

Chelfham Senior School Newsletter

Summer 2009



Chelfham Senior School offers specialist education and residential care for boys aged 11 to 19 who have autism with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

We specialise in working with pupils exhibiting severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and those who have difficulties in acquiring appropriate social skills. Located on two sites in the heart of Devon, Chelfham Senior School provides a positive structured environment where pupils are encouraged to assess their behaviour and bring about change.

The main house of Bere Alston provides for our 11 to 16 year old boys, whilst our post 16 provision at Kilworthy House focuses on vocational awareness courses and independence skills training. Placements can be on a day or term-time basis and for 52 weeks, depending on individual need. We can provide places for up to 63 students.

Welcome to Chelfham Senior School

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, and a warm welcome to Chelfham Senior School. We offer specialist education and residential care for boys aged 11 to 19 years who have autism with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Chelfham Senior School specialises in working with students who exhibit these types of severe and complex difficulties. Our provision is based around individual education, therapy and care needs, with personalised assessments, plans and programmes for all our students. Our first newsletter looks at recent developments in our curriculum, forthcoming educational trips abroad, our new arrival 'the sensory garden', our exciting theme days and an update on our land-based studies department. There are many more developments planned for Chelfham Senior School in the weeks, months and years to come. We are aiming to be the very best that we can be. Thanks for joining us.

John Steward Principal

Praise from Ofsted inspectors

Chelfham Senior School has recently been awarded 'Outstanding' in safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety and 'Good' in every other category, including behaviour, care, teaching and student progress.

Chelfham Senior School, in Tavistock and Bere Alston, received significant praise from inspectors for the work we do with young people with special needs. A total of four inspectors came into school for three days in February this year and made judgements across both sites including education, care and therapy.

They found that the school had made great strides forward, particularly in education, since the last inspection and was well placed to improve further.

"Boys come here with great difficulties, they make progress in their learning and behaviour, they feel safe and happy and their families are supported. This is all made possible because

of the fantastic staff who work tirelessly to make a difference to these young men's lives. We want our students to become valuable members of the community – now, and for the rest of their lives." John Steward, School Principal



Chelfham Senior School has also recently been awarded the Sportsmark Award for its physical and outdoor education provision. Pictured - climbing and caving on Dartmoor, one of many outdoor pursuits followed at the school.



Ref: Ofsted report: <http://tinyurl.com/ofstedchelfham>



The sensory garden

This term Chelfham Senior School has a new arrival in the form of a sensory garden. The garden has been thoughtfully planned and constructed by our two grounds men, James and Roger, and is a relaxing place for students to sit and experience many different assaults on their senses! There are beautifully scented plants, interesting textures to touch and spectacular colours to be explored throughout the year.

James and Roger have not only supplied the fantastic planting scheme but also wood carvings and stone areas to touch. The raised bed allows students to sit comfortably whilst in reach of the sights, smells and textures. A hedge around the garden makes it a quiet place to sit and relax.

Sensory gardens are a valuable tool for students with more complex disorders especially for those who fall within the autistic spectrum. The garden can help to relieve anxieties, reduce stress and stimulate senses. It is also used as an outside classroom as it can facilitate the teaching of many other curriculum areas such as science and art.

As well as the sensory garden there is an ambitious scheme taking place which is creating four raised beds for planting, a hedge maze, a story lawn complete with pergola and an amphitheatre style seating area. The students are getting involved with the building of this area undertaking jobs such as digging, soil/compost moving and growing plants to fill the beds with. We are all very much looking forward to the completion of this area and the good weather to use it!

Visit to First World War sites

In July last year four Year 9 and 10 students and four staff travelled to France and Belgium to visit sites connected with the First World War. This was part of the Year 9 history curriculum and we plan to repeat the trip this year, although as it was exceptionally hot in July we will be travelling earlier in the season this year!

On the Monday we will take the Eurostar to France and travel on to Belgium where we will stay in a farm near Ypres. We will be able to help the farmer with milking, feeding the pigs and collecting eggs.

On Tuesday we will visit sites around Ypres, including original tunnels and trenches at Sanctuary Wood and the major British cemetery at Tyne Cott. In the evening we will attend the remembrance ceremony at the Menin Gate, in Ypres where the last post is played every night in remembrance of those who died to save the Belgian people.

On Wednesday we will travel to the Somme visiting the large crater at Lochnagar and the museum at Albert. We will have lunch at Tommy's café and also visit the Ulster Memorial and the Tank Memorial. A trip to the hypermarket on the return to the farm will allow us to try out our French. In the evening we will eat out at a restaurant in the centre of Ypres.

On our final day, after we say good bye to our hosts, we will stop at the Canadian Site of Vimy Ridge and explore the tunnels and trenches. Next its on to the main French cemetery at Notre Dame De Lorette. Finally we'll take the Eurostar home, arriving late on Thursday evening. On their return to England the boys will create diaries of their visit to help them remember the wonderful experience they had.

Chelfham's new curriculum

Our young people have not always had positive experiences in school before they come to us so we try to make our education as relevant and interesting to them as possible. We have half-termly theme days that bring all the staff together providing a day that challenges the students, gets them working together and shows off their various skills. Recent ones have included China Day, Africa Day, The Buggy Challenge and Clock Design Challenge. In the summer term we are having a World War week inviting into school local people to talk about their experiences and also a re-enactment group will be visiting.

We offer a broad and balanced curriculum including: core subjects, design and technology, land based studies, art and media, physical education, outdoor education, leisure and tourism, Asdan, food technology, information communication technology and science all of which are available at GCSE, BTEC or entry level accreditation.

Achievements

Our students are entered for a wide variety of suitable accreditation. In 2008 all those entered for GCSE in core subjects gained a full pass grade. We had five students gain the level 1 Certificate in Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) and many other Asdan Bronze and Silver Award passes. Over 90% of our students gained an Entry Level Award or higher.

Recreational activities

Chelfham Senior School takes great pride in providing exciting and diverse trips for all students that are arranged all year round. We are fortunate to have a Friday afternoon historical group that offers up a variety of trips to many historical places throughout Devon and Cornwall, such as castles, stately homes, archaeological sites and many more places of interest throughout the year.

These different trips provide excellent opportunities for fun and cross-curricular learning. One such trip was to the Plymouth Breakwater that had to include a boat trip to reach it and this was a full day trip learning all about the building of it.

We also include longer trips through the school term, for example we had a very successful three day basic survival course run by Footsteps of Discovery in Cornwall, with all students receiving a Certificate of Achievement as well as a great outdoor experience.

For next term the school is in the process of organising a trip to Normandy in France, to visit many of the battle sites and grounds, cemeteries and museums related to the D-Day landings as it is the 65th anniversary this year. This will also give the students some exceptional experience of being in another country looking at their culture and way of life.



Students learn how to care for these animals and how to provide them with good living accommodation. They learn the importance of proper balanced diets as well as health and safety issues involved with working with animals. Students also learn how to grow plants from seed in our heated glasshouse and polytunnel, how to grow vegetables and yummy soft fruit in the raised beds. We use the animal manure to make our own compost. The plants raised are sold at the local pannier market where students have the opportunity to run a market stall each week, selling a variety of goods some of which they have made themselves in the youth enterprise lessons. Some of the plants are put into hanging baskets that adorn a local alehouse in a nearby village.

Chelfham students raised £50 last year with these hanging baskets and the proceeds went to the charity 'Send-a-Cow' who also benefit from the profits from the market stall. Our open day raised a further £160 selling plants and refreshments to our visitors. Students from both the Kilworthy and Bere Alston sites benefit from the land based department and students work towards a BTEC level 1 Certificate/Diploma in land and environment, as well as having a lot of fun!

Land-based department

The land based department at Chelfham Kilworthy House site provides students with the opportunity to work with small animals, including rabbits, chinchillas, foreign finches (breeding well), a chipmunk (he needs a girlfriend), gerbils, guinea pigs, a Florida rat snake, our latest addition a large monitor lizard (who happily comes out to play), a leopard gecko, african mud skippers (great fun to watch feeding as they climb on to the land to catch crickets), tame lambs and a miniature shetland pony.



Theme days

Chelfham theme days offer the opportunity for students to access activities and ideas that would not otherwise appear in the curriculum. Theme days allow students and teachers to investigate specific topics or themes in more depth and with increased flexibility for independent investigations and individualised learning to occur.

The planning for theme days is centred around activity based learning via workshops, creative exploration and whole school events. Students are actively encouraged to participate in a range of activities throughout the day.



On another day students designed and built their own clocks, some of which went on to be sold at the schools market stall as part of young enterprise at Chelfham.

Cultural awareness is also investigated via theme days with Africa, Canada and France being three recent countries focused on as themes. From traditional African song and dance through to chopping logs like a lumberjack, then visiting the school café for a pain au chocolat. Our unique theme days create wonderful opportunities for fun and activity to stimulate enquiring minds.



Our theme days are structured to encourage Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) and Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) which are embedded into the aims of the day and which also inform the planning.

Recent theme days have focused on 'making and doing' as a working title. Students constructed and customised their own mini buggies from kit form and the day ended in a whole school get together with prizes for creative engineering, design and teamwork.



Colourful Devon

The art students at Kilworthy House have been busy composing and painting three large canvasses which explore the theme of 'The Colours of Devon' as part of an exciting county wide project organised by Devon Education Services. This will culminate in a major celebration and exhibition in Exeter Cathedral during the first week in June which many of our students and staff will be visiting! As well as providing a great opportunity for community involvement, this creative venture also fulfils many of the criteria for the Level 1 Certificate and Diploma in art, design and media.

The dark side

As part of our termly, cultural theme days, the students at Kilworthy House recently took part in a successful Chinese Shadow Theatre production of the willow pattern story. This tragic love story was performed and filmed in our lively media department and will be edited in time for our regular end of term mini film festival. The directors cut also includes the Bloopers to lighten the mood before the holiday!



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