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Welcome to the latest issue of *Inform For Education*, the bright new publication for schools across Wales.

This month our pages are again packed with stories about teachers and pupils from secondary schools across the country.

And remember that *Inform For Education*, which is sponsored by education IT specialists Lisol, is **YOUR** newsletter, so we want to hear from you.

If there is something you would like to celebrate at your school, let us know at news@inform4education.co.uk

We look forward to hearing from you. Until then, happy reading!

LANGUAGE PRIZE

An appeal has been made to schools in Wales to enter a competition celebrating the best language projects.

Winners of the European Award for Languages earn international recognition for their school, but the number of recent entries from Wales has been disappointingly low.

"With no winning projects based in Wales in recent years, CILT is keen to boost applications from Welsh colleagues," said Tamzin Caffrey, spokesperson for CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

Schools can compete for prizes of up to £2,000 to be presented by Sir Trevor McDonald.

The deadline for applications is April 13, 2006. For more information log onto www.cilt.org.uk/eal.

INform FOR EDUCATION

GUIDING STUDENTS INTO THE FUTURE

Pupils can put future plans for university and full-time work on hold and take specially-paid gap years.

A scheme run by The Year In Industry (YINI) allows teenagers to get paid to work while still deciding about their future.

And YINI is presently inviting schools in Wales to sign up for presentations to learn more about linking pupils with local companies.

A Level students who sign up to the scheme do essential work for businesses and train on the job, while swelling their bank balances by earning salaries of between £8,000 and £14,000.

Ron Hoare was recently appointed YINI's director for South Wales to help expand the initiative.

"The Year in Industry provides challenging, paid work placements for talented gap year students," he said.

"I am now going to schools to talk to pupils about the options available to them for the future. At the beginning we concentrated on engineering but we can now find placements in areas such as business, IT, electronics and accounting.

"There is plenty for sixth formers and younger members of the school to consider - it is never too early to start thinking about the future."

Former Cowbridge Comprehensive School pupil Ben Isaacs took a placement through YINI four years ago and worked on aircraft engines at the Sea Harrier Aircraft Facility at DARA (Defence Aviation Repair Agency) in St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan.

"I learnt about the placement opportunity while I was studying for my A Levels and was interested in engineering," Ben explained.



Former Cowbridge Comprehensive School pupil Ben Isaacs

"I knew I wanted to take a gap year but also knew I didn't want to sit around - I wanted to do something constructive. My placement meant I learnt about the job from the floor up. I got overalls on and my hands dirty, but also saw the work in the office."

After a year at St Athan, Ben moved onto a civil engineering degree course at Cardiff University and is now sitting his final exams.

Other companies in Wales on the scheme include Hyder Consulting, Fairfield Mabey, Sogefi Filtration and Control Techniques Drives Ltd.

YINI says 26 per cent of students on its scheme get sponsorship through their university years and ultimately go on to work for the companies concerned.

For more information, visit www.yini.org.uk. Teachers who would like to book a presentation on the scheme for their school should email r.hoare@yini.org.uk or call 0870 360 1327.

AROUND WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

The work of teachers and pupils at Dyffryn Taf Comprehensive School, Whitland with the latest interactive whiteboard technology has helped the school to secure "Centre of Excellence" status.

NEWPORT

A team of teenagers - Mathew Hughes, Michael Whnell, Elena Oates and Rosie Griffiths - from St Joseph's RC High School, Newport, have won an innovation award for designing a model racing car.

MONMOUTHSHIRE

St John's-on-the-Hill, Chepstow, is opening its doors on Saturday, March 4, for those interested in learning more about life and learning at an independent school. Call [01291 622045](tel:01291622045) or email registrar@stjohnsonthehill.co.uk for information.

PEMBROKESHIRE

Year 12 and 13 pupils from Greenhill School, Tenby, recently played host to youngsters from Lyon, with students helping each other with their studies of French and English and enjoying trips around the Pembrokeshire coast.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN

Sixth form students at Welsh-medium comprehensive Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg in Barry have joined the Vale Volunteer Bureau programme to offer their services to voluntary groups in the community.

SWANSEA

A specialist teaching facility to give children with profound and multiple learning difficulties the chance to go to mainstream secondary school is being opened at Pontarddulais Comprehensive School in September. It will cater for 12 young people.

LENDING A ROBOTIC HAND

Creating robots to speed up assembly lines and designing easily adjustable aircraft seats were among the tricky problems tackled by dozens of sixth-formers.

The AS Level students put on their thinking caps at an Engineering Education Scheme Wales (EESW) workshop to meet challenges set by companies.

Greg Walker, Michael Price, Rafael Jankowski and Gareth Gibbons, from St Joseph's RC High School, Newport, worked with Corus on ways of detecting holes in metal.

Their teacher, Dr Simon Broadly, said: "This event gives students a valuable insight into how project management works on an industrial scale."

Students from Caerleon Comprehensive School - including Nicola Worrell and friend Louisa Rich - worked with their design and technology teacher John Quaterman to help Fairfield Mabey design a maintenance device for bridge girders.

"It was a real challenge coming up with the idea and then creating a design for it," said Nicola.

Aspiring engineers from St Julians Comprehensive School - including Liam Payne, Alistair Thompson and Gareth Johnson - devised a robotic arm for packing braking systems for Arvin Mentor.

"This is the final stage of the production line and because it's currently being done manually it's slowing down the whole process,"

explained 16-year-old Liam. "The hardest part was writing the script for the program that controls the robot arm."



Rougement independent school students Lauren Ferrand, John-Paul Mysercough and Charlotte Davies are pictured working on a design for an aircraft seat. (Picture by Phil Mansell)

Students from Caldicot Comprehensive came up with a system of video cameras and magnifying lenses to detect flaws in steel. Their task was set by Cogent Orb Steel.

"Currently these flaws are measured by eye," said 17-year-old Ian Perry. "Once we'd solved the problem of how to magnify the steel, we came up with a solution which will hopefully enable the company to make changes before problems occur."

Making aircraft passenger seats which are smoother to adjust was the challenge set by Contour Premium Aircraft Seating for a team from Rougement School, Newport.

And Taliesin Parker and Rhys Brooks, from Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Pontypool, created an assembly rig for artillery shells for BAE Systems. The workshop was held at the University of Wales, Newport.

TEACHERS MAKE A GREAT SONG AND DANCE

Pupils were thanking teachers for the music when staff at a city school put on a show featuring music from Abba, Grease and West Side Story.

Even headteacher Huw Jones-Williams strutted his stuff during the unforgettable show at Fitzalan High School in Cardiff.

Mr Jones-Williams led staff in a musical extravaganza which opened an exciting new chapter in the school's history.

Fitzalan is set to create a multi-media suite in a disused boiler house for the use of pupils and the local community. The facility will include a computer room and a dance and



Thank You For The Music: An Abba Tribute



The cast of Grease Lightning

drama, 'Fame'-style academy.

The show was the teachers' contribution to a series of concerts which will help raise funds for the development.

"The staff used the occasion to project music and drama as fun," said deputy headteacher Barrie Phillips.

Art teacher Debbie Sims produced and directed the show, with technicians from Genero providing the sound.

Mr Jones-Williams took to the stage as part of the Grease Lightning act, which also included Sian Holder, Anne Humphreys, Wendy Owen, Simon Nurse, Pierre Codron, Elaine Bailey, Dal Kaler, Ian Balakrishnan and Sally Roper.

Katie Jones, Sarah Davies, Sue Donnelly, Ceryn Parmar and Emma Walsh ripped it up as the Loud Girls.

Mr Codron got down with the kids as Ali G, while Wolly Carter and Linda Sherrington sung their hearts out in the Phantom of the Opera.

Swedish hitmakers Abba were played by Elaine Bailey, Gill Walker, Lucy Muller and Adrian Smith, and songs from the classic musical West Side Story were performed by Simon Nurse, Ian Northwell and Simon Fuddy.



Looking for trouble! The Loud Girls

The blondest wigs of the night were on country outfit Shania Twain and The Twiglets, consisting of Adrian Pritchard, Ian Northwell, Wendy Owen and Mark Evans.

WEBSITE CONCERNS

Teaching unions want an investigation into a website which encourages pupils to write anonymous comments about staff.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) will discuss a motion at its conference in April condemning www.ratemyteachers.co.uk

NUT Cymru has also criticised the website as being "very upsetting". Gareth Matthewson, headteacher of Whitchurch High School in Cardiff, describes it as "extremely dangerous."

PRIZES FOR HELPING OTHERS

Inventive pupils can help disabled children and win prizes for themselves and their school.

The Ready, Willing and Mobile 2006 competition is open to 11 to 14-year-olds with bright ideas about how to help disabled children integrate into everyday life at school, at home and at play.

Run by Mobility Roadshow, it encourages pupils to consider disability, accessibility and inclusivity.

The winner will receive £1,000 cash for equipment, and stationery and art and craft materials worth £250 for their school.

They also get a digital camera, £100 worth of books and an activity weekend.

Cardiff-born Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE will present the prizes. There are also runners-up prizes.

Entries close on April 30. Details at www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

YOUNG MUSICIANS MAKE COUNTY PROUD

Music loving pupils and teachers in Carmarthenshire have helped the county gain UK-wide recognition for excellence.

The county's Youth Music Service has become one of only seven in the UK to receive the Diploma for Outstanding Commitment to Youth Music.



Amman Valley, left to right, Bethan Griffiths, 15, from Tregib School, Llandeilo, with her flute; Georgina Davies, CCC Music Services Co-ordinator; Sara Richards, 14, from Amman Valley School, Ammanford, with her clarinet; Rhys James, 15, from Tregib School, with his tuba.



Llandovery, left to right, Alice Theophilus, 12; CCC violin teacher, Martin Lewis; Kathryn Goddard, 12; Katherine Touch, 13, all from Pantycelin School, Llandovery.

It is the second year running Carmarthenshire has gained an accolade through the annual Local Education Authority Music Awards. Young musicians from across Carmarthenshire form the county council's Youth Music Service.

Education and Children's Services executive board member Councillor Mary Thomas said: "Receiving this prestigious award for the second time confirms that we

have maintained the standards and level of opportunities being provided to young people.

"We have a wealth of young musical talent within Carmarthenshire and this service provides them with excellent opportunities."



Carmarthen, left to right, Christopher Evans, 14, from Queen Elizabeth High School, Carmarthen, with his alto saxophone; CCC brass teacher Gethin Sanders; Luiza Scaife, 15, from Ysgol Bro Myrddin, Carmarthen, with her alto saxophone.

COMPETITION TIME

This month's big competition prize is a Dell Personal All-in-One A920 which prints, scans and copies.

The unit combines the three functions to save work space and still produces quality documents and pictures with print resolutions up to 4800dpi.

We have one A920, worth around £65, to give away courtesy of Cardiff-based IT experts Lisol.

To win this fantastic prize just email your name and address to comps@inform4education.co.uk and we will enter you into our prize draw.



Last month's winner was headteacher Wayne Newton, of Cefn Hengoed Community School, Winch Wen, Swansea, who wins a complete set of 12 classic books from the Macmillan Readers series for the school.

AT THE ASSEMBLY

Wales needs to cut its number of trainee teachers by half, according to a report commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The report said Wales was producing more teachers than it needed with about half of the 2,100 trained every year leaving the country or profession.

It recommended scrapping education degrees in favour of a new post-graduate course for all.

Teaching unions warned of a future recruitment crisis as many teachers are approaching retirement age.

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