

HEAD TEACHER'S EDUCATION BULLETIN

May - 2026



PHONE FREE SCHOOL

Those of you who have visited the school site recently will have noticed a new building has appeared next to the tennis courts. Whilst we had hoped that this would be ready for Monday 1st June, global conflict has caused delays to the delivery of materials and we are now expecting completion later this term. The building is our new school reception, which will also function as our 'single point of entry', where all students will switch off their phones and put them in their Yondr pouches each morning. Parents and carers will receive a lot of information and guidance about this together with our new mobile phone policy.

We made the decision to implement a 'phone free school' following visits to Birchwood High School in Warrington last autumn, who are now near the end of their second 'phone free' year. Government policy overtook us in February, when the secretary of state announced new guidance in January stating: 'All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.'

A lot of information was sent out with our survey in late October/early November, which 404 parents and carers responded to. I won't repeat that here, but will simply repeat that our reasons for this decision are entirely about improving our student's mental health and well-being. Having not grown up with 'smart' phones, I cannot possibly know what life is like for our young people, but there is overwhelming evidence that over exposure to screen time increases anxiety, reduces attentional focus and in turn impacts negatively on learning. We will over the next year also be exploring ways to support our parents and carers to control and limit screen time.



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OUR PERMACULTURE GARDEN

In February I submitted a bid to the National Lottery 'Awards for All' for £14,000 to fund a 'Creating Environmental Sustainability' project. I am delighted to inform you that the lottery team approved this bid in late April and we are currently planning how this will work. There were 2 aspects to the bid, which included funding for our own permaculture garden and polytunnel for winter planting, and a range of strategies to increase the biodiversity of the school site.

We aim to create a permaculture garden with raised beds near to the science block at the front of our site, which will be sheltered between our boundary hedge and a polytunnel type structure – we are exploring the most robust design for this at present. The foundation for this work is the United Nations **agroecology framework**, which teaches us about creating just, resilient and sustainable food production systems. We hope to involve as many students as possible in this work, and would welcome any support from keen gardeners and horticulturalists in the Bewdley community, as our plants will need to survive all year round, but school is only open for 39 of the 52 weeks.

Our biodiversity work is much broader and we are working in partnership with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to plan and carry out this work. Our first steps are to create wildflower meadows and the front and back of the school. There is also a long and narrow strip of woodland between the school and the river, which we will seek to manage to increase its biodiversity. We also plan to install bird and bat boxes, create invertebrate habitats and install an otter box on the brook which runs through the school site. We will monitor wildlife use of various areas of the site using camera traps, so that students can gain first-hand experience of the increase in biodiversity on our school site.



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SEVENTY YEARS OF 'THE BEWDLEY SCHOOL'

In my February bulletin I told you about an idea I was working with to celebrate 70 years of secondary education on our wonderful school site. This is still a work in progress and subject to change, but I would like to share our current plans with you and ask for the help of the Bewdley community in shaping this celebration.

Our ideas are still very much about sculpture as a permanent and very tangible legacy for this celebration, with also musical celebrations and written word as part of our plan. In order to make this as meaningful and powerful experience for our community as possible, we plan to ask specialists in their field to be 'Sculptor in Residence', 'Musician in Residence' and 'Writer in Residence' for a proportion of next school year. I will be submitting a bid to the Arts Council at some point soon, and the 'Sculptor in Residence' will be contingent on the bid being successful. The musical and written aspects of the plan will go ahead regardless.

The title of the project which will drive this celebration is 'Past, Present, Possible - What a school represents to its community'. Put very simply, our project process is to ask people who attended the school in any of its various lives - Bewdley Secondary Modern School, Bewdley High School and The Bewdley School, to share with us their experiences of attending the school. We will use the anecdotes we are told to produce printed work which tells the story of the school. The themes and emotions which these stories evoke will be used to inspire a symphony or collection of musical works which will be performed in the summer of 2027. They will also be used to inspire sculptural themes which will be installed on the site next summer.

If you or anyone you know attended the school between its opening in 1956 and today, please contact head@bewdley.worcs.sch.uk or call the school on 01299 403277 to tell us your story.

'Past, Present, Possible -
What a school represents to its community'

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END OF THE EBACC

Choices of GCSE subjects in England have never been entirely free. During my 34 years as a teacher, students have always had to study the core subjects of English, maths and science at GCSE. In 2010 the coalition government introduced the 'English Baccalaureate' or Ebacc. The drive behind this was also to encourage all students to study a humanities subject and a language at GCSE, in addition to the 3 core subjects.

This has had an extremely negative impact on what are loosely known as creative subjects, and which include on our curriculum subjects like art, design and technology, drama, food technology, music and textiles. We are very proud of the fact that we have not only maintained these subjects, but they include some of our strongest subject areas in the school.

The latest education white paper from the government removes the Ebacc, and asks all GCSE students to choose 2 subjects from 3 groups, the groups being creatives, humanities and languages. One significant change is that the coalition government did not include religious education as a humanity subject but the new framework does. This new structure will apply only to students in current year 7 and year 8 when they reach GCSE. All other year groups will continue with the legacy Ebacc system. When year 7 and 8 approach GCSE options there will be a lot more information about this change.



'The latest education

white paper from the government removes the Ebacc'