Ashby School Sets the Pace

Ashby School is leading the way in classrooms across the country - by sharing its expertise with more schools and colleges than ever before.

Ashby’s growing success means that it is being asked to share its ideas with teachers elsewhere – including staff at two under-achieving East Midlands schools.

Teachers from Ashby now have a hands-on role in the two schools – both of which were placed in special measures by OfSTED – to improve student performance.

Science staff from Ashby School are also training teachers as far afield as Herefordshire and Staffordshire in the use of information technology.

Many of the projects stem from Ashby’s status as a Specialist Technology College (TC).

Tim Procter, TC Director at the school, said: “Being a Specialist Technology College is not only about raising the standards in your own school. A key element is a willingness to share the good practice, skills and strategies of the teaching staff with other schools to give them the opportunity to improve their results.”

Ashby School is also using its expertise to help Loughborough College by providing training and equipment for a new course to tackle computer hackers.

Adrian Wright, Head of IT and Computing at Ashby School, said: “This is a unique partnership between a state secondary school and an FE college, where the secondary school is servicing the FE college. Ashby School has been the prime mover in getting equipment into Loughborough College and training staff. This course will be of international benefit.”

Diary dates

Examination leave dates

• Year 11 examination leave begins on Monday 22 May
• Year 12 students begin examination leave on Monday 22 May and return on Monday 19 June
• Year 13 examination leave begins on Monday 5 June

Other dates

• Year 12 students will attend a Higher Education fair on Wednesday 29 March
• French oral examinations for AS and A2 students will take place in the week beginning Monday 24 April
• GCSE French orals will take place from Thursday 2 May
• Year 11 Leavers’ Ball will be held on Friday 12 May.

School is Upwardly Mobile

Three of the last five mobile classrooms at Ashby School will be demolished by the end of March – making way for a purpose-built teaching block.

The new block – which is expected to cost between £650,000 and £750,000 – is the latest weapon in Ashby School’s campaign to oust its few remaining mobile classrooms.

Continued on back page.
View from the Top

OfSTED inspection

As examination results and teaching standards have improved at Ashby School, we are asked increasingly to become involved with other schools and organisations.

While this gives us a valuable opportunity to offer advice and guidance, we are also learning a great deal – new ideas, fresh ways of working, etc – that can benefit students at Ashby.

Here are just a few examples of the work we have been involved in this term:

• Modern Foreign Languages staff have been helping to train teachers at local primary schools, in line with Government targets for all primary schools to teach a foreign language by 2009. As a result, we have learnt a great deal about introductory language skills;

• Science staff working with schools in Herefordshire and Staffordshire have made us more familiar with Science teaching to younger students and introduced us to some interesting developments in business studies at one of the schools. We are planning to use these findings with our own students;

• Design and Technology staff are hoping to boost GCSE results at two secondary schools which have failed their OfSTED inspections. They are also liaising with primary colleagues to help them to teach computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) to their pupils. This means that students across the Ashby and Ibstock area are becoming the youngest national leaders in CAD/CAM.

Clearly, Ashby School is not only a partner, but a leader, in influencing educational improvements throughout the local area and beyond.

In this issue of The Ashbeian, you will find many other examples of the ways in which Ashby works with other schools, establishments, organisations and agencies on a daily basis - making for a happy, integrated and successful community.

Mrs V. Keller-Garnett, Headteacher

From The Governors...

Finance Committee

Since 2000, the school has invested more than £3 million in structural improvements.

This has included the creation of a new science building, an extension to the library, a dining room extension, toilet refurbishment in Blocks A and C, brand new toilet facilities in B block, a total refurbishment of all the science labs not part of the new building, new classroom and reception in B Block, conversion of the old science block into a Languages Suite, new Network Services room, new Textiles room, new sports hard play area and most recently a new £550,000 Arts Block. Planning permission has also been granted for a new £750,000, six-classroom block on the Leicester Road site to replace the existing mobiles.

Major changes in school catering have also had an impact on the work of the Finance Committee. Since the school ended its contract with external caterers two years ago, all food has been prepared and cooked on site, in a bid to raise nutritional standards and promote healthy eating. As a result, a wider variety of school meal options have been introduced, giving the school greater financial flexibility, and allowing it to trial and subsidise healthier alternatives.

The school has invested £40,000 in new equipment and two new tuck shop-style catering outlets in the school grounds. The Finance Committee has also been able to meet a request from the Student Council to install freeview television facilities in each of the two restaurants.

Ashby School has adopted a similar hands-on approach to school maintenance by taking over the responsibility for maintaining the school buildings from the Local Education Authority. The school now has the flexibility to choose local contractors and has already benefited from an external facelift by being completely repainted.

This year, the school launched ‘Parent Pay’, a secure online facility to enable parents to make credit or debit card payments for school shop items, such as uniform and books, as well as payments for school trips. Details of how to use this facility, including password information, will be included in a letter to parents and on the school website.

For the financial year 2006/07, the school expects to receive a budget of around £6.5 million. In addition, the LEA has provisionally agreed to contribute £350,000 to the new six-classroom block.

The budget will be boosted by continued funding from the DfES following our successful three-way Specialist Technology bid, and our recent accreditation as a Language Specialist School. However, budgetary pressures from rising energy and examination costs, and the cost of implementing the Government’s new teaching staff structure, will mean yet another very challenging year for the Governors.

Daphne Hodkinson – Chair of Finance Committee
Andrew Burton- Bursar
Teacher Training Works Both Ways

Ashby School is working closely with six universities to help train student teachers. In all, student teachers in 13 subjects will carry out their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) at Ashby School this year.

Margaret Hawksworth, Director of Professional Development at Ashby School, said: “This situation is extremely advantageous to both sides. The students are learning their new skills in our supportive environment, while we are benefiting from the wealth of new ideas and strategies that the students bring with them.”

Ashby School also shares its expertise in other ways with local universities, by sitting on several interview panels and giving presentations on issues such as Behaviour Management and Mind Mapping. Miss Hawksworth is also a member of the Leicester University Steering Committee for Education.

Long-Serving Staff Skip Class After 30 Years

Deputy Head teacher Avril Pratt retired in February after 34 years at the school.

Retiring Deputy Headteacher Avril Pratt witnessed the growth of technology in school

Mrs Pratt moved from Berkshire in 1972 to take up a job as English teacher at Ashby School, becoming a Deputy Head in 1979. She worked under four headteachers, taught thousands of students and witnessed dramatic changes in education.

Mrs Pratt, who had special responsibility for timetabling, said: “The single biggest change in the last 30 years is the technology. I remember when the school introduced its first computer studies course. There was just one computer to teach a whole class of students and that was bought with proceeds from the school tuck shop. Now with fully-equipped computer suites and interactive white boards in every classroom, things couldn’t be more different.”

Mrs Pratt will now spend more time with her husband and is looking forward to pursuing her hobbies of travelling, swimming, walking and reading, as well as crosswords and Sudoku.

Another long-standing member of staff left Ashby School in January. Assistant Premises Officer Alan Poyser had worked at the school for 17 years before deciding to retire. Ashby-born Alan, who has lived in the town all his life, is planning to spend more time travelling and walking, and with his family.

To mark his retirement, Alan was presented with a watch and gardening vouchers.
Faculty Focus – English

Right to Read - Ashby School students are giving up their free time to help local primary school youngsters with their reading. Since September, 40 of Ashby's Year 13 students have been involved in the Right to Read scheme. The students are trained to work with small groups of children in local primary schools each week, listening to them read and discussing their reading habits.

English teacher David Allford said: “Ashby School students have given up some of their free time every week to work with the primary schools. Both our Year 13s and the primary school children have enjoyed the activity and have benefited from it.”

Following the success of the scheme, primary schools requested that Right to Read be extended to include more children. As a result, 40 students from Year 12 began working in primary schools in February.

A Novel Competition - Budding writers were given the chance to showcase their talents, by entering a competition to find the best writer in the school. During assemblies, students were shown examples of exciting openings to novels and were then asked to produce their own. The only rules were that the story opening had to be a gripping read and a maximum of 120 words. The standard of entries was very high, and encompassed a wide variety of subjects and styles. Of the 253 entries received, the winner was David Piper from Year 11 who produced a witty and beautifully controlled effort.

IT improvements - All teachers are now incorporating IT into English lessons and utilising new projectors to view all film resources. Wireless keyboards and computer mice have also found their way into English, much to the amusement of many classes. TVs on trolleys are now a thing of the past!

Staff are hoping that new software bought to help students improve their approach to the non-fiction section of GCSE exam will prove successful.

Visiting Speaker for Year 13 - Jean Evans, principal examiner for AQA English, will be visiting the school on Monday 20 March to work with 60 Year 13 students. She will be giving tips and advice on how to approach the Critical Approaches Paper for A2 English Language and Literature.

Trips and Visits

Since the beginning of the year, English staff have organised a rich variety of trips and visits to support and encourage students in their studies.

GCSE Trips - In January, teacher Alison Allford took a large group of Year 10 students to Stratford to see 'Great Expectations' - a text many students study for coursework.

Later in the month, 150 Year 11 students attended GCSE Poetry Live in Nottingham where they enjoyed hearing a wide range of modern poets including Simon Armitage, Carol Anne Duffy, John Agard and Gillian Clarke.

Year 13 Canterbury Trip - In September, Year 13 students headed to the South East to re-enact Chaucer’s ‘Canterbury Tales’, accompanied by Mrs Fisher and Mr Fox. This book forms the basis for the students’ A2 English text transformation.

During their visit, students ‘rood (the minibus) toward Caunterbury’, as modern pilgrims, calling at a 14th century friary, walking along the Pilgrims’ Way, trying their hands at bell-ringing, and strolling through the Kent woodland. The trip was rounded off by attending mass at the Cathedral, followed by a visit to St. Thomas’ shrine.

Teacher Kath Fisher, who accompanied the students, said: “We crested the hill into the Cathedral City that Chaucer’s own pilgrims would have seen. In the hectic chaos of modern life, we don’t often have the chance to give time to address our spiritual side - we went away with inspirational ideas for our coursework.”

Grade Raiser and Target Groups - Two new initiatives to help students boost their GCSE performance have been launched by the English Faculty. The Grade Raiser Club and the Target Group have been put in place to maximise the achievement of GCSE Year 11 students.

The Grade Raiser Club will run after school for eight sessions and is designed to help students focus on the mechanics of the English examination papers. The Target Group is designed to support and encourage students who have the potential to raise their grade.

Students are strongly recommended to buy commercially-produced Revision Guides for English which are available from school. All Year 11 students will be issued with a free in-house revision guide shortly.

Faculty Focus – Maths

Maths students have given the thumbs-up to increased IT resources in the Faculty.

Staff have built up a large ICT resource base for use in lessons, giving students greater variety and helping to increase their understanding.
Student feedback has included the following comments:

“The graph-drawing software helped me immensely with transformations of graphs and understanding of formulas for quadratics.”

“It's often useful to watch graphs and shapes changing on the screen rather than trying to visualise it in my head.”

(Links to revision sites can be found on the Maths pages of the school University site.)

A Calculated Risk - One recurring problem with technology is that students are consistently failing to bring their calculators to lessons. This is having a detrimental effect on their learning. As a result, students are being urged to come to school properly equipped.

Joint Venture - The Maths Faculty is now developing closer links with Ibstock and Ivanhoe Colleges as part of the school's Technology College commitments. The school's first joint venture involves entering a number of Year 10 high school students for GCSE Statistics.

Maths Challenge - More than 100 students from Years 10 and 11 entered the national mathematics challenge run by the University of Leeds.

Two students from Ashby School were placed in the top 400 for their Year group. David Piper (Year 11) and Hannah Willett (Year 10) both qualified for the prestigious Mathematical Olympiad to be held in March. This was a magnificent achievement.

Ellie Holt (Year 11) and Tom Platts (Year 10) finished in the top 1,500 for their respective year groups and qualify for the Kangaroo stage of the challenge. This was another great achievement. Anthony Moon and Jenny Wallace from Year 10 also achieved great scores and were awarded with gold certificates.

Ashby School is also planning to enter for the Maths Challenge team event later in the year.

Awards - Last year, Jack Hetherington and Paul Wild were given a Maths Award for improving most from GCSE to AS. Two Year 13 students will be awarded similarly this year.

Finally, the Faculty is trying to keep students interested and on their toes by publishing regular competitions such as those found on the Cambridge University website http://plus.maths.org

Faculty Focus – Humanities

Humanities is a large, diverse and vibrant Faculty responsible for the delivery of Humanities and some social science subjects across the school.

During the autumn term, a large group of Year 12 students attended a conference in Birmingham on the Reign of Henry VII, while a smaller group of Year 13 students visited a conference in London on the subject of Life in Nazi Germany.

In April, Year 11 students will go to the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds as part of their revision programme on the History of Medicine. This will be followed in May by a visit to Ashby Castle and Museum for all Year 10 History students, as part of their research for a piece of coursework entitled History Around Us.

History - History students from different year groups have taken part in a range of visits in recent months.

Government & Politics - Ashby School's first group of Government and Politics A level students has almost completed the full course.

Students have chosen an intriguing combination of coursework issues, ranging from the rise of Sinn Fein to the weaknesses of the US Constitution. In March, Year 12 students will visit an AS Government and Politics conference in London

Psychology - In December, the Psychology Faculty took over the school's Lecture Theatre for a day, where staff and students were joined by examiner and author Cara Flanagan.

AS students listened to two 40-minute talks based on their January module - with tea, coffee and biscuits on offer during the break.

This was followed by two 40-minute talks for A2 students, linked to their final Psychology examinations this summer. Overall, the day was a huge success and involved about 80% of Psychology students.

A2 students who are considering taking Psychology as a degree were given the opportunity to attend an applied Psychology course. This featured talks on Forensic Psychology, Sports Psychology and Criminal Psychology, among other areas. For many students, this course confirmed their decision to take their Psychology studies further.

Religious Studies - The Religious Studies department kicked off the year in celebratory style, after achieving excellent examination results and the highest ever uptake for A level RS.

Highlights of the year so far have included a regional conference at Coventry Cathedral for Year 13 students. They took part in various active learning seminars as well as listening to a thought-provoking lecture by Professor John Hull.

Head Boy Nick Lackenby and Head Girl Lucy MacLauchlan took part in the Holocaust Educational Trust’s ‘Lessons for Auschwitz’ course. This involved seminars at the Central London Synagogue and The Imperial War Museum, as well as a visit to the concentration camps at Auschwitz, Poland.

Following this, Nick and Lucy hosted a series of excellent assemblies that brought home to students the scale of the atrocities that took place. They also wrote the following piece about their experiences of Auschwitz: ...Continued on page six
Faculty Focus - Humanities (continued)

“The word Auschwitz' has become synonymous with thoughts of inhumanity and murder. By the end of the Second World War, more than one million Jews, gypsies, Russian prisoners of war, homosexuals and Poles had been slaughtered there.

It is hard to convey the emotions one feels on seeing the piles of shoes, hair and suitcases left behind by the victims, or the infamous gateway leading to the death camp at Birkenau.

One of the most striking truths we learnt at Auschwitz was the importance of making the whole school aware of the horrific act of genocide.

Our opportunity to speak to the school came through assemblies. As each student left the lecture theatre, they were given the option of pinning a symbol to a wall in the 'Passage of Reflection.' Each symbol represented more than one million innocent victims who were killed during the Holocaust.”

Geography

In the last 12 months, Geography has continued to be a popular and successful choice for students at GCSE and A level. Examination results in both have been excellent. In the recent January 2006 unit results, many students achieved above their target grades in demanding A5 and A2 examinations.

General Studies and Critical Thinking

General Studies is a key part of the enrichment programme for post-16 students. Many students achieve their best grade in this subject, making it an essential part of their requirement for university entry. Critical Thinking is a new course targeting Gifted and Talented, post-16 students. The course, which focuses on recognising and developing reasoning skills, has been run as an extra-curricular activity this year. Following excellent, initial results, the course will run again next year.

Citizenship

Citizenship continues to thrive at Ashby School. Academically, students achieved their best ever results at GCSE with a fantastic 75% gaining A*-C grades. It is important to note that 468 students were entered – so this result is extremely positive.

Elsewhere, ‘active citizenship’ has become much more common. This ranges from the work of House Charities, Disaster Appeals and various fundraisers to individual students making a difference in their own communities. Citizenship appears to be increasingly on the agenda.

Bigger, Better & Brainier

School House will once more open its doors to England’s brightest students in 2006 – as part of its programme of courses for gifted and talented youngsters.

Since the scheme began in 1998, the number and type of courses has risen steadily alongside the prestige and success of Ashby School and School House.

As one of the providers for the National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), based at Warwick University, School House runs courses for some of the country’s cleverest youngsters. This year, School House will run a residential course called “In search of Medieval Lost Villages”. There are also nine single days of study taking place across the Midlands, inspired and resourced by School House.

At Easter, Gifted & Talented Teachers from School House will also travel to Cambridge University to run the first course of its type at St Catharine’s College. Thirty-six Leicestershire and Derbyshire students aged 11 to 15 will study the course, focussing on the 17th Century.

During the summer holidays, School House will host four residential courses, including a look at “Messing Around in History” - an examination of the health, engineering and social implications of the treatment of human waste over the last 1,500 years.

There will also be two shorter residential courses, focussing on the English Country House. This course is run in association with the National Trust.

Pond Life

Nature-loving students have begun work to create a haven for pond life at Ashby School – with help from a local builder.

Elementary students brought Wellington boots and warm clothes to start work revamping the pond.

A group of 13 A level Biology students called on builder Keith Beesley to help clear the overgrown pond with his mechanical digger. It is hoped that the finished pond, which will cost up to £1,000 to complete, will attract new wildlife and eventually become the focal point of a new nature area.

The site will also be the setting for a memorial bench, dedicated to former Ashby student Emma Pennington, who died last year following a double lung transplant.

Teacher Charlotte Lauder, who is leading the project, said: “When we began, the area was choked with grass and bore little resemblance to a pond. By the time we have finished, we hope to have fish and plant life and the beginnings of a new conservation area.”

The project should be finished by Easter.

Tip Tops Go Nationwide

A teacher from Ashby School is helping to shape the teaching of gifted and talented students nationwide, by sharing his experiences with colleagues from across the country.

Malcolm Salt addressed more than 200 secondary and primary school teachers at a conference in Northumberland in March on his work with gifted and talented youngsters at Ashby School, and with the Tip Tops – an after-school club for the brightest pupils from local primary schools.
Since last year, the Tip Tops club has doubled in numbers from 40 to 80 youngsters from 12 local primary schools, who each attend Ashby School once a week.

Mr Salt said: “The number of pupils is the highest ever. These children have such a thirst for knowledge. By coming to the Tip Tops, they are going to advance three or four years in the major academic disciplines.”

Ashby School has also launched a poetry competition, open to all local primary school children. This is designed to help the pupils experience language and to encourage them to reach the highest possible standards.

Library Update - In the Picture
A digital camera is available for students to borrow from the library for schoolwork purposes, at no cost.

Students may also wish to improve the presentation of coursework by taking advantage of the library’s colour photocopying service. This costs 20p for an A4 sheet or 40p for A3.

A Flyaway Success
Awards are to be presented to students from Ashby School who help to run the Tip Tops Club for local primary school children.

The Pegasus Awards – named after the mythical winged messenger – will be given to students from Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 who have given up their time to help at the club.

One of the students involved is Guarav Srivastava, 15, from Year 10. He said: “I have built so much confidence in terms of teaching. It is also a great pleasure to see the next generation of gifted and talented pupils and to help them reach a higher level of academic excellence.”

A Case in Points
Well Done Awards have been issued to Sixth Form students for the first time this academic year. Up to February half term, the total number of House Points and Well Done Awards earned since August was as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>1198</th>
<th>6809</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>4961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 13</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an added incentive for Sixth Formers to come to school, following the news that Chair of Governors, Clive Jones, is to sponsor Year 12 and 13 attendance. Students with a 100 per cent attendance record for a term will be entitled to a week of free lunches in the school restaurant.

Awards Evening
The school’s annual awards evening in May will feature guest speaker David Taylor MP.

Local MP David Taylor, who is a former student of Ashby Boys’ Grammar School, is also one of the school’s Governors and is renowned for his achievements, both in Parliament and the local community.

More than 100 students from across the school’s Faculties will receive awards for academic and other achievements at the ceremony on Thursday 18 May.

Woodcock Winners
Outstanding academic performers may be in line for an additional award at this year’s ceremony. The Woodcock Prize, which is being reinstated after several years, will be presented in memory of former headteacher Thomas Arnold Woodcock.

A fund to support the annual prize has now been set up. Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the fund should contact Clive Jones, Chairman of Governors, at Ashby School.

Anyone who would like to sponsor one of the other awards should get in touch with Awards Co-ordinator Sue Sibson at Ashby School.

School Council Calls for TV Dinners
Giant TV screens showing sports coverage and music channels have been introduced in Ashby School’s two restaurants, following requests from the School Council.

The TVs have been introduced as part of an ongoing programme to improve the dining experience for students and to encourage more of them to eat on site, where the emphasis is on healthy, homemade meals and snacks.

Nicola Leigh, catering manager at Ashby School, said: “The students love it. At the moment, they are watching the Winter Olympics during their break and lunch times. Later in the year, I imagine it will be Wimbledon and the football World Cup. The televisions are part of our continuing commitment to give students an all-round, satisfying dining experience. The screens can also be adapted to give presentations using a Pc. We shall certainly be using the screens to promote our healthy options.”

Student Laura Hardy, 16, is in favour of the new TVs. She said: “I think the TV is a good idea. It is nice to have a bit of background music and it will probably encourage more people to eat in the restaurants, where they can buy healthier food.”

Rachel Barsby, 17, said: “Most people listen to music at lunchtime anyway so it might stop them bringing their ipods into school, which is a good thing. My only complaint is that we need more screens so that everybody doesn’t crowd around one!”

School Council members are also responsible for organising a non-uniform day to coincide with Fair Trade Week. All proceeds will go towards Fair Trade Week.

There are also plans for a ‘Big Project’, involving a large portion of the school population. Details of this scheme are at present under wraps.
Talking Heads

What is your name?
Avril Pratt.

What is your role at Ashby School?
Deputy Head Curriculum. I retired in February 2006.

How long have you been at the school? 33.5 years

Tell us something about yourself that not many people who work with you would know. I ran chess and water polo clubs here, years ago.

Describe your average working day. A mixture of teaching, marking, preparing, planning, timetabling; getting info to and from students and parents; sorting day-to-day problems; dealing with disciplinary issues, new students, people’s worries; being on duty at breaktime, lunch time, detentions; attending meetings, interviews, etc.

What interests you most about your work? The people and making things work so that people can fulfil their talents.

How has Ashby School changed in the last 30 years? It has always been a vibrant place with enthusiastic staff and students; now it has technology as well.

What changes would you like to see in schools in the next decade? Schools like this – well-run and forward-thinking – should have more financial backing and greater freedom to achieve.

What will you do during your retirement? Walk, read, travel, sport.

How would you like to be remembered? As an effective facilitator, someone who helped to make it possible for others to succeed, and as an encouraging human being.

What will you miss most about going to work at Ashby School? The people and the puzzle (ie timetabling and all that I sum up in that word, which is far more than the timetable itself).

What has been your most embarrassing moment? Misunderstanding a question at an important (at the time) interview.

What scares you most? Unnecessary violence/unreason.

What achievement are you most proud of in your life? Helping others to succeed.

What has been your greatest extravagance? Our house.

What would you never do? Want to live anywhere where there is significant oppression.

When you were at school, what did you want to be? A financier.

If the world were to end tomorrow, what would you do today? Enjoy the day – and preferably help others to enjoy it, too.

Upwardly Mobile (from page one)

Headteacher Mrs Vivien Keller-Garnett said: “We have already removed four mobile classrooms this academic year. The new teaching block on our Leicester Road site will mean that we can get rid of another three mobiles, leaving only two. We have every intention of getting rid of those, too, when the money is available.”

The cost of the new teaching block will be met by £320,000 from Leicestershire County Council, with the remainder coming from Ashby School’s own funds.

Mrs Keller-Garnett added: “Mobiles are cold in winter, hot in summer and expensive to run. Working in mobiles is not conducive to a productive learning environment. We value our students and their education and that is why we want to provide them with the best buildings possible.”

The new block, which will be used for the teaching of English, is part of a rolling programme of building improvements at Ashby School.

French exchange

A week in France helped students from Ashby School to hone their languages skills.

Nineteen students paid a return visit to their penfriends in Romans-sur-l’Isere in February, to brush up on their French speaking and visit some of the local attractions. The students – from Years 11, 12 and 13 – stayed in the homes of French families, acquiring firsthand experience of French life. They also spent a day in Lyon, visiting the historical sights and the shops.

Students from Romans visited Ashby School in December. Ashby School also has partner schools in Spain, Germany and China. Students from Ashby School will visit a Spanish school in April.

Re-cycling to Romania

Recycling could help to save the planet – and send four Ashby students on a free trip to Romania.

By completing a short recycling project, students will be considered for a place on the trip, as part of Ashby School’s involvement in the international Comenius Project. The three-year project, which is funded by the British Council, links Ashby with schools in Romania, Germany, Poland and Italy, and focuses on recycling and sustainability.

Ashby teacher Gary White said: “This is a great opportunity for four students to take part in what is essentially a cultural exchange. The students will get a glimpse of authentic Romanian life, visit local places of interest and meet students from our fellow Comenius schools in Germany, Poland and Italy, as well as Romania.”

To secure a place on the trip, students must prepare a short Powerpoint presentation and a written report about recycling. Focussing on a product of their choice, they should address the following questions:

• What is the life cycle of the product? What is it made of? What materials are recycled? What is not, but could be recycled?
• What percentage of waste is recycled in NW Leicestershire now? What are future recycling targets?
• What recycling initiatives take place in NW Leicestershire?
• What does NW Leicestershire do about non-recyclable waste?
• What are some of the rules and regulations regarding recycling?

Mr White added: “It is vital that we raise awareness of issues like recycling and sustainability across Europe. If we continue to generate waste and rely on landfill sites as a solution, then we are going to confront some very grave problems in the future.”

Students interested in travelling to Romania must be in Years 10 or 11. All entries should be delivered to Mr White by Friday 24 March.

Students are expected to provide a small amount of spending money for the five-day visit. Winning entrants may feature in the local media and be included on the Comenius Extranet site.