

## Head teacher's Report Magazine 2014

As the Summer holiday came to an end, all at SHSB celebrated the overall achievement of students in the external examination results. It was a year in which we had our best ever GCSE results and retained our position with the strongest A-level results (another 'best ever') in South Essex.

GCSE results were, overall, the best we have secured with more than half (65%) of all entries resulting in A\* & A grades, almost a third (29%) of results at A\*. This is the fifth consecutive year in which our GCSE results have risen substantially and reflects the outcomes of our focussed work in this area.

At Advanced Level, well over three quarters (83%) of grades awarded were at B or better, and half of all results (48%) at A or A\*. These results placed the school 36th in The Daily Telegraph's league table of state schools, well ahead of our nearest competitors.

These results reflect the hard work of the students and staff alike, and illustrate what can be realistically achieved by each and every pupil in the school: setting their sights only on the highest grades.

As well as celebrating achievement within school, we also want to highlight a number of outstanding achievements of our pupils beyond the school.

*First, credit is due to two of our current pupils who gained local publicity for assisting in saving the life of a drowning man. Ted Camm jumped in to the waters to assist his friend to rescue the man, believed to be in his forties, who had got into difficulty after diving off Bell Wharf. As onlookers screamed in fear he helped support the man as he flailed in the sea before Lewis Barrett hauled him out using a rope he had found.*

*Secondly we focus on areas where our students have dedicated their time and effort to secure impressive success. Recent leaver Lloyd Sabatini has for some time pursued the sport of Lawn Bowls, on occasions partnering another former pupil Ed Morris who left seven years ago. Lloyd recently became the 2013 under18 Singles Champion in the County of Essex and Ed Morris equalled that achievement taking the equivalent title at over 25 level. Playing together, they also became County Pairs Champions for the second year in succession. This qualified both for appearances at the National Championships, held in Worthing, and they came away as 2013 National Pairs Champions and with Ed also reaching the quarter finals of the National Singles competition. Both players have now been selected to play for the Senior England Team in the 2014 British Isles Championships and both have been granted trials for the UK National Team. (Lawn bowls is far from a sport for the older generation, and opportunities exist at the Essex County club for cadet players.)*

*Similarly, it is worth noting the success of Andrew Berry in the Essex County Tennis Finals held at Thorpe Bay Tennis Club. Andrew won the U16 Boys Singles without losing a set. He also won the U16 Boys Doubles event with his partner. Andrew has now won the Boys Singles Event 4 times in the last 5 years; and joins some illustrious names on the trophy including the Lloyd brothers (Trojans.....ed), David Felgate and Mark Petchey.*

*In the creative arts, many parents will remember Robin Porter who played lead saxophone in our school Big Band. Robin performed as part of this year's Prom concerts at the Albert Hall, in the Proms Plus Late season. He was broadcast subsequently on BBC Radio 3.*

As a school we are very active in raising funds for our own benefit, but pupils and families continue to show great generosity at Harvest time too. This year's collection has taken our total donations to HARP to a total of more than 13,500 items for the homeless. Several years ago the school community at SHSB was set a challenge of bringing a thousand food items into school for the harvest assembly. As the needs of local homeless people become more widely understood, more and more pupils have responded. This year's harvest collection included over 1,500 tins, packets and essential hygiene items. These donations reflect well on our commitment to HARP – a local charity providing support and advice to the homeless of Southend.

We were thrilled that one of our senior prefects, Justin Farrance, received the 'Citizen of Southend Silver Award 2013' at The Porters in Southend, presented by Sir Teddy Taylor and the Deputy Mayor. Having volunteered in Morocco several times this year, Justin met a baby who was orphaned at 5 days old. Hanane needed some serious operations and Justin made it his mission to raise the £2000 needed to give her a second chance in life. The panel of judges, on behalf of Southend, heard of his story and remarked

how he was an inspiration to other teenagers in the area. Being involved in the school's Charity Committee, Justin has worked with both local and international charities to try and improve the lives of others.

Gifted and Talented scientists from years 9, 10 and 11 travelled to Oxford University in September to attend a lecture run by the Faraday Schools Institute, in partnership with Reading University, entitled 'Robots, God and Determinism'.

*Prominent speakers included Professor Kevin Warwick (inventor of the Rat Brain Robot), Professor Keith Ward, Dr Martin Coath and Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore. There were many challenges to our understanding of humanity and religion but perhaps the most intriguing idea came from Professor Ward (Oxford's resident theologian), who stated that he would baptise a robot, if it asked (assuming that it were an intelligent robot). His logic is that everyone should be able to accept God, if they are truly willing, but this is controversial because it raises the issue of whether only humans can be Christian, of course this predicament is a long way off but it is still a possibility. The speaker that gave us a new perspective was Dr Martin Coath because he gave us all a fascinating insight into the world of neuroscience and how he and his research group are attempting to construct a microchip with the same ability as a human brain, meaning that it has the possibility to learn and act on its own."*

VocabExpress is a week-long competition open to all pupils from Years 7-11 in all languages we studied here at school (and many others too!), in which pupils compete to test themselves on a huge variety of vocabulary. This is the second year the competition has run; this year we entered second place nationally on the very first day, and managed to maintain our position overall for the whole week of the competition. Overall our pupils scored 879,055 points. Of particular note was Fraser Martin in Year 10, who with 87,915 points, scored over 10% of the school's points by himself!

Details of the individual languages:

- In French, we were 1st in the country
- In German, 5<sup>th</sup>
- In Spanish, 5<sup>th</sup>
- In Russian, 5<sup>th</sup>
- In Italian, 6<sup>th</sup>
- In Arabic, 6<sup>th</sup>
- In Hebrew, 4<sup>th</sup>
- In Japanese, 12<sup>th</sup>
- In Urdu, 4<sup>th</sup>
- In Mandarin, 8<sup>th</sup>
- In Latin, 3<sup>rd</sup>

In October, over 600 school relay teams from as far afield as India, Canada and Kenya competed to beat the world relay marathon record, while raising awareness and money for vulnerable children across the globe. SHSB and SHSG entered a mixed team and set the best time ever recorded by a mixed Year 8 team in Europe: 01:53:53, just a minute quicker than the time recorded by the 'Tigers' at the Spartak Stadium, Bishkek, and second in the world!

It was, once again, a tremendous honour for the school to be joined by significant numbers of Old Southendians, as well as guests from the Governing Body and Parents Association as we enacted our annual service of remembrance. The legacy of sacrifice from former pupils at SHSB is considerable, and the individual accounts of devotion and commitment unearthed from local historical research have a profound ability to re-connect us with the realities of the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts.

There was also an opportunity to reflect on the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic with a commentary by Mr Sanders, Leader of History, and the Breton Fisherman's Prayer:

*"... Thy world, O God, so fierce,  
And I so frail.  
Yet, though its arrows threaten oft to pierce  
My fragile mail,  
Cities of refuge rise where dangers cease,  
Sweet silences abound, and all is peace."*

During November, we also held our prospective Sixth Form open evening. Very many thanks are due to all who contributed to a hugely successful evening. We received the largest number of visitors 'on record', welcoming 630 families! The number of students from other schools was quite remarkable given the number of places we have to offer. It is a great tribute to all in the school community: staff, students, parents and former pupils that this degree of interest and enthusiasm has been secured. Our own boys from the current Year 11 attended with a great level of seriousness. For many of them: seeing the number of other visitors has made them realise the value of securing a place in the Sixth Form here and the need to sustain or renew their own efforts.

Before Christmas, a number of students from Years 8, 9 and 10 took part in Computer Science Education Week, an event which initially started in the USA and is rapidly becoming an annual event across the globe. Students develop their programming skills working through a number of problem-solving activities and challenges. The school has just received 5 Raspberry Pi for its participation in the event.

Students thrive in their learning when opportunities are provided for them to excel in the classroom, but also to explore and develop talents and interests beyond the academic. Congratulations to the Male Voice Choir, the Big Band and the Chamber Choir who all took part in the Southend Music Festival. All of the groups performed to an exceptional standard, winning the 'Ellis Cup for Male Voice Choirs' and the 'Music for Pleasure Shield'.

Our Year 10 GCSE Music pupils also went to the Royal Albert Hall to take part in the Youth Messiah, which brings together massed school choirs from all over the country. Our pupils formed part of a 1000- strong 4-part choir, which received a standing ovation at the conclusion of the afternoon. The boys were accompanied by the English Festival Orchestra and conducted by Suzanne Digby OBE. Mrs Hall, who took the boys, reported that the event was an invaluable experience for the boys, who were a credit to the school.

Congratulations also to our Junior and Intermediate Cross-country teams who took part in the national cross-country finals at SHSG. Their outstanding efforts rewarded the Juniors with 14th place in the country and the Intermediates with 5th place. It is always good to see former pupils continuing to excel at sports after they leave the school. Two ex-pupils, Adam Hickey and Alex Short (former School Captain), are now international cross-country runners, both having been chosen to run for Great Britain in the European Championships in Belgrade on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

*Old Southendians may well recall that Sir Michael Wilshaw – the head of Ofsted – made some remarks about Grammar Schools in an interview published by The Observer. It is always difficult to know whether his views were accurately represented in the media, but he put forward an argument that Grammar Schools do not address 'social mobility', citing the proportion of 'middle class' children who attend such schools. The first, and obvious, riposte is that most Grammar Schools, though not all, are situated in more prosperous towns. More significantly, however, it is important to ensure that a fair comparison is made: examining the social diversity within 'top streams' in comprehensives against that in selective schools. It remains the case that our Grammar Schools are considerably more inclusive in socio-economic and ethnic composition.*

*Likewise, much has been made of the fact that children from poorer backgrounds tend to 'fall behind' in their education compared to their peers. The data on Grammar Schools clearly shows that no such gap emerges within our provision.*

*Southend High School for Boys remains committed to providing a challenging, engaging and rewarding education for higher ability pupils – no matter what their background – coming from the widest variety of local Primary School contexts.*

*Applying to a Grammar School is a matter of parental choice, but it can only be exercised if the curriculum and teaching at Key Stage 2 afford the opportunity for pupils to access the upper end of the National Curriculum.*

*Pupils and staff at SHSB continue to offer a variety of workshops, mentoring activities and opportunities for the more able at our local Primary Schools. We do what we can, but just as it is our obligation at SHSB to prepare students for University entrance at the highest levels; so also we look to all Primary Schools to do their very best (as some already do to an exemplary degree) for preparing pupils to access our Grammar Schools.*

Drama students at Southend High School for Boys have certainly been developing their cultural values through regular theatre trips. Year 12 have attended both *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas*, both of which were critically acclaimed and were enjoyed thoroughly by the AS cohort. Years 10 and 11 fully relished the visit to the award-winning *One Man Two Guvnors* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, and there were many hilarious, 'laugh-out-loud' farcical moments throughout!

Our two classes of Year 12 geographers visited Epping Forest for a day of 'rivers fieldwork'. With stories of flooding and snow storms from previous years resting at the forefront of their minds, all were pleasantly surprised at the calm, albeit cool weather. The day began with a classroom session looking at fieldwork practices and the geography of the area before the groups set out to survey just over 1km of the nearby stream, Loughton Brook. After spending the afternoon leapfrogging their way down the river collecting a variety of data (and passing the site made famous by Monty Python and the Holy Grail's Black Knight), the group returned to the centre for a brief statistics exercise.

We are a 'bike it' school. Southend High School for Boys has for a number of years actively promoted cycling: as a sport, as a leisure activity, but most significantly as a regular daily means of transport. The case for pupils cycling to and from school is compelling. Evidence (BBC Radio 4 – facts & figures) supports the following claims that: planned cycle journeys are safe, cycling is healthy, cycling is very economical, cycling is a lifetime habit, cycling is often as swift as car, and cyclists make better drivers. All these lessons are included in our programme for pupils in Year 7, who have a programme of dedicated 'Bike It' lessons.

Sustrans, working with European partners, has produced a film demonstrating how young people in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and France travel to school and why cycling levels vary across Europe. Their intention is that the film will be distributed by social media and the internet to "... help young people compare their journeys, understand why there is a difference in this common journey and to see why cycling is a sustainable, clever, healthy and fun form of transport."

Southend High School for Boys was the only UK school to be selected to feature in this European documentary about pupils cycling to and from schools. I'm pleased to announce the launch of the BFC mini-movie 'The Journey to School', which was screened in assembly.

The film can be viewed online by searching for "Bike Friendly Cities, The Journey to School". Anyone viewing the film cannot help but be influenced by the difference in attitudes explained in Belgium and the extraordinary site of over 1000 bikes parked outside one high in school in Middleburg (Holland) – a school to which two of our students will be visiting later this term as ambassadors for the 'Bike Friendly Cities' programme.

We were delighted to welcome Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Roy Bowers to the school in the Spring. It is several years since the school was subject to a full Ofsted inspection; on this occasion, the visit was at HMI's request within a programme in which they are reviewing the contribution made by schools which excel in provision for competitive sport. HMI Bowers comment was that "... *it was obvious that they had to come to Southend Boys ...*" It is gratifying to know that the school – rightly – has a national reputation in this area and is a tribute to the staff who have contributed so admirably over the years, under Mr Thomas' leadership.

It is also a matter of pride that the extra-curricular sporting excellence reviewed by Ofsted is also mirrored in so many other aspects of life at SHSB. The same week also saw a full house enjoy the first Drama Showcase. The range, depth and quality of the varied performances were deeply impressive. The younger pupils brought brightness and integrity to a complex performance; the Sixth Form drama students demonstrated a power and sensitivity in touching renditions; and current GCSE candidates handled heartrending tragedy and comic farce with equal skill. We are very grateful to the parents who are also supporting further performances of the examination scenes in the theatre this week. Last year, in recognition of the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest, we launched the 'Everest Challenge' – a programme of demanding and varied challenges, from learning Italian to cycling at a velodrome, through which every pupil was prompted to try something different, demanding and new.

Building on the experiences and feedback from the Everest Challenge, we have begun the process of planning a series of events that provide further learning and challenge, but with an emphasis on contributing to the community. These activities, in the coming months, will run under the 'forti 14'

banner, and include an 'afternoon tea' for the elderly, a homeless sleep-out (in conjunction with HARP), a programme involving the RNLI *and more...*

Old Southendians will be as pleased as all our pupils were to hear that after substantial refurbishment the School Library re-opened for regular use. The Library has, in recent years, been seen by many – especially those in the Sixth Form – as the hub of the school. Developing habits that equip them well for University, a good number of our A-level students gravitate towards the quiet and purposeful atmosphere for study whenever they have a 'free period'.

Likewise, for many of the younger pupils, the Library serves to provide a base for cultivating those reading habits – too often displaced in a "web-weary attention-deficit" culture – with an excellent selection of books, regularly re-stocked and replaced, to engage and entice. The original intention was that the Library would be closed for a brief period: allowing for new skylights to be installed, as the Art Room extension was being completed on the floor above. However this relatively simple work coincided with the unrelated flooding of the library: a result of insufficient roof-drainage capacity to cope with the torrential downpours we have recently experienced. It was right to seize the opportunity to address the drainage, lay new carpet, paint the walls, re-condition the book shelves, fit new lighting, re-wire the computer network connections and generate a Library that meets our demanding standards and that will serve for many years to come.

Old Southendians may be aware that we are part of the Jack Petchey award scheme. This scheme – run by students for our students – is a way of recognising pupils who go the extra mile. Nominations can be received from students, staff and parents, celebrating pupil achievements that are just that little bit special.

We are delighted to announce our first Jack Petchey Award winner for this academic year was Jack Shankland in 7EA1 because of the superb start that he made to life at SHSB. Jack has managed to set aside medical issues that might have caused others to flounder, and has taken every opportunity to get involved in the wider life of the school. Jack is already proving himself to be a bright and positive member of the school community and we are very proud of him. Jack has decided to spend the £200 grant award on a basketball hoop for the Year 7 playground, together with some footballs and cricket equipment for use during lunch. Forty of our Year 13 physics students went to Geneva in order to visit CERN.

*"On arriving on Thursday evening in a wet, cold and windy Geneva we made our way to our hostel located in a quiet part of the city near the lake front. On Friday morning more than half of the group decided to spend the entire morning and some of the afternoon scaling the 1300m tall Mont Salève in France. This walk took a lot of time due to the adverse weather conditions but all those who did will be sure to say it was worthwhile. Later in the afternoon we met back with the others in our group who instead of tackling the mountain went to the Red Cross museum instead. We then explored the lake front of Geneva and looked at the old part of the city. The Friday night we spent in teams in the hostel tackling physics problems and undertaking an engineering challenge, the results were very close and everyone had a good time taking part. Saturday, another early start, was the day we finally visited CERN. We received tours over ground and underground, something not normally allowed, of one of the detectors on the site."*

In February we hosted an afternoon tea for the older members of our community. Despite the appalling weather we had a fantastic turn out of over 100 visitors. Our year 8 and 12 students did a marvellous job of providing sandwiches, scones and conversation with our guests. They also enjoyed the delights of our school musicians and a lovely time was had by all. It was fantastic to see both young and old interacting and enjoying themselves together. I have received many compliments about our students from our visitors, and we are proud of their enthusiasm and hard work on the day. This was the first of a series of events planned this year under the banner 'Forti 14', which are designed to encourage our students to be involved with a wider community of people.

*Congratulations go to Lucas Marriott, Euan Sykes and Henry Harvey in Year 9 who as members of the Leigh Town FC Under 14s team, took part in a fundraising charity walk during half-term to raise money for the Bobby Moore Fund for Cancer Research. The boys walked the first leg of a 50-mile event, from Southend united to Basildon Festival Leisure Park.*

*Congratulations also to Thomas Ager-Lowden (11ST3), who is currently 3rd in the country for sailing Dart 16 dinghies. This follows his success in 2012, where his team were runners-up to the GBR Olympic team. Last year, Thomas helmed his Dart with a crew who sailed a series of 6 races in very difficult weather conditions. Thomas' success is a result of his commitment and teamwork of the highest standard.*

Not only has the school got outstanding results in the Borough and National competitions it also has a superb record in the Essex County Championships, having won the Year 7 competition for 10 out of 12 years and the Year 8 competition 11 out of 12 years. This year was another excellent result, with the Year 7 school team being placed 1st in the county with 83 points from the first 6 runners. The Year 8 team also became County Champions, defending their Year 7 victory with 95 points.

During Fairtrade fortnight, Southend High School for Boys had the privilege of welcoming Foncho - a Colombian banana farmer - to our school for the day. This proved to be a wonderful opportunity to help Foncho spread the word of his mission: to make banana sales fairer in order to improve the quality of life on his farm and that of other farmers in the developing world. We also welcomed a group of students from Heycroft Primary School, who brought with them an impressive array of insightful questions for Foncho. However, this would not have been possible if not for breaking the language barrier between us. Therefore accompanying him on his UK tour was Rebecca, who provided all the necessary interpretation for him during the day. So in this way, Foncho's visit was beneficial for the Fairtrade committee members and language students alike. A handful of A2 Spanish students seized the chance to practise our language skills with Foncho whilst being able to further our knowledge about his life and work on his farm in Colombia. "... For me, the opportunity to speak with a Colombian, whose accent is vastly different from that which you would find in Spain, was invaluable. Furthermore, I was able to hear the difference in the style of speech and colloquialisms - an essential part of ensuring efficient and accurate communication of ideas and knowledge..."

We were delighted to announce our second first Jack Petchey Award winner for this academic year: Susannah Springall, 12ST1 was nominated after having lost her father at Christmas and we are all so proud of the way she has coped with her tragic loss. She has thrown herself into all aspects of school life despite the fact that she only joined us in September. Susannah's attitude exemplifies the school motto: *forti nihil difficile* (to the determined, nothing is difficult). Well done Susannah.

The Intermediate Mathematics Challenge (IMC) is aimed at pupils in Year 11 or below in England and Wales. The challenge involves answering 25 multiple choice questions in one hour and is sat in school under normal exam conditions. 49 pupils from SHSB took the challenge in February 2014 and 15 were awarded Gold Certificates, 18 were awarded Silver Certificates and 11 were awarded bronze certificates. Daniel Cowdrey from Year 10 was the best in our school and he got 93 out of 120 points available. Four pupils from Year 11, six pupils from year 10 and 3 pupils from year 9 were among the top scorers nationally and have been invited to take part in the European Kangaroo rounds.

On Wednesday 26th March, SHSB won four county titles in three sports in four different age groups. The Year 7 and Year 9 basketball teams won their matches to become Essex champions. The Year 8 rugby team won the Essex Rugby Festival Final at Thurrock Rugby Club, winning all four of their matches without conceding a try. The Year 10/11 Hockey team won the Essex Plate Final, with the Year 9 team being Essex runners-up.

In addition, the Years 7, 8 and 11 football teams won their individual Finals to become Borough Champions, with the Year 9s only losing on penalties after a 2-2 draw. Years 7, 8 and 9 each won their Finals of the South East Essex Cup. Particular congratulations to the Year 7 and Year 8 teams who are double champions.

In basketball, the Year 7, 9 and 10 teams all won their Finals to become Borough Champions for 2014. Finally, in Borough swimming, the squad won the Overall Trophy, the Relay Trophy and the Squadron Trophy, a clean sweep of all the Borough trophies.

Congratulations to all pupils involved in these teams for their commitment and skill.

The South-East Essex Art and Design competition award ceremony took place during March at Thorpe Greenways Infants School. There were many primary schools and three secondary schools taking part in the competition. Categories were divided by Key Stage and by discipline/subject. The SHSB exhibits illustrated the high standards of work our students produce on a daily basis. The diversity of medium and discipline within the display made considerable impact with the judges who were pleased with our involvement this year.

*Government funding has been an issue for this school, and other Grammar Schools, for a number of years. We welcome the focus on targeted funding for pupils with greater needs or from challenging circumstances; but we question the extent of that focus, however, when a typical GCSE pupil in this*

*school is funded at about £4500 per year, and in other secondary schools in Southend the figure is over £7500 per pupil per year.*

*For many months we have been aware of the potential impact of the Government's new Sixth Form funding formula. This new approach provides a set income figure per student, whereas previously students were funded per course. In simple terms, the new formula provides funding for students to complete 3 full A-levels, whereas we routinely provide 4 A-levels plus General Studies and some students complete even more.*

*The school is set to lose £½ million on an annual budget of £5 million: a 10% reduction. Despite strong representation, a face to face meeting with the Secretary of State, and assurances that the formula would be revised to cater for "large programme providers" – no adjustment has been forthcoming.*

*Governors have been working closely with senior staff to forecast the impact of these changes on the school: it was self-evident that we would be unable to continue without some reduction in our levels of provision. After exercising due diligence, governors were able to offer their support for a range of measures proposed by the school's senior leadership team.*

*Our primary objective was to retain access for all Sixth Form students to their four academic A-level courses in 2014/15. We have been able to do this. We have addressed the challenges of reduced funding by increasing our revenue, through a planned increase in Sixth Form student numbers. Typically we have had 165 students in Year 12, of which about 30 have come from other schools. In September 2014 we will have 200 students in Year 12, with the additional places drawn from the 400 applicants who expressed a preference for this school in December. Some Sixth Form class sizes will be larger than they have been previously. We have commissioned an independent property consultant – at no cost – to assess the impact on our accommodation. We have also responded to the financial constraints by curtailing expenditure, through a re-allocation of timetabled lessons. Students in the Sixth Form have typically had 9 hours of direct tuition per fortnight in each subject.*

*Next year, our A-level cohorts will still have 9 hours allocated per subject, but one of these lessons will be for directed self-study: they will have teaching for 8 periods. This was viewed by governors as a necessary, appropriate, creative and well-managed response. On the one hand we should be incensed by the mis-management of post-16 funding that has disproportionately impacted on schools with large A-level programmes. The net effect for this school will be 2000 fewer Sixth Form lessons next year. On the other hand Old Southendians can be re-assured that the core of our Advanced Level provision remains intact: access to four (or five) A-levels for every student, alongside our outstanding programme of extra-curricular opportunities and house activities.*

As part of our 'Forti 14: Giving Back' programme, Year 7 have been exploring voluntary organisations which help with search and rescue. We arranged for the year group to spend some time with the RNLI, receiving a talk and looking at how the boat team operates, as well as undertaking a lifeguarding taster session. Jason Boateng, Form Captain of 7EA2, reports on his experience:

*"On Monday 28th April I and some members of my form went to Eastwood to do lifeguard training. We had to wear pyjamas so we knew what it felt like to be out in the sea in our clothes. It was really hard to swim as our trousers kept falling off. We did fun challenges like trying to hold a basketball with you being on your back and your knees up to your chest. We had to see who could hold the position for a minute. We couldn't wear goggles as we don't have goggles out at sea. Then after school we went to a RNLI centre so we could see what they do. We saw a hovercraft which surprised us; especially as we thought it would go faster – it only did 30mph. Our English teacher, Mr Renton, used to be with the RNLI before he became a teacher. He helped to show us around. Before we left we looked at the uniform they wear which is a onesie type fleece with a rain coat. The boots are attached to it and there are gloves and a helmet. It was a really fun day and all my form wish they could do it again."*

Congratulations to the Chamber Choir, which took part in the Choir of the Year competition in Basingstoke. The Choir won 'Choir of the Day' in its class, and qualified amongst the last 16 choirs in that class competing towards the national finals in the Royal Festival Hall in October. Michael Lafferty-Smith of 13EA1 reports on his experience:

*"Competing in the Choir of the Year competition with the SHSB Chamber Choir was both a rewarding and exciting experience. To sing with close friends in such a fantastic environment was a feeling quite unlike*

*any other. After finding out we had progressed through to the finals, we couldn't take the beaming smiles off our faces, as we proudly sang the school song at the top of our voices on the coach back. Singing in the Chamber Choir will be what I will miss most about the school when I leave, however, luckily I may have the chance to sing again with the group in October, and I can't wait!"*

Also during April, Joshua Smith and Joshua Soane, of Year 9, benefited from a unique hands-on learning experience at Royal Holloway, University of London in Surrey. Delivered in partnership with educational charity The Smallpeice Trust and Royal Holloway, this 3-day residential course gave 54 students, aged 13 and 14, a valuable insight into the fascinating world of cyber security. The course demonstrated to students how important it is to be aware of the risks we are taking in cyberspace. Working in small teams, they got a unique opportunity to explore some of the threats to cyberspace and the techniques currently being employed to provide cyber security, by tackling a series of cyber security challenges. They also got to meet cyber security professionals, learning about the challenges they face each day in securing cyberspace. In the same month, all of Year 8 took part in a session run by the Happy Puzzle Company.

*"When we came to the classroom we were pleasantly greeted by a courteous presenter who was organising the activities we were going to be doing. The first challenge, which we would never have worked out on our own, was to get the middle ring out of a chain which consisted of three rings. As we moved onto working on challenges in groups, we quickly found working as a team was good because at first most of us struggled to communicate with each other. Eventually the teams got better at communicating and were able to complete the challenges successfully. We had to use maths to help us solve some of the challenges, such as the penguin and iceberg challenge, in which you had to position the penguins in a particular way.*

*Once we realised symmetry was involved our group completed the challenge. In the puzzle using coloured trapezia our group formed a sequence using the different colours and fitted it into the wooden hexagon by rotating the shapes. Other puzzles also included jigsaw puzzles which were the hardest we have ever done in our life, one containing a large number of minute pieces. We really enjoyed the puzzle day because we learnt a lot of things involving maths as well as logic and problem solving skills. We had a huge amount of fun competing with other groups, and we improved our team work ..."*

Congratulations to those pupils who took part in the 'Have Your Say' finals held in Colchester, this May. 10 out of 13 teams were placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd; we brought home the three shields which we won last year – and brought home four more! Our pupils secured regional wins in Year 10 German, Year 9 French, Year 8 Spanish and Year 7 German.

The school entered this year's British Schools Karting Championship with nine drivers, in teams of three. Everyone drove well at the local heat, at Brentwood: we were successful in getting our A team – Harry Rankin, Hugh Shields and Charles Lamb – through to the regional final, at Buckmore Park in Kent. The regional event took place on Sunday May 4th. At the halfway point of the meeting we were in 7th place (from 25 teams), which was the last qualifying place for the national final. Special mention must go to Charles, who reeled off a dominant win in his first race, thus equalling the best ever achievement for an SHSB driver in this championship. The team then faced their lower grid positions in the second half of the meeting: they all drove with great commitment, moving up through the field in all three races. We dared to hope that we had done enough, but sadly had slipped to 8th overall, and the national final must wait for another year...

The Forti 14 programme continued into the Summer Term. *Arwel Bennett 10EA3 writes*

*"... On Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May, a group of Year 10 students did a homeless sleep-out at the Salvation Army in Hadleigh in aid of the homeless charity, HARP. We were only allowed some cardboard and a sleeping bag for shelter and so had to devise ways to keep warm and dry when it began to rain at about 3.00 am. Overall the experience was a valuable lesson for those participating that taught us to be grateful for what we have and to help us understand the hardships of homeless life."*

*Adam Bedwell-Smith and Dylan Ponting 9EA3: "... In the school's Special Olympics event, the Year 9s took pride in helping towards the huge success that resulted in the children from various [special] schools going home with a huge smile on their face. We all began by eating lunch with the children and getting to know a thing or two about them. The welcoming party and refreshments party began preparing food and drinks and making sure all the equipment was ready to go. The events started to the soundtrack of 'Chariots of Fire' and instantly everybody was having a good time. It all ran smoothly, with everybody contributing, including all the Year 9s, teachers and helpers. We ended on a high too, by giving everybody a gold medal and we hope to invite the schools back again to have another great day."*

SHSB was delighted to hear that former pupils Morgan Fox and Josh Rees both finished the football season playing in the Football Championship League. Josh made his Football League debut for Nottingham Forest and Morgan joined Charlton Athletic. Year 7 and 8 Essex Cup Final teams met Morgan when he recently visited the school.

Congratulations to all our sporting teams, who have had an amazing year. The school has been in County finals in 7 different sports: football, basketball, hockey, cricket, rugby, cross-country, badminton:

- Yr 7 football Essex Cup champions
- Yr 8 football Essex Cup champions
- Yr 12/13 football Essex Cup runners-up
- Yr 7 basketball Essex Cup champions
- Yr 9 basketball Essex Cup champions
- Yr 8 basketball Essex Cup runners-up
- Yr 12/13 basketball Essex Cup runners-up
- Yr 7/8 badminton Essex Cup runners-up
- Yr 9 hockey Essex Cup runners-up
- Yr 10/11 hockey Essex Plate winners
- Yr 7 cross-country Essex champions
- Yr 8 cross-country Essex champions
- Yr 7 Essex Cricket Plate winners
- Yr 8 rugby Essex emerged rugby champions

In July, we opened the school for our main recruitment Open Evening: attended predominantly by families of boys currently in Year 5, who are anticipating sitting the selection tests in the Autumn. Over 2000 visitors joined us during the evening: we are delighted that the school's spirit, success and reputation are being so widely recognised. Thank you to all Old Southendians who promote the school in the community, to the students who are our ambassadors, and to the very many volunteers who helped make the evening such a success.

A number of visitors wrote to us after the Open Evening, and this unsolicited comment was typical:

*We would like to extend our thanks to both you and all your staff and pupils who attended yesterday's open evening. My family really enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere and the impressive pieces of work on show. We had fun with the experiments, particularly in the science lab and we found all the staff we met to be friendly and approachable.*

*All the pupils we encountered were also a delight, they were friendly, presentable, and enthusiastic.*

*It was great seeing how the pupils interacted with each other and the staff, they were a credit to themselves and the school. Many thanks again.*

An annual feature of the Summer Term at SHSB has been our mass bike ride. This year 320 boys, aged 11- 14, took part: the biggest and longest mass ride organised by any school in the country. The boys cycled in small groups, each with two fully briefed escorts.

In total 400 riders made the return journey of 14 miles from the school to East Beach, Shoeburyness. The route used sections of urban roads as well as the town's network of extended cycle paths. For many pupils it is the longest bike ride they have undertaken. Many thanks to all those on the route which was marshalled by staff and members of Sustrans, a national bike charity, and it was fantastic to be so strongly supported by Cycle Southend.

It was a great opportunity for the pupils to have fun and keep fit together, as well as encouraging the boys to use their bikes for leisure, sport and local journeys.

Congratulations to the school's Intermediate Team who are once again National Athletics Champions; congratulations also to our Junior Team which came 2nd in the country. Although we have become accustomed to this level of success, it remains an extraordinary achievement by any measure.

The SHSB team placed 3rd nationally in both Warhammer competitions, and 3 of the 8 were nominated for painting awards. All the boys won certificates, so a good effort from our teams in another national event.

On Friday 11th July, Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 completed a 9.5 mile walk starting in Hockley and finishing back at the school. Despite showers of rain and the consequential mud, spirits remained high and all but 3 of the 600 participants completed the adventurous route. The logistics of taking such a high number of pupils on the train from Prittlewell worked very smoothly.

On the same day, 26 boys and eight staff completed a marathon walk, led by Mr Sanders. This 26.2 mile challenge was from Great Horkeley (near Colchester) to Harwich, and took eleven hours to complete. For the majority of the pupils, this was a personal best in terms of miles walked, and a reflection of their resolute stamina, fitness, determination and work ethic. Pupils from across the school took part, including 6 boys from Year 7. The weather was overcast and very humid; some pupils suffered from cramps and blisters. However, all twenty-six students finished the walk, with several running the last quarter-mile. Another marathon walk is planned for next year.

The school hall has, twice, in recent weeks been transformed for evenings of remarkable entertainment. Bold staging, choreographed tight scenes, and dance fed the tragic romantic drama of Romeo and Juliet. High-tempo swing, jazz improvisations and high-quality food all served to ensure another great fund-raising Jazz Night.

Opportunities at this level only happen because of the willingness of our teachers to give extensively and freely of their time and expertise. It is therefore appropriate to give special thanks to those colleagues who are now moving on.

"Thank you!" to Mr Renton, Mr MacPherson, Ms Carragher, Mrs Moore and Ms Dabbs. Each of these colleagues is moving on to a promoted post in September: it is a tribute to their expertise, their professionalism, and to their development in this school. Each of these colleagues will be missed; each has given 'above and beyond'; and there will be individual students who will forever remember having been taught by these teachers. In each case, we hope to remain in contact and to establish, where possible, productive links with their new schools ...

"Thank you!" to Mr Parkinson, Mr Feldwick, Mr Rogers and Mr Cartwright. Teaching is a craft skill that is learned and mastered through many hours in the classroom. Much has been written about effective pedagogy and the characteristics of the productive classroom. It is easy, however, to underestimate the crucial importance of 'character' and 'love of subject'. Each of these four long-serving colleagues has demonstrated these latter qualities with real impact in and beyond their classrooms: Mr Parkinson's patience and quiet efficiency has characterised his teaching and more recently his examination officer work; Mr Feldwick exhibits an unrelenting and joyful enthusiasm for German and, indeed, for life; Mr Rogers comes alive in the classroom where he has been an outstanding teacher of Chemistry leading many students towards undergraduate study in allied disciplines; and Mr Cartwright has proved to be multidimensional – karting, cycling, music aficionado, and lover of literature ...

On behalf of all their students we say "Thank you!".

In recognition of all their contributions within the staff team, we say "Thank you!"

**Dr Robin Bevan** (Head teacher)