestrians to go round the cars and blocking the view of both pedestrians and drivers.

Mrs McClimont has written to her own parents and has requested me to bring the problem to the attention of MHCHS parents.

Please do not park on the raised red area outside Courtland School.

Voluntary One-Way System

I remind parents to use our voluntary one-way system when coming to school. The area around the school can get very congested at busy times, so it is much better for everyone if we travel up Ramillies Road, past school and then down Worcester Crescent.

The alternative is, of course, to drop students off at the triangle at the bottom of Worcester Crescent and let them walk to school, or pick them up from there after school.

Second Hand Uniform

THE school operates a system for buying second-hand uniform. If anyone, particularly students leaving from Year 11, has any unwanted uniform in good condition, it can be donated to the school for The Friends to sell.

Please hand it to Mrs Barnes.

Fair Trade News

By Mr J Gunzi

WELL done to all Year 7s for collecting 1,200 Fair Trade tokens and congratulations to 7P for winning the Year 7 Fair Trade Competition. Students in 7P collected an amazing 600 Fair Trade tokens and were given the opportunity to go bowling on a school day afternoon.

The Fair Trade Action Group is delighted with the effort put in by all Year 7s, and would like to thank the school for supporting this initiative.

The group would also like to thank the Year 8 students who have volunteered to sell Fair Trade chocolate at breaktime whilst Year 12s are on Study Leave.

News from Art

By Mrs C Fitzgerald



Mask by Hemma Shah Yr 11

FROM Friday 18th to Friday 25th June the Art Department held its annual GCSE and A' Level Art Exhibition.

The show itself was a great success with family, friends and teachers of the school celebrating the achievements of the pupils' 2-year courses.

Many congratulations to all our Year 13 students and to those who have gained places at St Martin's School of Art, Chelsea School of Art, London College of Fashion and Printing and Leeds University. *(More photographs of work will appear in the next issue.)*

Wildlife Pond – A Healthy Attraction

By Mrs L Howarth

WITH the onset of the warmer weather, the wildlife pond has sprung into life and is a delight to the eye, with a blend of attractive aquatic plants, a water feature and wildlife visitors. The pond area has brought a natural and absorbing feel to the school surroundings and is becoming a welcome location for students and staff. It is pleasing that there is popular interest in all aspects of the pond and it is increasingly being used as an area to enjoy peace and tranquillity. It is also proving to be a place of special intrigue for our science and geography students, who are able to observe the pond's population in a 'natural home'. The pond has provided a popular habitat for frogs, toads, newts and insects, as well as native fauna and flora. A number of fish (tench and rudd)



have also been introduced which have added both interest and charm and helped maintain the balance of the pond.

I am particularly grateful to a number of students who have taken a special interest and have given freely of their time to assist with regular maintenance and care of the pond. Additional volunteers from students, staff, governors or parents/guardians would be most welcome.

The next phase in the development is the erection of a picket-fence and the introduction of plants in the borders surrounding the pond to provide a self-contained area. Any suitable plants for this phase of the project would be gratefully received, as the cost of many plants is prohibitively expensive.

News from the PE Department

By Mr A Johnston

England v. New Zealand Lords Cricket Trip

THE PE Department was fortunate enough to receive tickets for the first day of the first match of the recent Test Series between England and New Zealand.

Pupils from Yrs 7-10 attended the trip, experiencing international cricket at its best. The boys represented the school very well and enjoyed the day.

Cricket Results

Year 8 v. Fortismere School: WIN. MHCHS 118 – 9, (A Vakana 33, C Shah 17) Fortismere 58 all out (Shelly 3 – 13, Unalkat 4 - 14).

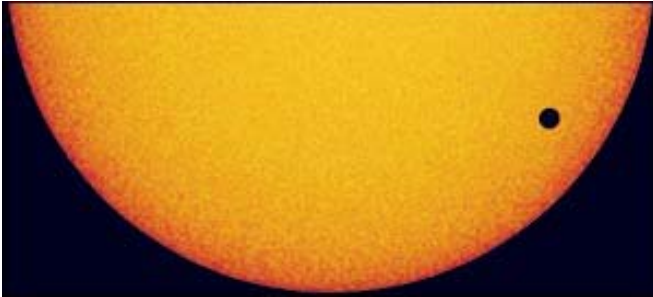
Year 9 v. Compton: WIN. MHCHS 81 – 4, 16.3 overs, (Mihir 50); Compton 79 – 8, 20 overs, (Adams 3 – 10).

Year 10 v. Christ's College: LOST. MHCHS 82 – 6, 20 overs Christ's College 83 – 5, 14 overs. Man of the Match: Sam

Science Department News

The Transit of Venus on Tuesday, 8th June 2004

By Mrs N Narenthira



THIS rare astronomical event, last witnessed in 1882, was visible as a small blurry dot moving across the sun's disc. It was visible from 5.13 to 11.26am which was very convenient for us to show it to our students while the rest of the country was queuing up outside observatories.

Mini-Observatory at MHCHS

By Emily Balsdon, 8F
and Sophie Butler, 8G

ON 8th June students and teachers witnessed Venus travelling across the sun. On the day leading up to this spectacular event, we spent our Science lesson learning about Venus in transit and we made posters using ICT explaining how to see it safely.

On the day, many forms went to the Year 7 and 8 playground where the Science teachers had set up a mini-observatory using binoculars enabling us to view Venus. They also provided special protective goggles to prevent us damaging our eyes when we looked at the sun.

Even though Venus only looked like a tiny black dot in front of the sun, we are very lucky to have witnessed this event. The next time it will appear is in 2117; after that it will not happen until 2117.

Music Department News

By Mr D McCanlis

MANY congratulations to the following students who have all taken their Associated Board (AB) and Guildhall (GH) exams through the school recently. Well done to you all.

Trumpet

Tom Eaton	Grade 6 Merit	GH
Vincent Wong	Grade 4 Pass	AB

Trombone

Yusuf Narcin	Grade 4 Pass	AB
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Piano

Michael Man	Grade 6 Pass	AB
Emily Simons	Grade 4 Pass	AB
Thomas Matsuzaka	Grade 2 Pass	AB
Anaami Pandit	Grade 2 Pass	AB
Hannah Back	Grade 1 Merit	AB
Miranda Narcin	Grade 1 Merit	AB

Violin

Purva Kaushik	Grade 4 Pass	AB
Connaire Quinn	Grade 4 Merit	AB
Zara Speller	Grade 1 Merit	AB

Cello

Tsuey Ho	Grade 4 Merit	AB
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Drum Kit

Tom Eaton	Grade 5 Merit	GH
Duncan Quigley	Grade 5 Merit	GH
Harshiv Rawal	Grade 4 Pass	GH
Alan Soltani	Grade 4 Honours	GH

Flute

Jonathan Back	Grade 5 Distinction	AB
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Singing

Deborah Berenson-Perkins	Grade 7 Merit	AB
Melanie Oberlander	Grade 4 Pass	AB
Emily Simons	Grade 3 Pass	AB
Melissa Stylianou	Grade 3 Merit	AB
Alexandra Cane	Grade 2 Pass	AB
Janelle Fraser	Grade 2 Pass	AB
Leora Grace	Grade 2 Pass	AB
Danusia Van-Ennis	Grade 1 Pass	AB

Theory

Shardi Vaziri	Grade 5 Pass	AB
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News from the Geography Department

By Mr D Griffiths

EVEN with much of the upper school on examination leave, it is still a busy time in the Geography Department. Year 10 two-year GCSE Geography students visited Dorset to collect field study data on the River Bride, and in Lulworth Cove (see Student account). Students returned impressed by their experiences and are presently completing their coursework during their class and homework times.

The Year 9 fieldtrip to Switzerland will leave on 3rd July 2004 for a week's worth of fieldwork. Students will visit a river valley, a mountain settlement, a glacial valley, a glacier, an organic farm, the Gruyère Cheese factory and a chocolate factory. It will be a packed week, but previous experiences suggest a very rewarding one.

Mr Gunzi and Miss Smith are also taking a group of upper school students to Iceland in August, to visit the volcanic features of the island. It should prove to be a trip of a lifetime for students who will visit, amongst other destinations, the Blue Lagoon featured in many travel programmes.

Year 10 Geography Fieldtrip to Dorset

By Jenni and Virginia Man

ON Friday 7th May, eager Year 10 geographers set off for 3 nights and 4 days to the south coast of England, Osmington in Dorset, to collect data for their coursework and, of course, a little fun. We set off at 9.30am from the triangle in two separate parties, the vast majority travelling by coach and a selected few via the minibus with Mr Gunzi driving.

The journey was punctuated with a quick stop at a service station and the driver missing a turning which delayed the expected time of arrival. All was not lost; we finally arrived at our destination, the activity camp. Upon arrival we were allocated to our chalets and, to one group's surprise, they had new found room mates, a family of ants! After a scrumptious dinner that evening, we embarked on a night walk around Osmington led by our new friend and group leader, She ra.

The next day was windy; we went to Lulworth village to do some sight seeing on the coastal features we were to include in our coursework. The features that were formed naturally by the sea include Lulworth Cove, Stair Hole, Durdle Door and Man O' War Cove.

Day three in Dorset was dedicated to the River Bride. This experience taught us all a very useful lesson; you should not bother wearing socks when you're going to walk in water! Whilst going to the different sections to measure the variables of the river, we had to walk through fields full of soft, squishy, smelly surprises – cow dung, along with the most interesting company – cows. After the visit to the River Bride, we made our way back to the activity centre where a number of the students spent some of their free time playing basketball in the sports hall. This taught us another lesson; never deny your true size, because the truth always gets revealed!

It seemed that we had just arrived, but already it was time to leave. Our last day at the Osmington Bay camp was memorable, as we were scheduled to have quad biking lessons after having packed up all our belongings and returned our keys for our chalets back to the camp. We all had fun except the few who drove their bikes out of their tracks and crashed, in particular 'Miss Unfortunate', who went on a more rough and tumble ride . . . this is the reason why the law insists on everyone getting a licence before driving! We left the camp later on and arrived back at Mill Hill after a long 4-hour journey – back to school we went – dreaming about our new found friends.

Many thanks to Miss Tai, Miss

Smith, Mr Gunzi and Mr Cannon for coming along on this fieldtrip with us, and special thanks to our coach driver, the activity centre leader She ra, and Mr Griffiths for organising the whole trip for us.

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Dinesh Advani



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News of Students

Rowing Success

IN his spare time, Daniel Ashworth sculls at the Tideway Scullers School on the Thames at Chiswick Bridge. He



sculls in a single and a double mostly but also in a quad at some regattas.

On Sunday 9th May, Daniel represented MHCHS in the Ball Cup Rowing Regatta at Dorney Lake, Eton. The course was 1,000 metres and he won the single sculling event for his age group – U12.

He has represented his club on a number of occasions, winning singles, doubles and quad events.



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Cadets

By Dinesh Advani

I go to my local Sea Cadet Unit, which is only a few minutes away from school. There are many Sea Cadet Units scattered all around the UK so you could easily join your local one.

I find it extremely enjoyable, especially now that there is good weather so we can go pulling (rowing) at the Welsh Harp every Tuesday, but on Fridays we go to our unit to learn other things. We also get the opportunity to go to some really exciting places for the weekend, such as the destroyer HMS Bristol, where you can learn how to pull (row), sail, canoe and powerboat.

Unfortunately, you have to be 14 to powerboat, so I went sailing instead. Every bit of it was enjoyable, except when we did capsized drill where we had to purposely capsize our boat into really dirty, cold water. If you learn boating properly, and pass your test, you get badges which you give your

Mum the horrible job of sewing onto your uniform!

Although most people hate drill (marching), I love it. At first I found it hard to march but now I can do it easily.

Some people say that they wouldn't like to join Sea Cadets because if there is a war they will get picked before anyone who hasn't been trained, but that isn't true; a person who is in Sea Cadets is just as likely to be picked as someone who isn't a member.

The unit I go to parades on Tuesdays and Fridays, from about 7 – 9.45 p.m. but the parade nights vary between different units.

You have to be over 10 years of age to join the Sea Cadet Corps, as a junior, and when you are over 12 you can be a Cadet. Two people from my unit come to our school.

Although Sea Cadet Corps is supposed to teach you discipline, we mostly have fun!

Holiday dates for the next 18 months

Please note training day correction on Monday 8th November 2004

Autumn Term 2004

Thursday, 2nd September - Friday, 17th December

Half Term: Monday 25th - Friday, 29th October

Staff Training Days - Wednesday, 1st September and Monday, 8th November

Spring Term 2005

Tuesday, 4th January - Friday, 18th March

Half Term: Monday, 14th - Friday, 18th February

Staff Training Day - Monday, 21st February

Summer Term 2005

Tuesday, 5th April - Thursday, 21st July

May Day: Monday, 2nd May

Half Term: Monday, 30th May - Friday, 3rd June

Staff Training Days - Monday, 4th April and Monday, 27th June

The next Newsletter will be distributed on Monday, 19th July.
All Newsletters also appear on our website: www.mhchs.org.uk

Mill Hill County High School Dry Ski Club

Starting in September - Fortnightly on Wednesday evenings
Beginners' Lessons (7-8pm) - Recreational Ski-ing (7-9pm)
Held at The Gosling Sports Centre, Welwyn Garden City
For more details see Mrs Davighi

Vicky Churchill
c/o The Friends /MHCHS
Worcester Crescent,
Mill Hill, NW7 4LL
Home 01923 289890
Mobile 07850 553513
e-mail vicky@vickychurchill.com

June 2004

Dear Parents,

re: 'The Friends' of MHCHS PTA (Parent Teacher Association)

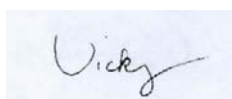
I am really beginning to get excited about our forthcoming Firework Display which will take place on Saturday October 30th. Plans are now well underway and if you would like to be involved and can help us with this event please contact us, we would love to hear from you. The Friends are holding regular meetings about the Firework Display and all parents are welcome.

Our next Friends/PTA meeting will be on Wednesday 8th September in the Library at 7.45pm when all parents will have the chance to meet Mr Thompson and to discuss matters of interest to the school or simply listen to others. We will also look forward to welcoming new parents at this meeting.

I look forward to seeing you there

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



VICKY CHURCHILL
 Chairman of the Friends/PTA

DON'T MISS

'The Friends/PTA' Forthcoming Event

Saturday 30th October

Firework Display

Live Music - HOT Food - Licensed Bar

Entertainers – Rides

Something for everyone, all within
 our own school grounds

CALENDAR

June

Monday, 28th Staff Training Day – Students do not attend school unless taking an external exam
 Yr 11 Camp departs
 Tuesday, 29th Yrs 9 and 10 Exams; Yr 7 Trip*
 Wednesday, 30th Yrs 9 & 10 Exams; Yr 7 Trip*
 * Daytrips to Hedingham Castle

July

Thursday 1st Yrs 9 & 10 Exams; Yr 7 Trip*
 Friday, 2nd Yr 10 Exams; Yr 11 Camp returns
 Saturday, 3rd Yr 9 Switzerland trip departs
 Monday, 5th Yr 10 Science Field Trip to Epping Forest
 Yr 12 German students on work experience for 2 weeks.
 Wednesday, 7th Dance Medley
 Thursday, 8th Dance Medley
 Friday, 9th Yr 9 Switzerland trip returns
 Monday, 12th Yr 9 Knapp House Trip Departs
 Yr 10 Work Experience starts
 Thursday, 15th Poetry and Music Evening
 New Yr 7 Induction Day
 Friday, 16th Knapp House trip returns
 Tuesday, 20th New Yr 7 Parents' Evening
 Wednesday, 21st Sports Day, Copthall, 9am-3pm
 Thursday, 22nd End of Term
 Friday, 23rd Yr 10 Work Experience finishes

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