

A photograph of a construction site with scaffolding in front of a brick building. The building has 'Academy' visible on its facade. Three people in high-visibility vests and hard hats are standing in the foreground.

SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

**BRAND NEW
MODERN
FOREIGN
LANGUAGES
SUBJECT**

**JESS JEYS,
FORMER
STUDENT, SAYS
BIG THANK YOU**

**FOOTBALL TRIP
OF A LIFETIME TO
HOLLAND FOR
YEARS 8 TO 11**

**ELLIE DE'ATHE
RECEIVES SOLIHULL
'OUTSTANDING
PROGRESS IN
MATHEMATICS'
AWARD**

PRINCIPAL'S **VIEWPOINT**

“Significant investment in the learning environment”



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Grace newsletter. The focus of this issue is to look at the environment for learning and development that we have created at the Academy. If you live close by you cannot help but have noticed the extensive building work that has been taking place at the Academy. This represents

a significant investment in the learning environment and was funded through a government grant to improve buildings.

The key focus as always, remains in the provision of an outstanding education for your child, and staff are working hard with every student to ensure they reach, and ideally exceed, their potential. One of the key areas we focus on at the Academy is literacy and I would encourage you to support your child in reading as often as you can. Evidence shows that improved reading skills benefit all areas of a child's education.

The environment that we seek to create for all learners is one where they feel supported, safe and academically challenged. We speak regularly with students, staff and parents/carers to ensure we are getting this right. An example of how working together can bring change is through the new playground and lunch area for Year 7 and 8 students.

This term has seen Grace students embarking on a number of visits and events which you can read more about in this newsletter. There are many more international events planned in the coming year. We feel these give our students the opportunity to immerse themselves in different cultures and experiences that serve them well as they develop into well rounded members of society.

As the festive season is just around the corner we have some spectacular community events planned in December including our Christmas Fayre and Carol Concert and Community Christmas Meal. We hope you will join us!

Darren Gelder, Principal, Grace Academy

ACADEMY UPDATES

ACADEMY SHOW

Little Shop of Horrors – performing nightly from Tuesday 30 January to Thursday 1 February 2018 at 7.00pm. For more information and tickets please contact Reception on 0121 329 4600.

ANDORRA SKI TRIP

A ski trip for Year 8 to 13 students from Tuesday 16 to Tuesday 23 February 2018, skiing the resorts of Vallnord and La Massana.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS MEAL

The Community Christmas Meal is on Thursday 7 December from 4.00pm to 6.00pm. £3 per person. Victorian themed celebrations include two-course Christmas dinner and traditional carol service. Call reception to book a place. Particularly aimed at older members of the local community.

THE STUDENT VOICE

STUDENT GUILD

ALEXANDRA GRIMMETT
HEATHER BILL

"I am so pleased that I was selected to be Student Welfare Officer in the Student Guild as it means I will be able to make sure that everyone feels safe in Sixth Form and that they are happy here. This will also look good on my UCAS application and on my CV for when I apply to be a paramedic. By becoming the Welfare Officer, I have been able to become a more responsible and confident person, not just for me, but for my fellow students in Sixth Form. My organisational skills have improved a lot as I have been able to do my work for the Student Guild without it having a negative impact on my education.

"So far since being in the Student Guild I have sent out a student welfare questionnaire. Based on this we have been able to gain new heating, a quiet room for students to do their work in, and lockers for students to keep their belongings and work in. We have purchased a new TV, radio and speakers for the Sixth Form area. Post 16 have chosen SOLO as their charity this year, so throughout the course of the academic year we will be raising as much money as possible for them." **Heather Bill**



"Our aim for this year is to continue to improve Sixth Form for current and future students."

MEET OUR NEW HEAD STUDENTS

Four Head Students have been appointed after a rigorous application and selection process: Kirsten Davies, Ashley Baker, Kyle Baker, and Madison Sherriff. New Head Student Kirsten Davies, Year 11, said: "It's great that we are now called Head Students, rather than Head Boy and Head Girl, because this means that everyone is treated equally and selection is solely based on our ability to do the role, rather than just gender. The kind of skills you need to do the job include confidence, leadership, inclusiveness, and ability to make decisions. We have already taken on a leadership role by organising a survey of student views, giving everyone the opportunity to have their say, and giving them ownership of what is going to happen in the future." Head Student Ashley Baker added: "I want to represent the Academy and encourage and motivate other people in our year group. We will be involved in charity work, and represent the Academy at community events, as well as being used to facilitate communication between teachers and students."



NEWS

ELLIE DE'ATHE RECEIVES SOLIHULL PROGRESS AWARD



Year 12 student Ellie De'Athe has been awarded the Solihull Education Award for 'Outstanding Progress in Mathematics' by The Mayor of Solihull. One of Ellie's teachers, Shaun Donald, Assistant Principal, says that Ellie's journey from getting D and E grades in the bottom set to achieving 8 A*s at GCSE, three grades better than the national average in all her subjects, is an amazing one. Commenting about her success, Ellie said: "In Years 7 and 8 I wasn't good at anything and really struggled. However, I hate failing so I made a decision to turn my life around. I started revising and revising and, for me, it was a great motivator to have competition. Shaun Donald was the main reason I got such a high grade in Maths. I could always go to him for revision sessions and he was also prepared to help me with my studies through one-to-one mentoring. I am now considering going on to study criminology or photography at university."

TEAM BUILDING AT ACKERS

Year 12 and 13 students have completed a team-building challenge at Ackers to help them work together more effectively. The adventurous group tackled a range of activities to test their abilities to communicate, work as a team

and solve problems quickly and successfully under pressure.



TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Thirty-two students from Years 8 to 11 set off for the trip of a life time to Holland in October to up-skill themselves and their abilities in football.

The footballing cohort got the chance to play an international club fixture against a Dutch school for the first time, as well as watching live professional football and learning new skills. Students went through a programme of skill development including passing, moving, dribbling, shooting, and positional work. They also improved their ability to work as part of team, while developing self-reliance and independence. PE Teacher Blaine Wakeman says this will help to improve their performance as a team in league fixtures, commenting:

APPRENTICESHIP FOR ALICE SALE

Successful former student Alice Sale, said: "It all started for me at the Careers Fair at Grace Academy when WM Housing told me there would be an apprenticeship available after Sixth Form. I waited for it to come up and I have now been doing HR for 18 months. I wanted to gain work experience and a qualification at the same time, and I am studying for an NVQ Level 3 in HR."

SHIRESTONE ART WORKSHOPS

Nicola Russell, Head of Art, said: "It is amazing to spend some time with students from our feeder schools who get the opportunity to find out what we do here, our expectations, and to get to know us."



FORMER STUDENT SAYS GRACE STAFF CHANGED HER LIFE



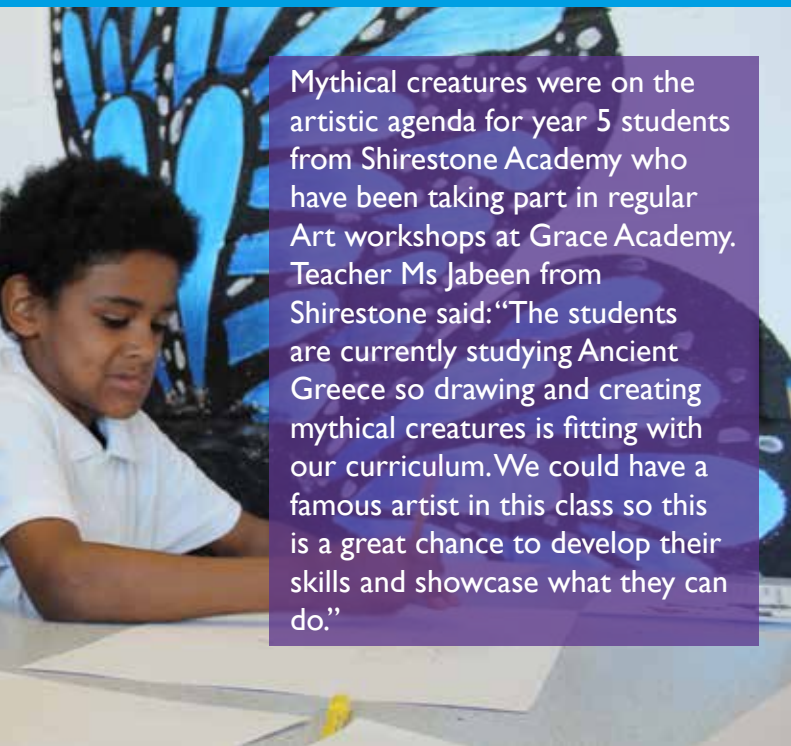
Jess Jeys has just started work as a Year 2 primary school teacher at Stanton Bridge Primary School and says she wouldn't be where she is today without the support and help she received while she was studying at Grace Academy. Sharing her story, Jess said: "I was very naughty in Years 7 and 8 and my mum used to always say that the school had her on speed dial. Eventually I was diagnosed with ADHD and I needed a lot of extra support. I want to thank Mrs Gibson for always being so kind and understanding, and for always being willing to help because I know I wasn't the easiest child. If it wasn't for Mrs Gibson and Mrs Timothy my school life and journey would have ended a lot differently, so I wanted to say how grateful I am for everything and say that you are the reason I am where I am today. Thank you so, so much!!"



"Year 9s have already progressed to the second round of the Solihull Cup and all age groups have reached the second round of the prestigious West Midlands Cup. Years 7 and 8 have also made it through to the second round of the Birmingham Cup. Every year group this year will have at least four professional fixtures compared to two last year, and we have been having over 100 students for KS3 football training, as well as at least 50 students for KS4 and KS5 training."

FOOD COLLECTION APPEAL

Across the Academy, every student has been encouraged to bring in at least one item of food in a three-week appeal to help those in need this winter. Over 3000 tins and other non-perishable food items were collected last year and distributed to struggling families through Renewal's Helping Hands ministry and Birmingham City Mission. We are aiming to beat that target this year.



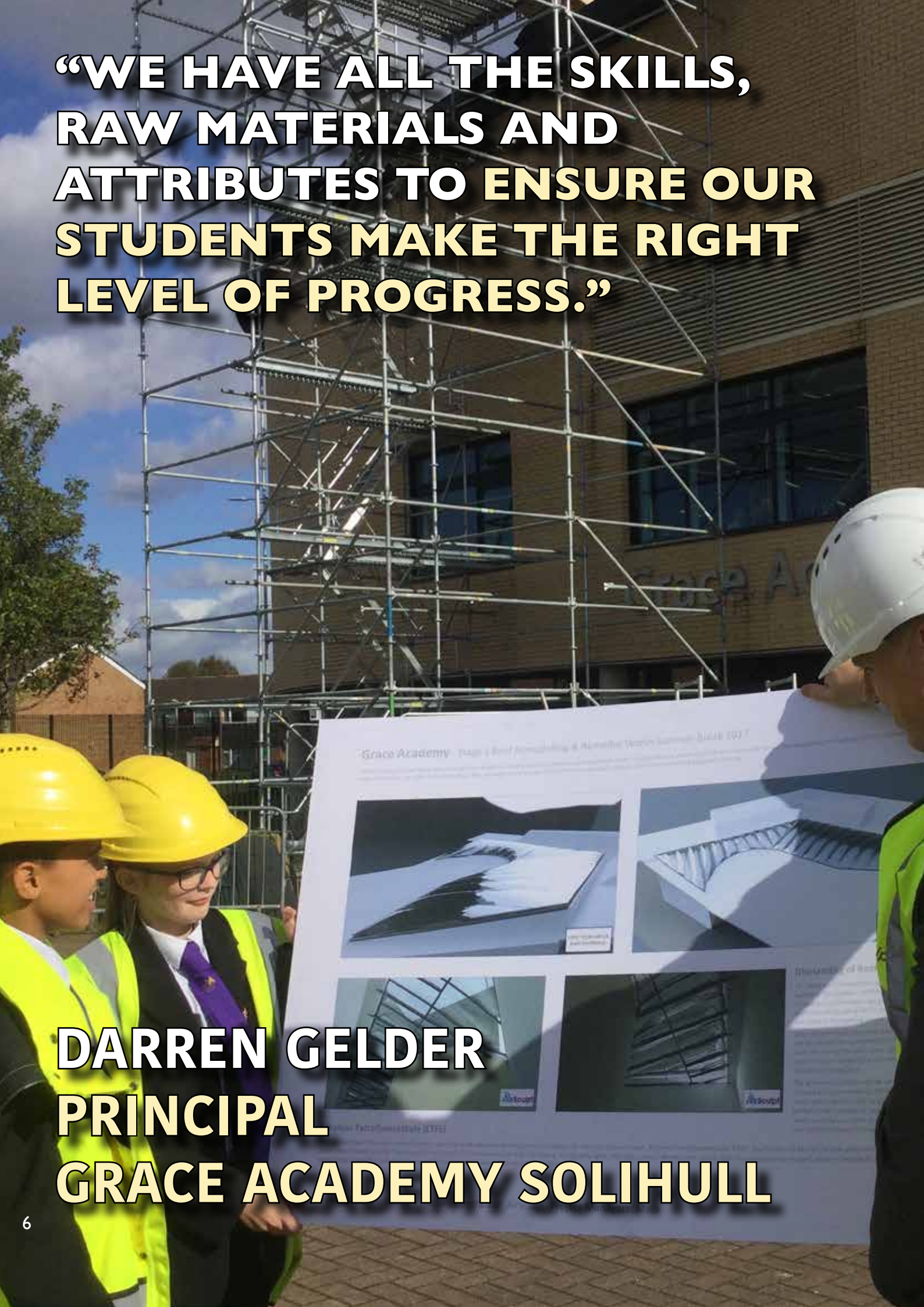
Mythical creatures were on the artistic agenda for year 5 students from Shirestone Academy who have been taking part in regular Art workshops at Grace Academy. Teacher Ms Jabeen from Shirestone said: "The students are currently studying Ancient Greece so drawing and creating mythical creatures is fitting with our curriculum. We could have a famous artist in this class so this is a great chance to develop their skills and showcase what they can do."

CAREERS FAIR FOR SUCCESS

Over 30 businesses and red-brick universities attended our careers fair for Year 9 to 13 students to help them explore their future options after leaving the Academy, whether they decide to go on to college, university or take an apprenticeship. Students had the opportunity to speak to external business people face to face to gain the information they need.



**“WE HAVE ALL THE SKILLS,
RAW MATERIALS AND
ATTRIBUTES TO ENSURE OUR
STUDENTS MAKE THE RIGHT
LEVEL OF PROGRESS.”**



**DARREN GELDER
PRINCIPAL
GRACE ACADEMY SOLIHULL**

DARREN GELDER **COVER STORY**

As we continue to improve in all areas, Grace Academy has invested heavily in improving the overall school environment, alongside developing sustained, high levels of teaching and learning in every lesson.

After making substantial improvements over the past three years, Principal Darren Gelder insists the Academy is not about to rest on its laurels, despite being oversubscribed and with a sizeable waiting list.

Darren explained: “The GCSE and A Level results were yet again incredible, both overall and for many individual students, and we are expecting that all our students will achieve their expected level of progress again this year. Along with other schools, we faced uncharted waters last year with the new grading system in English and Maths, and other subjects will follow this year, but all the indications are that it will be another successful year for us. We have seen the Academy go from strength to strength, particularly in the core areas, which is a continuation of the work we have done to build firm foundations for the future. Whatever route our students decide to take, there is a pathway at the Academy to recognise and promote their talents and achievements. Using differentiation, we can establish which students are achieving their target grades, and ensure everyone is making the required level of progress. All we ask is that every child will try their best.”

Students’ academic achievement has been strengthened by significant investments in their learning environment and Darren commented: “We have developed a new dining hall and dedicated outside space for Year 7 and 8 students which gives them more space to grow and develop in their first two years with us. The new purpose-built playground and lunch space gives the students a special identity as part of the Grace Academy family, and has been welcomed by them and their parents and carers. We were fortunate to be successful in receiving Government capital funding for a new roof for the Academy which will be more environmentally friendly, keeping the heat in and the cold out. The roof will also bring more light into the Academy which has been widely linked to student progress. Our IT provision has also been revamped with the introduction of iPads for all Sixth Form students. The Student Guild has requested docking stations for them so they become portable learning devices, embedded in every lesson, and the students’ skills and abilities with them are phenomenal.

“Our catering provider has changed to Caterlink, so we now have a whole new menu and a more flexible approach to healthy lunch provision which has significantly increased the up-take. Our new food pod outside offers convenient healthy food that you can grab and go and this has been very popular, ensuring all students have access to a nutritious meal throughout the day.”

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN FOCUS

Students are setting the standards high in Modern Foreign Languages, a brand new subject introduced by Katie Seazell in September for students in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Katie told us that taking Modern Foreign Languages is different and fun and said: “It’s all about giving students the opportunity to learn a new language and culture in a completely different way. Languages can help us to understand grammar more fully and our own language even better, as well as making us more culturally aware. Knowing another language can also widen the opportunities for students after they leave school to go on to university, college or directly into the workplace.

“The process of learning a new language can help our organisational skills and long-term memory skills, developing a part of our brain we don’t often use, as well as helping us to communicate more effectively. It’s also great to have a Modern Foreign Language on your CV because it shows you are resilient, can stick at things that are not easy to learn, and there are many transferable skills employers look for that you can develop by learning another language.”

All the students currently taking the Modern Foreign Languages course will have the potential to take a GCSE option in French. Year 7 students on the course are supporting the whole school literacy initiative by tackling French with a literacy scheme of work. They have been translating verbs and writing full sentences in French, dissecting the literacy content within them. Year 8 and 9 students are studying a module called ‘All About Me’, and are being encouraged to talk about themselves and other people, and to read authentic French texts, picking out the key words within them.

Alongside this, students are being set homework on Duolingo, a website that businesses often use to teach their employees another language. Katie explained: “Students are encouraged to race against the clock to get the right answers and earn points. The point is, Duolingo is competitive and students enjoy seeing who is top of the leader board each month which is motivating them to learn. I am also encouraging them to come along to my French Club on a Wednesday evening where they have been doing their homework or translating French books into English.

“Successful language students tend to be able to spot patterns in different languages, can easily see links between the new language and their mother tongue, can adapt different concepts into their work, and show an interest in, and empathy for, foreign countries.





“My advice to anyone considering taking a foreign language is to work hard and keep going when things seem tough. Don’t give up. I’ve found all the students I have met are welcoming, hard-working, fun to be around, and want to do well.”

“LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE WIDENS OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS”



COMMUNITY HUB

OVER £150 RAISED IN 15 MINUTES FOR MACMILLAN

Homemade victoria sponge, lemon unicorn cupcakes, and smartie cookies were among the delicious treats made by staff who joined in The World’s Biggest Coffee Morning. Staff baked and donated over 25 cakes for the event and raised over £151 in a record-breaking 15 minutes for Macmillan Cancer Support. Laura Wadley, Youth and Community Coordinator, said: “We have staff, parents and members of the wider community who are dealing with cancer and this is just one of the ways we can show our support. A big thank you to everyone who helped us to raise money for this worthy cause.”

PERIOD PROJECT ENSURES ACCESS TO SANITARY ITEMS



Working in partnership with Renewal Christian Centre, we have launched The Period Project to ensure that students do not have to stay away from school during their period because they do not have access to sanitary items. Members of Renewal’s congregation have been donating the sanitary items which have then been distributed to the Academy through Helping Hands. Any girl can now come to the Academy’s designated support workers to access these items free of charge when they need them.

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FUN AT FAMILY TRIP TO BLACKPOOL



The Academy organised a family trip to Blackpool for 51 students and their families to see the illuminations and enjoy a great day out over half-term. Costing only £12 per person, the subsidised trip gave families the opportunity to spend some quality time together which they might not otherwise have been able to afford to do. Maxine Bromley, Family Support Worker who went on the trip, said: “It’s been great to make the trip for the illuminations and loads of fun.”

BULLETIN BOARD

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DECEMBER

Community Christmas Meal - Thursday 7 - 4.00pm - 6.00pm
Christmas Fayre and Carol Concert - Friday 8 - 6.30pm - 8.30pm
YFC Christmas Event - Tuesday 19
End of Term - Thursday 21

JANUARY

INSET Day - Monday 8
Students Return - Tuesday 9
Academy Show - Tuesday 30 - Thursday 1

FEBRUARY

Ethos Week - Monday 5 - Friday 9
Year 12/13 Stock Market Challenge - Monday 12
Andorra Ski Trip - Tuesday 16 - Tuesday 23
Half Term - Monday 19 - Friday 23



@GASolihull

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK:
GRACE ACADEMY SOLIHULL

www.graceacademy.org.uk

WHY NOT JOIN THE PTFA?

Call Matt Spina for more information
on: 0121 329 4625
or email:
MattSpina@graceacademy.org.uk

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Solihull Child Services Duty and Referral Team:
0121 788 4305

Child Exploitation and
Online Protection (CEOP): 0870 000 3344

In an emergency call the Police: 999

Childline: 0800 1111

Police non-emergency: 101

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

To report a concern: help@nspcc.org.uk

Women's Aid: 0808 800 0028

Helping Hands Food
Parcels: 0121 711 7311

familycentre@renewalcc.com

Victorian Christmas

Fayre and Carol Service

**Friday 8 December
6.00pm until 8.30pm**

Carol Services at

6.30pm and 7.30pm

RENEWAL FAMILY CENTRE

TINY TIMES STAY AND PLAY TODDLER GROUP

Come and have fun with your child and meet other carers and parents too!

Tuesday

10am - 11.30am

Thursday

10am - 11.30am

1pm - 2.30pm

Renewal Family Centre
Walnut Close
Chelmsley Wood
B37 7PU

www.renewalcc.com/chelmsley/

COFFEE SHOP

Sit back and relax with friends in our bright, airy coffee shop!

Opening Hours

**Tuesday, Wednesday, and
Thursday**

9am - 3pm

Serving light snacks, confectionery, and hot and cold beverages