

New course brings out a caring nature

STUDENTS have been swapping textbooks for live snakes, tarantulas and chickens as part of a new course being offered at Earl Mortimer College.

A science lab now plays home to the new weird and wonderful arrivals as part of a new BTEC course offered to students.

Students spent this term getting to grips with all aspects of caring for the animals and insects, as well as fish, geckos, rabbits, frogs, snails and giant cockroaches.

They are responsible for feeding, cleaning cages and enrichment of the animals during their lunch and breaktimes. Each student has their own hamster to look after.

There are plans to expand the programme next year with more students getting involved and more animals brought in possibly including a python and a tortoise.

There are also plans to have animal experts and professionals such as vets and dog groomers give talk to the class, covid permitting.

Science teacher Mr Smith said: "We have introduced this course to broaden the curriculum a bit and give students the chance to do something more vocational.

"It is a small group for now to ensure we are doing it correctly and the animals are getting the care they need, that is our top priority."

Year 10, Leo, said: "I come from a farming background, so this was something that I was really keen to be involved with.

"I love spending time with the animals and I think I have built up a bond. It is amazing that we can spend time in school looking after animals.

Year 10 Mía said: "It was in my plans to have a job that involves working with animals. This has been such a great insight into what life would be like if I had that job.

"I am so grateful to the school because this has made a huge amount of difference to my experiences here. This is something that I am really passionate about.

Principal, Ms Banner, said: "I think as teachers we can get a bit stuck thinking purely about exam grades and GCSE.

"We see children here as individuals that don't all fit into the same mould. Our job is not just to get them through exams but to help them find something they are passionate about."

Students learn to take responsibility by looking after insects and animals



“I really love spending time with the snake and I think I have built up a bond. It is amazing that we can spend our time in school looking after animals...”

Student Leo

Students have enjoyed looking after a wide variety of animals.

Exciting chapter for free book initiative



THE school is hoping to encourage a love of reading among students by offering free books.

Year 7 and 8 are able to pick between 17 titles selected by a panel of experts as part of the Book Buzz programme.

The scheme, in its first year, gives youngsters access to a range of books to suit all reading tastes and abilities

To help them make their choice, students were able to watch a clip of each author talking about their book.

Students will take quizzes on their chosen books to gain points through the Accelerated Reader Programme. There are also plans to run a Book Review competition.

Librarian Ms Ridd said: "There is great excitement about it, and they are lovely books. The feedback we have been getting from students is very positive.

"They have hit the nail on the head with their research about what kind of books Years 7 and 8 want to read.

"Even for the most reluctant readers, there is something about holding a brand-new shiny book and reading it."

Awesome outdoor adventures for awards scheme

YEAR 9 and 10 students have volunteered at the school, took part in sport and went on a camping expedition to complete the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.

They had to put in volunteering 50 hours, three months of physical activity and practice a skill to receive the bronze prize.

Teacher Mr Bescoby said: "If they can complete that by May half term, they will be given the opportunity to take part in an

expedition to get the full bronze award.

"Many students are already coming to us, asking for volunteering opportunities within the school and wider community.

"It is an awesome initiative that has been hampered in the last two

academic years so it is great to get it up and running again."

Students will get a discount on enrolment fees after the school obtained a grant from the Duke of Edinburgh.

If you are interested in signing up, please speak to Mr Bescoby.



Students undertook a number of initiatives for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme.

Having an input on the future of our town

STUDENT leaders have had the chance to have their voice heard while improving the Leominster thanks to a scheme run by the council.

The school's student leadership team have been working in partnership with councillors to improve the town's heritage and culture offer.

The team, made up of the Head Boy and Girl and their deputies and three senior prefects, also meet with Principal Ms Banner.

They discuss teaching and learning, careers, Covid safety and exam preparations in the sessions run every half term.

Ms Banner said: "Our students are getting a real-life insight into the inner workings of local politics working directly with those who make the decision about issues impacting the town."

"They get to have a say on items of real value and importance. They are great ambassadors for the school, and role models for the younger students."

Our students have been working with Leominster Council.



Safety first for cyclists

STUDENTS have been getting a handle on cycling safety thanks to the brilliant Bikeability programme.

Year 7 and 8 students have passed their level three cycling proficiency after taking part in the workshop.

The school hopes the free training will build among those who cycle to school – and potentially encourage more to take it up.

Year 8 Leyham said: "I am very into bikes, but I would sometimes get a bit nervous around cars so I thought I needed to know a bit more about safety on the roads."

"I found a new way to get to school that is easier and quicker and safer because it's not next to a main road."

Student Personal Development Co-ordinator, Mr Bescoby, said: "Students have been looking at all aspects of how to use a bike safely, learning about high-visibility, helmets and safe routes."

"It was a massive success. Everyone passed and got really good feedback, and now more students are really keen to get involved."

Bikeability instructors also visited the school to deliver a lesson on bike health, helping students learn the basics of how to maintain and repair their bikes.



Teachers show great dedication



PRINCIPAL Ms Banner

THERE are many wonderful things about being the principal of a school.

I relish the challenge of not only being responsible for the progress of one class but for all students.

Taking the big decisions comes with it a lot of responsibility, success or failure, the buck stops with me.

To do this job properly you need to dedicate yourself to it, you have to believe in the transformational impact of education.

Nowhere was that better illustrated than on a recent television programme I watched featuring singer Adele.

Reunited with her old English teacher, she was overcome with emotion and gratitude for this person that helped to inspire her.

When I read this newsletter, I see that same footprint of great teaching.

I know it is one of my staff who organised the maths competition, the trip to the theatre, the sports match.

It was a person who knows that a great teacher leaves an indelible mark in a young person's life with their generosity, talent and warmth.

These are the people that I am proud to call my peers. People who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of our students. I believe it to be a noble cause.

At a time when we count our blessings, I give thanks for my colleagues. The best of the best.

Finally, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas. Hope you have a well deserved break. We will see you next year.

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Acknowledging our differences



Students took part in a series of events to mark Anti-Bullying Week including wearing odd socks.

STUDENTS have been celebrating their differences during a series of activities to mark national Anti-Bullying Week.

It included wearing odd socks to school, running their own assemblies and taking part in a drama workshop with Hereford-based Courtyard Theatre.

The workshops involved students acting out different scenarios and discussing how the people involved would have felt.

Ellen Dorsett-Pitts from the Courtyard praised students. She said: "It has been a pleasure to work with the students of Earl Mortimer College.

"I have been impressed by their understanding of bullying and their awareness of what it is. Their

understanding is a credit to the school and the systems that have been put in place."

The programme has been led by The Prevent Bullying Now ambassadors who have been trained to help peers who need extra help.

Assistant Principal, Mr Wharam, said: "Prevent Bullying Now's mission is to highlight anti-bullying issues and promote the values of the school in terms of how the students get on with each other.

"Students fully understood the impact of bullying and do not look at it as a taboo subject, they were proud to share what the school does."

He added: "Their enthusiasm and confidence to discuss bullying is excellent."



Tasty idea raises funds for foodbank

STUDENTS raised over £250 hosting Halloween and Christmas bake sales to fundraise for Leominster Food Bank.

Year 13 students Antony and Chloe led the two events which also included a school raffle with cash raised going to help those in need.

The pair have turbo boosted their fund-

raising efforts by signing up to the Young Enterprise programme with plans now in place to run further events on Valentine's Day and Easter.

Antony said: "We wanted to help the food bank because it's quite a big issue at the moment, as people don't have as much money because of the pandemic.

"We have also collected food donations by asking people to bring tins along to the cake stalls. It really does make you proud of yourself that you have helped people."

Chloe added: "Signing up with the Young Enterprise programme has given us lots of fresh ideas to help fundraise next term.

Young chefs serve up mouth-watering meals



Josh and Jade were two of the participants who impressed during the latest heat of the Futurechef competition.

STUDENTS have been cooking up a storm in the school heat of this year's Futurechef contest.

Year 11 students, Jade and Josh, impressed the judges to secure their places in the next round – the local finals in Worcester, where they will compete against other budding chefs from nearby schools.

If they are successful, they will progress to the regional heats and potentially the national final.

Food Tech teacher, Ms Dixon, said: "I've never been so hungry from all the smells – sausage meatball carbonara, beef and mushroom stroganoff.

"Each student was graded on their

workmanship, technical skills, creativity, presentation and hygiene.

"It was a pleasure to see them cooking and enjoying what they were making and doing."

Year 10 pupil Jake came third in the school competition by just half a point. He said: "We had to make a dish to serve two people, it could be anything but it had to be a main course.

"We had to show different techniques and skills to make the different foods. It was disappointing to come so close but I really enjoyed it."

"I chose to make steak stroganoff. It was the first time I had ever made it – it is quite simple but tasted really good."

I've never been so hungry from all the smells – sausage meatball carbonara, beef and mushroom stroganoff...

Ms Dixon

Pleased to see students return to sporting action

PE teacher Mr Bescoby has welcomed a return to competitive sport this term.

“THIS term it has been an utter joy to see our students return to the playing fields to take part in competitive sport.

The previous 18 or so months have presented challenges across all areas of education and PE was no exception with many left disappointed not to be playing sport against other schools.

But for the first time since March 2020, we had rugby, netball and basketball matches with students relishing the chance to be back on the field.

This is particularly special for our year 7 and 8 students as this for many is their first taste of competitive sport.

The year 9 basketball team are having a really good season – the A team have won all their matches so far.

Competitive rugby matches against Tenbury were hard fought. The year 7s beat Tenbury and the year 8 and 9 had narrow defeats.

With rugby, we are particularly proud that some of the students have gone on to be signed by local rugby club, Luctonians.

We are keeping our fingers crossed that we can restart the football season after Christmas and we are looking to run boys’ and girls’ football across all key stages.

We have also seen a huge increase in the number of students taking up our extra circular sport clubs, and the number continue to grow every week.

Most importantly, all the students that have attended have shown great progress and really developed their game.”



Mr Bescoby was delighted to see students return to sporting action.

Orienteers have PE lessons mapped out

Pupils will soon be able to take part in orienteering during their PE lessons with plans in place for a course to be plotted out on the school fields.

It is one of a range of new activities being incorporated into the curriculum, along with table tennis and volleyball, as the school looks to expand its sports offering.

Students had a taste of orienteering last half term and the lessons went down so well that the school decided to have a permanent course designed.

Year 11 Kyle said: “I really enjoyed it because it is something very different and

gets different parts of your body thinking and moving.

“I am really looking forward to doing more of it. It is a good idea to make use of the school field. It is great to be able to do sport again like this.”

PE teacher Mr Bescoby said: “We have looked at the impact of the pandemic and decided we need to push outdoor physical adventurous activity.

“We hope it will help students develop their teamwork skills as well as physical fitness – and sport is a great way to relieve mental stress as well.

“We have looked at the impact of the pandemic and decide we need to push outdoor physical adventurous activity...”

Mr Bescoby

Pointless competition idea helps budding scientists

STUDENTS have been honing their science knowledge in a house competition based on TV quiz show Pointless.

Science teachers took inspiration from the popular teatime game show by asking students to not only come up with the correct answers but find the most obscure ones.

During tutor's time, students were asked questions around a specific theme – biology, chemistry, physics, famous scientists and science careers.

Science teacher Dr Day-Jones said: "It is an opportunity for students to gain

lots of house points which they can cash in for rewards, improve their awareness of science, and raise the profile of science around the college.

"We have had lots of great feedback that the students really enjoyed the competition, they really liked the aspect of trying to get the Pointless answers.

"Students are still asking me now, 'are we going to do some more Pointless questions?'"

The overall winner was Tiger house, followed by Leopards in second and Jaguars in third.

Getting out and about at Forest School

THE school is making the most of their proximity to the great outdoors to help students learn about the natural world.

As well as spending time in the woods, EMC students are also learning about issues impacting green spaces, such as sustainability.

Students benefit from the programme with the woodlands transformed into a vibrant learning space where students can explore and study nature.

Year 8 student Lucas said: "Forest School is amazing. We do shelter building, make things and play games and just have fun outdoors.

"At the moment are building a bridge. We learn a lot about safety to do with fires and eye-level brambles and nettles.

"Sometimes we just make a fire and put a kettle on the top and make a hot chocolate, or play games like hide and seek.

Year 8 Carter said: "We are making new areas to improve the Forest School. We are moving more logs there and building a shelter and a pizza oven.

"The best skills we have learned are about safety and survival – we could definitely survive in the woods now."

Assistant Principal, Mr Wharam, said: "The natural woodland and orchard area is



“The natural woodland and orchard area is open-ended and promotes creative thinking and helps to engage young minds...”

Mr Wharam

open-ended and promotes creative thinking and helps to engage young minds.

"Forest school is a safe place where our children learn in a nurturing and safe environment but also try some more

challenging ideas, and move out of their comfort zone."

The school has been awarded a £500 grant from the Ernest Cook Trust to support its Forest School provision.





ARTISTIC CORNER

Year 7 and 8 getting stuck into The National Enterprise Challenge run by Air Products UK.

YEAR 8 Owen won Art Student of the Week with this wonderful abstract bike 3D design.



Scheme strikes a chord with our music-makers

YEAR 7 students have been receiving free lessons in how to play a musical instrument.

The scheme, run in partnership with Encore Enterprise, is aimed at removing the financial barrier to playing in a bid to create a new generation of musicians.

Students have been learning a selection of brass and woodwind instruments, guitar, violin and vocals in weekly small group sessions.

Music teacher Mrs De-Sondberg said: "We wanted to offer free instrumental lessons in the hope of bringing back the ensembles we had before Covid."

"We have lost a lot of our extra-curricular music because of the pandemic, and a lot of the classical instruments aren't as popular any more."

"We always offer some sort of lessons but this is the first time we have offered free lessons out to everyone, and we are delighted to do so."

“We wanted to offer free instrumental lessons in the hope of bringing back the ensembles we had before Covid...”

Mrs De-Sondberg

Photography is in the picture

STUDENTS are exploring their creative talents with a new photography class.

The school is offering a GCSE in photography with students taking lessons up to three times a week.

Student Courtney said: "I am grateful for the school for offering this course because it is something that I am enjoying at the moment."

"At the moment we are looking at different styles and types of photographers."

"It has made me think about my future and I would like to be a wedding photographer."