



# The British School - Muscat

*'An Outstanding School' - Inspectors 2009*



## BSM's Weekly Newsletter 10 October 2009

### News From The Principal

**Swine Flu** – Last Saturday we had two suspected cases of swine flu. One of the students returned to school on Wednesday and the other is back today.

Today we have one suspected case in 11CB.

So far this term we have had one confirmed and five suspected cases of the illness. Given the highly contagious nature of the virus, it appears that our joint home/school strategies for personal hygiene are working well. So, please continue to stress the importance of good personal hygiene, especially hand washing and respiratory etiquette, so that we're working together to help prevent the spread of the virus.

I will keep you informed on a daily basis of any developments. In the meantime, please keep your children at home if you suspect that they might have a flu-like illness and also keep their brothers and sisters at home. This is very important. You will then need to follow medical advice, especially if your children fall into a high risk category. **The Flu Hotlines for Oman are 92466422 and 92466642.** Please contact Mrs Cath Healy, our nurse, if your doctor suspects that your child may have swine flu. You can contact her on 99432613.

The school's position is to continue with school life as normal. I will contact you if this needs to change.

You can keep up-to-date with progress and advice by monitoring the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office's link: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/swine-flu> and/or the WHO's website: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

**Outward Bound** – Last Monday 10 students from 9TE attended Outward Bound Oman and developed their leadership and interpersonal skills while taking part in challenging adventurous activities on top of Jebel Al Akhdar. They had a challenging and enjoyable time. They were: Alex O'Hanlon, Caitlin Darke, Joel Abraham, Keir Etherton, Maaher Noor Ahmed, Max Hatfield, Oliver Tull, Rebecca Mackay, Victoria Amos and Victoria Clark. Watch out for photos next week!

This week another group of Year 9 students will be on Outward Bound.

**Double House Points** – Last week I awarded double house points to the following primary children for exceeding their teachers' expectations: Ferdinand de Limburg Stirum (1F), Christopher Jackson (2R), Vivian Undag (2S), Daniel Draycott (2S) and Robin Turner (5H) for English. Congratulations and well done!

**New Primary House Captains** – I am delighted to report that the following pupils were elected by their peers to be house captains for the first half of this academic year:

- Emma Taylor (6B) and Colin Mackay (6J) for Bowsher
- Kate Whittingham (6J) and Michael Ainsworth (6J) for Ghubra
- Zoe Taylor (6J) and Matthew Doyle (6J) for Ruwi
- Brogan Robertson (6B) and Sulaiman Al-Riyami (6B) for Yiti

**Attendance – We're Off Target** – This year we set a target to improve our pupils' attendance from Ofsted Grade 3 (satisfactory) to Grade 2 (good) by June 2011. You might remember that this was the only area in our inspection in which we were not judged to be outstanding or good. Our attendance figures against targets for the first month are:

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Target: 90.00% Actual: 89.24%

Key Stage 1 to Sixth Form

Target: 95.00%

Actual: 90.26%

Our under performance against target is mainly accounted for by:

- a) late returns to school at the beginning of September due to family holidays, visa complications for families, late contract starting dates of some parents, a few initial concerns about swine flu.
- b) a higher than normal absence rate on the one-day week beginning Saturday 19 September, that is, 151 absences compared to the usual daily average of 69. On the Wednesday before that holiday we had 103 absences.
- c) general sickness.

Concerns about swine flu and the actual illness itself did not affect pupils' attendance very much.

Please would you help us to hit our targets and reach Grade 2 by sending your children to school every day (providing they are healthy) and by avoiding the topping and tailing of school holidays. I'll report back to you in one month's time to let you know how well you're doing!

**Warning - No After-School Activities** – Please note that I will be holding a staff meeting for all staff on Monday 26 October. Therefore, there will be no after-school that day.

**Blue and Silver Masquerade Ball** – There are only 5 Thursdays to go until it's our Blue and Silver Masquerade (BSM) Ball, so please contact Karen Casemore on [headbsm1@britishschool.edu.om](mailto:headbsm1@britishschool.edu.om) for your tickets. This event, which will be for around 400 at the British Ambassador's Residence on Thursday 12 November, promises to be a very enjoyable evening.

### **News From The Board of Governors**

**Congratulations & Appreciation** – The Board of Governors congratulates Mrs Julie Towler and Mrs Sarah Whitelaw for being elected by parents on to the Board as parent governors. Julie has already served for two years and will now serve another two, whilst Sarah is new to the Board. She will officially take over from Mr Nick Smith on 18 October. The Board would like to thank Nick for his excellent contribution over the past two years. He is likely to remain available to the Board in order to advise on improvements to the school's facilities.

Congratulations also to Mrs Debbie El-Alwan who was elected by teachers to attend Board meetings as a staff representative. Debbie, who teaches English in the Senior School and has very successfully developed Model United Nations within the school, will replace Mr Thomas English who has served exceptionally well for the past four years.

The Board will be officially thanking Nick and Thomas and showing its appreciation for their service on 18 October.


**Marketing Committee** - Last Sunday evening the members of the Marketing Committee, which is chaired by CEO of The Zubair Corporation, Mr Giles Cunningham, met to monitor and evaluate the school's progress through its marketing plan. Aspects under review included press releases, the BSM Ball, sponsorship by companies, the Principal's weekly newsletter, the annual glossy calendar, developing links with the community, and the development of BSM branded merchandise. One of the main outcomes of this committee has been the launch of the school's new-look website which went live last Monday. Please take a look at it by clicking on – [www.britishschoolmuscat.com](http://www.britishschoolmuscat.com) . (The Marketing Committee consists of Mr Giles Cunningham (Zubair), Mr Jan Vossen (Shell), the Principal and the Bursar. All have children at the school.)

**Premises Committee** – The members of the Premises Committee also met last Sunday evening in order to discuss potential strategies for improving our school's facilities. You can make a contribution to this discussion by attending our meeting for all parents at 6.30pm on Tuesday 27 October. The Principal will shortly be inviting you. (The Premises Committee consists of Mr Giles Cunningham (Zubair), Mr Nick Smith (standing down on 18 October), the Principal and the Bursar.

**Finance Committee** – Last Tuesday evening the Finance Committee met in order to review the school's finances. Mr Paul Callaghan and Mr Dariusz Solecki of KPMG provided an auditors' briefing on the school's accounts, which KPMG have just finished auditing. KPMG's final report will be submitted to the full Board on 18 October. The committee then focussed upon strategies that the school could adopt to improve its financial efficiency. Recommendations will be promulgated through the Board on 18 October and outcomes will be published for parents in a summary in the Principal's weekly newsletter on 24 October. (The Finance Committee consists of Mr Ewan Stirling (CEO, HSBC), Mr Chris Holmes (PDO), the Principal and the Bursar.

The Board is very grateful to KPMG who have audited the school's accountants for many years, free of charge. It represents an excellent contribution to the community by KPMG, and outstanding value for money for our school!

**Governor Profiles** – Each week we profile a member of the Board of Governors. This week it's **Gorvinder Pannu, solicitor with Trowers & Hamlins.**

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Gorvinder Pannu</b>
	<b>Governor Type:</b>	<b>Subscribing Company</b>
	<b>Occupation:</b>	<b>Solicitor with Trowers &amp; Hamlins</b>
	<b>Responsibilities:</b>	
	<b>Committees:</b>	<b>Personnel, Pupil Discipline and Appeals Committee</b>

**Personal Details : Gorvinder Pannu**

Gorvinder is a solicitor with Trowers & Hamlins and is based in the Muscat office. Gorvinder specialises in employment law and practiced in London, England for 9 years prior to her arrival in Oman in February 2006. Trowers & Hamlins is a subscribing company and selected Gorvinder to be its Governor representative in April 2009. Gorvinder also has two children in BSM's Primary School. Gorvinder enjoys travelling, having extensively travelled to parts of the Far East, Africa, the Americas and Europe; snorkelling, skiing and reading. Gorvinder also has an interest in other cultures, particularly Islamic and Chinese cultures.

**And Last But Certainly Not Least...**

**Safeguarding & Absence From School** – Please contact us before 8.00am on everyday that your children are absent from school. This ensures that you and we know exactly where they are and why. Thank you.

**Low Attendance, Low Performance** – That's the conclusion reached by Ofsted after inspecting thousands of schools in the UK. Please try to keep your child's attendance levels up but follow the advice on swine flu first. Thank you.

**Tag Your Bags** – Please remember to tag your school bags and name your lunch boxes.

**Clunk-Click Every Trip** – Please make your children wear their seat belts.

**Crawling Speed, Phones Down and Engines Off** – Please carefully crawl through our car parks, don't use your phone whilst driving, and turn your engines off when leaving your car.

**Cream-up and Hats On** – Please protect your child's skin with sun block and a wide brimmed hat. Thank you for your co-operation.

Have a good week!

Steve Howland MBE  
Principal.