On Yer Bike

Boys and girls from Bullen have been on a 350-mile sponsored cycle ride – without even leaving the school.

Teachers and students from Bullen House used the school’s new X bikes to complete the distance, taking it in turns to cycle. Each bike covered 25 miles.

All proceeds from the sponsored event will go to Bullen’s chosen charity, Help for Heroes, which supports ex-servicemen and women, and their families.

The sponsored bike ride was inspired by a 350-mile cycle ride completed by Help for Heroes supporters. More than 300 people – many of them with disabilities – rode across northern France retracing the Normandy Landings.

Going, Going...

When Billy Kyle, 16, decided to cut off his trademark ponytail after eight years, he thought it might help to raise some money for charity.

Billy hoped to raise £200 but went on to collect more than £1,000 for MacMillan Cancer Support – including £20 from fellow student, Chris Sargeantson, who won a bidding war to be the one to cut off Billy’s plait.

Hundreds of students crowded into the Sixth Form Centre to see Billy given a short back and sides free of charge by a hairdresser from Classic Cuts of Ashby.

See page two for full story.
This issue of the Ashbeian showcases some of the fantastic activities students are involved in and many of the exciting initiatives taking place in Maths, English and Humanities.

The school is a vibrant place! Students and staff are working together to make sure that everyone enjoys their time at Ashby School. The school is committed to giving staff and students as many opportunities as possible to develop their interests and ambitions.

Student Voice is now an important part of school life. Students take leading roles in the work of the Houses; help staff to review the courses they teach; and are involved in all teacher interviews.

During the Spring term, Matt Hall (Director of Guidance and Student Voice) is working closely with students to give them a greater input into the way they learn and how teachers can help their learning.

Staff are also preparing students for their Summer exams. All main school students – including Year 10 students – will be sitting GCSE exams during the Summer term.

For Year 11, it is essential that all coursework is completed as it must be marked and sent off to examination boards. Students should attend revision classes and pick up the revision guides they need to help them with the Summer examination papers.

Year 12 students will take their final AS exam in the Summer. The grades they achieve will be taken into account by universities when they apply for university places during the Summer term.

Year 13 students are also under pressure. There are fewer university places available for the next academic year which means that competition for places will be fierce. Staff are determined to help students improve their grades by providing extra revision sessions, working on past papers and so on.

Students must take advantage of all the support and advice offered by staff if they are to raise their examination grades.

Our focus is on ensuring that all students achieve the very best they can. Staff will do everything to help them gain the examination grades, personal skills and qualities they need to move on to college, university and eventually a career.

Mrs V. Keller-Garnett
Headteacher

Speaking after his haircut, Billy said: “I feel very strange, I feel as if I’ve lost a stone in weight!

“I thought it was about time I got rid of the ponytail – I was getting a bit bored of it and it was a lot of trouble in the mornings – but I had no idea I would be able to raise so much money. A lot of people know me for my pony tail so now I will just blend in. I’ve got no plans to grow it again; I will be keeping it short!”

Another One Bites the Dust
Design teacher Karl Goodere decided to lose his locks after hearing about the End Polio Now campaign, which is being backed by the Ashby Castle Rotary Club.

Students paid £1 each to enter Mr Goodere’s charity prize draw, raising £130 for the End Polio Now fund.

Mr Goodere, who had been growing his hair since September, said: “When I heard about the End Polio Now campaign, I wanted to do something to help. In the UK, polio cases have fallen by 99 per cent because of vaccination but there is still more work to be done in other countries."

Ashby School has a long and successful tradition of charity fundraising. In 2009, the school donated more than £9,000 to charity from House fundraising activities alone.
Pilot Matt Gets his Wings

A high-flying Sixth Former from Ashby School has earned his pilot’s licence.

Matt Forrest, 17, is following in the footsteps of his dad, who is a Captain for bmibaby, and his grandad, who flew World War II planes off aircraft carriers.

Matt is now able to fly any simple, single piston engine aeroplane during the day outside of cloud. He hopes to become an airline pilot after leaving the Sixth Form. In the meantime, he and his dad are building a two seater kit-plane which will be able to fly at 250 mph and perform aerobatics.

Matt said: “We are hoping to have it completed in less than 12 months so watch out at the next Year 13 leavers’ ball!”

Dentist Hopeful Gets his Teeth into National Competition

The recession-busting plans of a student from Ashby School have earned him second place in a national essay-writing competition.

Marco Narajos, from Year 10, impressed judges with his answer to the question: ‘Has the recent financial crisis changed the way you think about your future?’

Marco wrote about his decision to become a dentist, after discovering that it was one of the professions least affected by the economic downturn.

Marco entered the Baillie Gifford and Financial Mail Essay Competition after spotting it in the Finance section of the Daily Mail. He came second in the 13 to 15 age group.

Students Become UN Ambassadors for a Day

Students will be able to put the world to rights when they hold their own United Nations Security Council meeting in March.

Students will take on the role of UN Ambassadors, representing each of the 15 member states. They will discuss the issues facing genuine Security Council members, and will pass resolutions.

Ashby School has its own branch of the United Nations Association. Members meet after school every Wednesday to learn about international issues and find out how they can get involved. Anyone interested in joining should speak to Mr Shahrokhshahi.

School Serves Up Free Festive Cheer

Older people from in and around Ashby were invited to a free afternoon of festive entertainment at Ashby School.

Visitors were treated to a performance by the school’s Music Department, followed by tea, coffee and mince pies, served by Sixth Formers.

The event was part of the school’s commitment to involve the community in all aspects of school life.
Tom and Sarah Head Up New Schemes

The horrors of Auschwitz are to be conveyed to all students by the Head Boy and Head Girl, who visited the Nazi death camp in February.

Tom Caron and Sarah Folwell are putting together tutorial activities based on their experiences in Poland, to encourage other students to think about the holocaust.

The Student Senior Leadership Team – headed by Sarah and Tom - is also looking at different ways to get students of all ages involved in more areas of school life. Students from all Years are now welcome to attend Student Voice meetings.

Sarah explained: “Anyone can come along if there is something they want to talk about. We are looking at bigger issues that affect everybody, such as timetable changes and plans to introduce a cashless payment system.”

An open mic evening organised by Deputy Head Girl Emily Harris helped to raise £300 towards the cost of the Yearbook and Leavers’ Ball.

School Mourns Death of MP

The death of long-standing school Governor David Taylor was a major loss for Ashby School.

MP David Taylor was an ‘old boy’ of Ashby School as well as being a governor, a former chair of the governing body and a highly-valued supporter of the school. His four daughters all attended the school.

Headteacher Mrs Vivien Keller-Garnett said: “David was committed to comprehensive education and worked untiringly on behalf of all children in his constituency to ensure they had access to the education and support they needed to improve their life chances.

“David helped Ashby School in numerous ways. He was always willing to listen and genuinely wanted to know how his government’s education policies affected the work of the school and students’ lives. He never flinched at raising questions in the House about our concerns – the school was frequently mentioned in Hansard - and would pursue the DSCF for answers or changes in policy.”

A collection was organised at Ashby School to raise money for the British Heart Foundation, in memory of David Taylor.

Superhero Flies Flag in French Competition

A new superhero devised by two languages students may help them to make their mark in a national competition.

Lorna McDowell and Amy Rundlett, from Year 11, entered a national competition run by the British Council to devise a storyboard in French, using 10 set words.

The girls, who compiled the entry in their free time, created a superhero called ‘Le Mentor’ to star in their storyboard.

Teacher Fiona McCafferty said: “The girls have developed their language skills by using words that they would never have come across before, applying them in different contexts and using a range of tenses and structures.”

Trampolinists Reach New Heights

Talented trampolinists from Ashby School fought off fierce competition to reach the semi-finals of a national contest.

In the first round at Nottingham, there were victories for the girls’ under 19s team and the boys’ under 15s side, securing both a place in the semi-finals.

Joe Hamon – a member of the winning boys’ side – came first in the under 15s individual competition, with team mate Josh Wright in second place.

In the semi-finals, the girls achieved a respectable fourth, while the boys came fifth, despite injury problems. The competition was run by the British Schools Gymnastics Association.

All four members of the girls’ team have since completed a judging and coaching course, enabling them to help run trampolining events across the county.
Speakers Stand Up for Ashby School

A sterling performance by Ashby School’s public speaking team earned them a place in the semi-finals of the Rotary Youth Speaks competition.

The three-strong team was made up of Chairperson Anand Srivastava, Speaker James Rucinski and Proposer of Thanks Maisie Ridgeway.

In the semi-final, the team faced stiff competition from five other schools in the Senior category.

Cyclist is Sports Star

Cycle speedway star Carl Jarvis reached the final of the prestigious BBC East Midlands Sports Awards.

The Great Britain U19s skipper, who finished in the top three, said: “Of course I would have loved to win the event, but just to mix with the likes of Sven Goran Erikson and Rebecca Adlington was a great experience.”

Carl has been British junior champion on five occasions. His progress in the BBC competition was based on his international achievements which included being England’s top scorer in the world cup final in Australia and skippering the Great Britain team.

Tia Cooks Up a Storm

Promising chef Tia Allen cooked up a storm in the county final of the Rotary Young Chef competition, finishing in second place.

Tia represented Ashby School in the final at Samworth Academy in February, after coming first in the school heats. In the final, she was required to prepare a three-course celebration meal.

Sarah Middleton, Food Technology teacher at Ashby School, said: “There were about 15 schools taking part – including catering colleges - and Tia was one of the youngest competitors, so she did exceptionally well.”

Get Help from Mary Smith

Ambitious young people from the Ashby area can apply to a special fund for help with the costs of their education or chosen career.

The Mary Smith Scholarship Fund is open to anyone under 25 who lives in or around Ashby, or is a former student of either Ashby School or Ivanhoe High School.

Successful applicants can normally expect a grant of between £25 and £150 to pay for training or to improve their career prospects.

Application forms are available from Ashby School or by visiting the school website. Completed forms must be returned by Friday 19 March 2010. Applicants will be asked to attend an interview with the Mary Smith Trustees on Friday 16 April 2010.

Keep School E-Informed

Parents are being urged to inform the school when changing email address – as most communication with students’ families is now conducted by email.

Parents who don’t tell the school about a change of email address may miss out on important information relating to their child’s learning and/ or activities.

Clive Jones, Chair of Governors, said: “By emailing parents, rather than posting letters home, the school can communicate much more quickly with families – and save a lot of paper.”

Information sent out by email includes log-in details for the My Child at School system (which allows parents to check their child’s progress on line 24 hours a day), Faculty information, school reports, parents’ evening details, Gifted and Talented updates, and news of forthcoming events.

Anyone who believes the school may not have their current email address should contact a.flamson@ashbyschool.org.uk
Faculty Focus...

Humanities

Three new teachers have been appointed to meet the growing demand for Humanities courses.

One of the biggest increases in student numbers has been in Religious Studies at A level.

Head of Faculty Stuart Hicks said: “RS is not what most people think it is. It is not Bible study or even the study of world faiths. It is about philosophy and ethics; meaty, contemporary issues that are very appealing to young minds.”

All Year 10 students are now following a full GCSE course in Religious Studies. Previously, students had worked towards a half-GCSE qualification.

At A level, more students have opted for courses in History, Psychology, and Government and Politics.

All Humanities courses at GCSE and A level are now modular, which means that students sit exams throughout the year, rather than in the summer alone.

Trips and visits add an extra dimension to learning across Humanities subjects.

In the last year, Humanities teachers organised a Sixth Form trip and a Year 10 trip to the Houses of Parliament, where they were met by David Taylor MP.

The Geography Department organised a fact-finding trip to Iceland in 2009, and is planning a Year 12 field trip to Holderness and a Year 10 field trip to Stratford upon Avon later this year.

Forty students, most of whom study Government and Politics or History, will travel to America in June to visit Washington, Philadelphia and New York City.

Psychology students are planning to see illusionist Derren Brown live on stage, while Year 11 History students will visit the Doctors’ Show (a dramatic reconstruction and exam busting workshop on the History of Medicine in two hours).

All trips tie in with students’ work in the classroom.

Sadly, students will no longer be visiting Ashby’s historic castle as part of their GCSE studies. Since the school adopted a new GCSE syllabus, students do not study local history.

English

Stage and screen performances have helped to bring English texts to life for scores of students this year.

Students have travelled to see a number of performances, linked to their studies, including ‘A Christmas Carol’ at the Birmingham Rep, Disney’s ‘A Christmas Carol’ at the cinema, Lenny Henry as ‘Othello’ in London, ‘Woman in Black’ at the Curve theatre in Leicester, and ‘Othello’ at Buxton Opera House.

Students will also be visited in school by performance poet Dreadlock Alien, who gives a new slant to poetry by using genres such as slam and hip hop.

Teacher Alison Allford said: “Performance is crucial to the study of English – it adds a whole new dimension and it encourages students to think in a different way about the texts they are reading.”

Students are getting more out of their reading by taking part in after-school clubs, such as the Ashby School Book Group. Students meet once a month to discuss a chosen book.

Forthcoming meetings will focus on ‘A Long Way Down’ by Nick Hornby (22 March), ‘Shadow of the Wind’ by Carlos Ruiz Zafon (30 April), ‘A Secret Life of Bees’ by Sue Monk Kidd (24 May), and ‘The Book Thief’ by Markus Zusak (28 June). If anyone is interested in going along, or has a spare copy of any of the books, they should speak to Miss Cave.

A creative writing group has been set up by student Nataliya Manskova for students to produce and critique their own creative writing.

For students who need extra help or support with English work, catch-up sessions take place every Thursday after school.

English teachers are also working with Study Plus students to help ensure they achieve a C grade at GCSE in English and English Literature.

Lessons involve more imaginative and interactive teaching techniques and greater use of teaching assistants’ skills. It is hoped that Study Plus will boost students’ attainment, confidence and motivation, in all subjects with a literacy element. This year’s students have all achieved grade C in their first piece of coursework.

Classroom teaching has been enlivened for all students by the introduction of Quizdom, an electronic voting system. Like game show contestants, students are asked to select their answers to set questions by pressing a button. The system is used to test students’ knowledge, particularly in revision modules.

Ashby students visited the Houses of Parliament

English Department
Maths
Maths and motivation go hand-in-hand at Ashby School – where teachers have launched several new initiatives to help students get the most out of their Maths.

The school’s annual Motivational Maths Day has become so successful that this year it was extended to involve more than 500 students from Years 10 and 11.

Students competed in teams to tackle a range of puzzles and Maths-based activities, designed to show the usefulness of Maths in a range of situations.

Able students in Year 10 are being encouraged to sit their GCSE Maths exam a year early. This means they can progress more quickly with their Maths learning and even choose to re-sit the exam in Year 11 if they want to improve their grades.

Ashby School is now working with its feeder high schools on plans for some students to sit the exam in Year 9.

At Post-16, some students are working towards their Maths Leader Award. This national scheme aims to teach young people how to lead others through basic maths activities and to develop their own communication, organisation and motivational skills.

All students are set to benefit from the delivery of five new whiteboards to Maths classrooms in January 2010.

White boards enable teachers to call up pages of previous work, take advantage of virtual instruments such as compasses and protractors, and save work for absent students.

Head of Maths Claire Jackson said: "White boards are simple but so useful. Whiteboards mean that lessons can be livelier and are another way of making Maths more interactive and engaging. Maths is a great subject."

Students appear to agree as unprecedented numbers are opting for Maths and Further Maths at post-16.

From the Governors...

Specialist Schools Steering Group Report
Languages College Report

As a Specialist Languages College, Ashby School is continuing to offer a wide range of language options, and to expand language work in the local community.

Weekly Japanese classes and termly Mandarin lessons, which focus on culture and language, have both proved popular with students. Italian lessons are also well-subscribed.

Ashby School is still working with local primary schools to ease the transition for pupils moving from primary school to high school. Training sessions for primary teachers and a French play for primary pupils were held in March.

Technology College Report

Teaching staff are working hard to ensure that students have continuity in their learning as they move from high school to Ashby School. Heads of Faculty in Science and Design Technology are working together to agree the subjects and topics to be taught to all 11 – 16-year-olds in Ibstock and Ashby.

Meanwhile, Head of Maths Claire Jackson is working with colleagues across North West Leicestershire to develop a district-wide curriculum model for Maths, aimed at improving Maths attainment for all students.

Big bang expert Professor Paul Newman gave a lecture on particle physics to A level Science students. Leading physicist Professor Newman has worked on the famous Large Hadron Collider, which replicates the conditions created by the ‘Big Bang’.

Finance Committee Report

Funds have been allocated for several major projects in the last year, including the extension and refurbishment of the Art, Design and Technology Faculty. Work will start soon on a new Boarding House extension funded by a grant from the DCFS.

To improve site security, an electronic security card access control system is being installed on all external doors. All students will be issued with an electronic card which will also be used for identification and cashless catering.

Steps to improve energy efficiency include a rolling programme of replacement double glazing and low energy light fittings, thermostatic valves on all radiators, insulation of pipework in all boiler houses, and measures to improve the efficiency of the swimming pool pump.

Major investment in the school’s IT facilities has seen the arrival of new computers for Design, Media Studies, Science, and admin staff, as well as interactive whiteboards in the Maths Faculty.

In January, external auditors confirmed that the school had again met the requirements of the Financial Management in Schools standard.

The Finance Committee is currently working on the 2010/11 financial year and expects to receive a budget of around £9m.

Daphne Hodkinson – Chair of Finance Committee
Andrew Burton - Bursar

The Finance Committee oversees all financial matters and health and safety developments across the school site.
Talking Heads

What is your name?  
Mr White but you can call me ‘Sir’.

Describe your role at Ashby School.  
I am a teacher of students and a pastoral guide to hundreds of young people.

How long have you been at the school?  
Seven and a half years….doesn’t time fly?

What did you do before you came to Ashby?  
I ran a slightly upmarket health club in Nottingham.

How has the school changed since you arrived?  
New buildings, new technology, new courses. Statistics now drive almost every aspect of the school for better or worse. Discuss.

What do you like best about your job?  
Never a dull day.

Tell us something about yourself that not many people at Ashby know.  
I was once (and briefly) a legal document courier in Los Angeles.

What do you think of today’s young people?  
Same as they ever were. I do think that their perceived reliance on technology is a bit sad though – there is life beyond phones, email, xboxes and Facebook.

Why do students need to follow a course in Citizenship?  
The boring answer is that the law says so. The better answer is that, when it is done right, students should gain an understanding of the wider world that they are going to live in. One day they will have jobs, partners, credit cards, mortgages, debt and a vote, so it helps to learn about some of this now and save themselves the confusion later.

What would you ask Joe McElderry (X Factor winner)?  
I’d ask him whether he has any self respect or whether he likes to debase himself in any and every way possible just to get his 15 minutes of fame. Also I would ask him whether he’d ever heard of Rage Against the Machine before Christmas 2009.

If you were stranded on a desert island, who would you choose to be stranded with?  
Ray Mears – survival guaranteed. Or perhaps my wife, if she’s read the Ray Mears Wilderness Survival Guide book.

Who do you most admire and why?  
Difficult question. Right now it’s, surprisingly, Boris Johnson. Not for the politics but for the ability to do a serious job whilst looking like he’s having a laugh at the same time.

How would you spend a million pounds?  
Quickly and hopefully generously.

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Diary dates

- 13 March  
  Old Ashbeian dinner at Lyric Rooms
- 16, 17 and 18 March  
  Year 12 Geography field trip
- 22 March  
  Psychology evening trip to Leicester
- 24 March  
  Gap year fair  
  Guest speaker Paul Reynolds to address United Nations group, 3.15pm  
  English theatre trip to Stoke
- 26 March  
  End of term
- 12 April  
  Summer term begins
- 14 April  
  Year 11 leavers’ photographs
- 14 - 16 April  
  Year 10 Geography field trip
- 20 April  
  Visiting poet to Year 11  
  English students
- 23 April  
  Ferrers’ residential weekend
- 26 April  
  Language orals begin
- 28 April  
  Year 13 leavers’ photographs
- 4 May  
  Higher Education evening
- 5 May  
  Aim Higher conference at Leicester University
- 7 May  
  Year 11 ball
- 11 - 14 May  
  European teachers and students in school
- 13 May  
  Awards evening

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Bon Anniversaire!

Ashby School is celebrating 10 years of its partnership with French school Lycee Triboulet. 
French exchange students spent a week at Ashby in December, sitting in on lessons and visiting places of local interest, including Stratford and Belvoir Castle.
Ashby students returned the visit in January, spending a week with their hosts in Romans-sur-Isere.
Both trips gave students an excellent opportunity to talk in French with their French counterparts, in preparation for crucial GCSE, AS and A2 oral exams in the summer term.