



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

Year 9 Options Evening

On Monday, Year 9 students and families attended an assembly to introduce the process of choosing GCSE options before meeting with Curriculum Leaders to discuss GCSE subjects.

Following this evening, all parents are required to complete the [GCSE Options Form](#) by **Friday 1st March** including reserve subjects in consultation with their child.

All the key course information can be found in the **Year 10 Options booklet** on our website: [here](#)

World Book Day – Thursday 7th March

The life of a secondary school Principal is rarely boring. Last year, I found myself sat in my office with a professional makeup artist (*not a regular occurrence, I can assure you*) as she transformed me into the prominent DC villain 'Two-Face', also known as Harvey Dent, from the Batman series. Across the school, teachers and support staff embraced World Book Day by dressing up and bringing characters to life in the same way and hopefully this created a few good memories along the way!

This year, we will repeat this feat, in celebration of the joy of reading. We welcome students to dress as characters from their favourite books but please note that this is **not an expectation**, and we don't want parents to feel the pressure of a weekend dedicated to sewing or gluing materials to this end. There will be several other ways students can get involved and show their commitment to reading.

On a serious note, I wanted to share this [article](#) which suggests that reading real books is finally on its way back. This is encouragement that our commitment to reading for pleasure remains as important as ever.

Rewards

Since the beginning of the academic year, members of staff have awarded students with over 40,000 merits, 9500 golden tickets and 1400 postcards. These huge numbers are testament to how students consistently meet our high expectations and truly embody our values in practice.

Not only do merits, golden tickets and postcards qualify students to treats such as parties, reward trips and film showings – they also translate into the above rewards. Our tuck-shop is brimming with everything from stationery to sweets so please encourage your children to visit Student Services every Friday to redeem their vouchers.

RSA Rewards	
Points in a half-term	Reward
25	Tuck shop visit + 1 prize draw entry
50	Tuck shop visit + 2 prize draw entries
75	Tuck shop visit + 3 prize draw entries + College Leader postcard
100	Tuck shop visit + 4 prize draw entries + RSA merch'
125	Tuck shop visit + 5 prize draw entries + Principal's letter





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Detentions change

We consider detentions a key component of our behaviour policy and whilst we have sought to accommodate those who catch buses, or have after-school commitments during lunchtime, this is something that is no longer feasible given the limited free space we have available during the school day. As a result, **lunchtime detentions will cease after half term and all detentions will take place after school in Sixteen07, our school canteen.**

Those who take school transport will be given 24-hours to seek alternative arrangements and only extenuating circumstances (such as medical appointments) will be considered as acceptable reasons for postponing a detention. Please note that after-school clubs will not be considered an acceptable reason for postponement. It is our hope that this will provide equity to the detention process and ensure that the sanction is facilitated more efficiently.

Break-time detentions will continue as a response to lateness at the beginning of the day, however students will no longer be permitted to acquire food from the canteen beforehand.

Year 7 Assembly

On Monday, both Ms Kirk (College Leader) and I led an assembly for all students in Year 7 to remind students of our expectations regarding high standards and expectations including the importance of respectful language. As part of this assembly, we discussed the importance of inclusive language and the potentially harmful impact of discriminatory comments. First and foremost, we have a duty to educate.

Students were provided with a reminder about the protected characteristics enshrined in law by the Equality Act (2010) and we decided that this was important given a small number of concerns that have been raised recently regarding inappropriate language that has been used by students in this year group.

We continue to promote the highest expectations for students, and this was a pertinent opportunity for our students to be given clarity about respectful conduct and how to report any concerns that they may have.

College Captain and Form Representative Selections

College Captain and Form Representative interviews have been a wonderful window into the amazing students we have at this school. We still have a few more to hold, therefore decisions will be made in the week we return after half term.

VASL – Human Library Initiative

Written by Mrs. Coxon (Reading Coordinator and Librarian)

John, a VASL Community Champions and Transport volunteer, gave a Human Library talk to 30 students at Robert Smyth Academy about his varied 37-year career working for the prisons service.

John started his working life teaching and then in 1977 got what he thought would be a temporary job at HMP Manchester, known locally as Strangeways prison. Strangeways was a Victorian prison, built in 1868; where prisoners were locked up three in a cell with just a bucket (no toilet). John remembers entering the prison grounds and walking past poo parcels which inmates had thrown out of their cells to reduce smells. Another memory shared was how trusted prisoners known as Redbands, because they wore a red arm band, would make drinks for prison staff. Being a Redband was generally considered by prisoners to be a desirable job, but this still didn't stop one being discovered washing staff mugs with a toilet brush!



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VASL – Human Library Initiative

Written by Mrs. Coxon (Reading Coordinator and Librarian) Cont...

John started off as an Administrative Officer holding a variety of roles whilst at Strangeways, including as a Discipline clerk working out sentences and release dates. He later became a supernumerary travelling to different prisons in the North (e.g. Hull, Durham). In 1988 he was promoted and posted to HMP Gartree as an Executive Officer. Gartree, build in 1965, as a low-risk Category C prison with a working farm had, very quickly, been regraded to a category A Dispersal prison; one of only five dispersal prison in the country. Gartree prison became front page news when in 1987 it became the first prison in the UK to have two prisoners escape using a helicopter, both were recaptured, one after 10 days, and the other after a year. After this event, to prevent further helicopter escapes the prison service introduced overhead wires to open areas.

John's roles as an Executive Officer included being a Custody, Personnel, Training and Store Manager. He was also selected to work as clerk for the Board of Visitors and as a database administrator. All these roles gave him different insights into the way the prison functioned.

John explained prisons were like small towns – Gartree had kitchens where all food was prepared, an Education Department for prisoner learning, a Healthcare centre, a Chapel, a well-equipped sports centre, prison shop, workshops (e.g. textiles), Stores, Works, Probation, Psychology, Punishment, Therapy and Security departments. The prison employed people in a variety of roles such as prison officers, instructors, psychologist, electricians, plumbers, painters, health staff, teachers, chaplaincy, administration, etc. He also mentioned the special training prison officers undertook to be part of the Control and Restraint teams who were employed to deal with prison incidents.

Famous prisoners who spent time at Gartree include, Reggie Kray, one of the twins in charge of the gangster mob, The Firm; Ian Brady, the Moors murderer, Fred West a serial killer, Charles Bronson, Jeremy Bamber and Tony Martin. All these gained further notoriety through being featured in films or television programmes. John talked about miscarriages of justice when evidence supporting people's innocence was deliberately withheld and drew parallels with the Post Office scandal unfolding now.

Students, many who had family members who work in prisons, asked insightful questions about the culture in prisons, dealing with violence/riots, and about the new super prison that had just got planning permission. They thanked John for an illuminating talk.



Human Library Guest, John



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Daisy's Charity Fundraiser

We are proud to support one of our Sixth Form students, Daisy, on her pursuit to raise funding and awareness for Macmillan. We hope that families will give what they can to encourage her efforts:

"My February will be full of running is all for an amazing man, Mike Prankard, who we abruptly lost to cancer. He was a father, husband, a friend, and an incredibly great paintball player!"

I wanted to raise money to help others who are going through this difficult time as a family or as someone who needs the direct help, as it only felt right. I want to see how much I can push myself this month to reach limits I haven't before with running due to a previous dislike for it. I realised it was silly to dislike a sport that I had previously wanted to get better at. So, I did, and I have raised over £100 so far! Every penny counts towards helping someone with cancer so please donate. Thank you ♥"

Parents and students can donate [here](#).

Rosanna's Charity Fundraiser

We are equally proud to support another one of our students, Rosanna, who is donating roughly 11 inches of hair to the Little Princess Trust. This is a very brave and generous thing for Rosanna to do and we commend her for being an ambassador for school values.



Rosanna's hair; a gift of dignity

Parents and students can donate [here](#).

Finally, I hope that our students have a fantastic half-term including those lucky GCSE History candidates who meet with me for GCSE Revision on Monday morning at 9.00am!

Thank you once again for your fantastic, ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Cleary
Principal



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Robert Smyth Academy

Key Dates: Spring Term

- **Monday 19th – Friday 23rd February: FEBRUARY HALF-TERM**
- **Monday 26th February: Year 11 Trial Exam Week**
- **Tuesday 27th February: PSHE Dropdown (P1)**
- **Tuesday 12th March: Year 10 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)**
- **Monday 18th March: Year 7-9 in-class assessments begin (4-week window)**
- **Thursday 21st March: Year 10 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)**

- **Monday 25th March – Friday 5th April: EASTER HOLIDAY**

Parents' Evening Dates (Summer Term)

- **Thursday 23rd May: Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)**
- **Thursday 6th June: Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)**

Teacher Training Days (Summer Term)

- **Friday 28th June**

Term Dates (2024/25), as previously communicated, can be found [here](#).



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