

# What can S7 do for you?

Pursuing excellence through collaboration

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S7 NEWSLETTER ISSUE 4

AUTUMN TERM 2013

- Do you have any news or a forthcoming event which would be of interest to S7 colleagues? Contact Sharon Kemp at [s7enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:s7enquiries@gmail.com) and we will add it to the next newsletter and the S7 website.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Profile of Coulsdon College and Collyer's 1

Note from the Chair 2

Review of S7 Teaching & Learning Conference 2013 2

Charitable S7—Tip of the Iceberg 3

S7 Careers—S7 Senior Leadership Programme and promotion 4

Experience of S7 Support Staff Leadership Programme 4

S7 Leadership Programme feedback 5

Student Council Day 2013 5

A Word from the S7 Manager 5

## S7 WELCOMES THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER AND COULSDON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE INTO THE CONSORTIUM

The College of Richard Collyer (widely known as Collyer's) is a sixth form college in Horsham, with approximately 1,700 full-time 16-18 students and 500 adult education evening students.

The establishment was founded as a school in 1532 in the will of Richard Collyer, a member of The Mercers' Company in London. As trustees, The Mercers' Company maintain a close relationship with the college. The college moved to its present site in the late nineteenth century and became a sixth form college in the mid 1970's. As a top performing institution, Collyer's has Beacon status and enjoys an "Outstanding" rating from Ofsted.



Jackie Johnston, Principal at Collyer's, says, "Collyer's looks forward to working collaboratively with the other S7 colleges. Working together not only helps each college improve its own offer, but also promotes the sixth form college sector as a whole in the area."



[www.collyers.ac.uk](http://www.collyers.ac.uk)

## Ofsted gives thumbs up to the new Coulsdon Sixth Form College



As many people will already know, Coulsdon has been federated with Reigate Sixth Form College since March 2013, with Reigate providing strategic leadership and management to assist Coulsdon on its journey to becoming 'outstanding.' Under the leadership of Reigate's Steve Oxlade and ex-'outstanding' Principals Paul Rispoli and Bernie Borland, the senior management team at Coulsdon has been making

positive and rapid changes to the College's curriculum, staffing structures and ways of working which have already made a significant impact.

Ofsted conducted a two-day inspection at the College on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September and described the College as "transformed". Comments from the lead inspector noted the "calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere" around the College and the significant improvements made across the board since the last inspection in January.

"Highly effective leadership" was evident throughout the visit and was noted as a fundamental reason for the change in the College's fortunes. Executive Principal, Steve Oxlade, was pleased with the outcome of the visit and commented "There isn't a school sixth form or any college in Croydon with the choice and flexibility of programmes we now offer. Coulsdon students can now 'Mix and Match' A Levels and BTEC courses choosing pathways which meet their interests and needs".

He continued "Next summer will be the first set of results under the new regime. The students this year are quiet, hard-working and serious about their future and I anticipate those results being outstanding. From now until that time the theme for all of us at Coulsdon is one word..... *relentless!* That means there will be a relentless focus on ensuring our College provides sixth form education at its best in everything we do."

For more information see the College's new website [www.coulsdon.ac.uk](http://www.coulsdon.ac.uk)



Steve Oxlade



## A Note from the Chair

Seventh Heaven..

Now we are seven, already we are feeling the benefits of sharing ideas and good practice amongst a wider range of Colleges. Staff from Coulsdon College and Collyer's are fully involved in S7 events and as ever we have a full-on programme of training days, networks conferences and meetings. At a time when the increasing emphasis in education policy is on autonomous institutions and competition it is reassuring that there continues to be such a high degree of collaboration between our seven colleges. It's only when talking to staff from sixth form colleges in other parts of the country who don't have the benefits of consortium working and can only deliver staff development in-house or through expensive private training agencies, that you appreciate how lucky we are to be able to access such a wide range of high quality opportunities in S7. Long may it continue.

*David Adelman, Chair of S7*



## S7 Teaching & Learning Conference 4th June 2013

The S7 Teaching and Learning Conference at Royal Holloway this year was a resounding success! Firstly the venue was lovely and extremely fit for purpose and we are very grateful to Royal Holloway for allowing us to use their conference facilities. Secondly the afternoon workshops were all bespoke to sixth form college education and led by people experienced and currently working in this field. The reaction to the subject groups with initial subject specific talks from University lecturers was mixed according to the personality and enthusiasm of the lecturer, but generally appreciated. The point of these talks was not to directly inform delegates' A level or BTEC teaching, but to provide them with an insight into current University research and to hopefully help to feed their interest in and passion for their subject.

S7 will be running another conference for teaching staff in June 2015.



*"Great to share ideas across colleges"*

*"It is always good to meet with subject specialist colleagues"*

*"Excellent lecture and group discussions—good focus on teaching and learning"*

*"Informative and encouraged reflection"*

*"Nice to meet others with similar issues - to get a sense that we are not alone"*

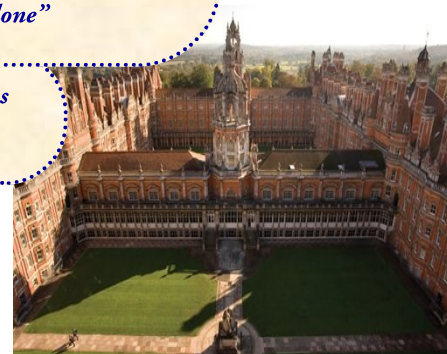
*"Very informative updates with current issues regarding sixth form colleges"*

*"Very useful information that was honest and provoking"*

*"Academic lecture was excellent"*

*"It's always good to touch base and focus on teaching and learning"*

*"Relevant and excellent ideas"*





## Charitable S7— Tip of the Iceberg

by Stuart Robinson, HoD Art & Design, Strode's College

Over the next year Stuart, his Strode's colleague, Darren Smith, two friends, Frank Ramsay and Rui Duarte, as well as many others along the way, are aiming to raise awareness and money for The Anthony Nolan register charity, a blood cancer charity that attempts to find donors for people, save people's lives and raise money for further research and development. The aim is to raise £10,000 in total and the team plan to do all manner of events from the Three Peak

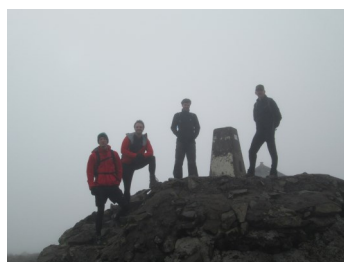


Challenge to cycling events, dodgeball tournaments, staff team events and student challenges to name but a few. These exciting events will all build up to the crescendo when, in June 2014, Stuart will attempt to Climb Denali (Mt McKinley), a 20,320ft mountain in Alaska and the highest mountain in North America. The expedition itself takes one month to complete and the climb travels its way through crevasse fields, steep mountain terrain and knife edge ridges — and because of Denali's geographical position it is the coldest mountain outside of Antarctica where temperatures can drop to below -65 degrees—chilly!!

So why this challenge? Why not find an easier way to raise the money?

“Good question,” says Stuart, “and one I asked myself as soon as I signed up to it. Anyone who knows me well enough knows that mountains are my passion. So why not try to raise as much money for such a great cause as the Anthony Nolan register whilst doing what I love?”

After months of planning and training, Stuart and the rest of the Denali Climb for Cancer Team have completed their first challenge after they climbed the three highest mountains in the UK, back to back, within 24 hours. The Three Peaks Challenge, as it is commonly known, is a serious physical challenge even for the fittest amongst us. The 24 hour countdown began at 8am on a sunny Saturday morning at the foot of Ben Nevis. Spirits were high and the team got off to a great start completing the ascent and descent of Scotland's highest mountain within 4 ½ hours. Then it was back in the car and a trip down to the Lake District for round two— a very



cloudy Scafel Pike which is the hardest to climb and made all the more difficult climbing in the dark. A misty summit and hard navigation and time were against the team but they made it up and down for 10:30pm, only 30 minutes behind schedule!

After an early morning drive to a very dark Snowdonia it was time for the third and final peak on this mission where a very windy Snowdon summit welcomed the team to Wales. With their legs “feeling the burn” they headed down the Llanberis pass to achieve a finishing time of 23hrs and 7 mins. Three peaks, 24 hours, lots of tired limbs but overall a very happy team ... well done to all. Memories of the challenge, good and bad, will no doubt stay with them forever. If you would like to sponsor Stuart please visit the charities website. Alternatively you can simply follow all of his build up and antics throughout the next year on his blog. See all of the links below:

[www.justgiving.com/theboysthreepeakschallenge](http://www.justgiving.com/theboysthreepeakschallenge)

<https://www.justgiving.com/teams/Denaliclimbforcancer>

<http://www.anthonynolan.org>

<http://mountaindiaries.wordpress.com/mountaindiaries> (Stuart's Blog where he will be discussing the build-up, training, sponsorship and fundraising throughout the year)

We welcome news items that would be of interest to our S7 colleagues so if you have anything to share please send an email to [s7enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:s7enquiries@gmail.com).

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As an S7 colleague, whether curriculum or support staff, you are able to take advantage of our Visits & Exchanges programme which has been running successfully for many years.

Feedback from visits that have been undertaken is universally positive and your senior management teams like to actively encourage their staff to make the most of the opportunity to visit other S7 colleges.

If this is something you would be interested in please contact [s7enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:s7enquiries@gmail.com) with your name, your department and details of your request and we will help to put you in touch with your S7 peers.

## S7 Careers — the S7 Senior Leadership Programme and promotion by Will Baldwin, Assistant Principal Godalming College



Will is the new post holder of Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Quality at Godalming College. Having been at the College since 2002, Will got a taste for management in the Psychology department before becoming Director of Faculty, a job he held for the last five years. Will completed the first S7 Senior Leadership Course last year, just before his promotion, and he has this to say about the course:

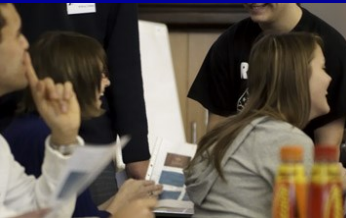
'I have to say the S7 Senior Leadership course gave me the confidence to believe that I could go for an SMT position. It dispelled any myths that I held – that I didn't know enough about funding, employment law or governance to be taken seriously at an interview or in post. Having looked at Business Management, Organisational Style and other areas of management on the course, it confirmed to me that actually the more humane principles of being rational and approachable are the most important characteristics of a Senior Leader. I still like to think I'm a teacher at heart and although an Assistant Principal needs to be bureaucratic at times I try and base my decision making on the student experience and what is important in the classroom. The input from the course from Paul Rispoli, Emma Young, Dave Cartwright and Anna Loveday was interesting and engaging and individual discussions both with them and other S7 colleagues on the course were also invaluable. I take on this job in an era when funding methodology is changing and curriculum reform is in chaos – it's been fun so far, but there are an interesting few years ahead!'

## Attending the S7 Support Staff Leadership Programme by Ruth Davey, College Librarian, Reigate College

I attended the S7 Support Staff Leadership Programme at Gorse Hill in Woking on the 15<sup>th</sup> May this year and found it very insightful and supportive. I was expecting a clear definition of what qualities a leader must possess to be effective and was pleasantly surprised to discover that leaders come in all sorts of different packages and do not all rely on presence and personality or even natural charisma to lead which was quite encouraging. I hoped there would be a section devoted simply to dealing with people and again the course fully delivered offering a comprehensive analysis of what might lie behind a staff member's behaviour on a personal level but also looking at possible management causes too. The course leaders made the discussion more human by talking about their own first hand experiences of managing staff and the need to pin down what a person is actually doing wrong when you get a complaint rather than accept the comment 'They're driving me mad!' I also recall there was a section on Time Management and have not yet forgotten the Jar of Gherkins analogy which meant deal with the big stuff first and fit the small stuff in around it.

I enjoyed meeting the other delegates who all had Management roles in a broad range of areas and it was interesting to hear that they all experienced issues from time to time, that they sometimes felt quite stressed and that they could all really use some advice. Personally, I found the course very supportive and it offered plenty of tips and suggestions. I drew from it how being assertive can be achieved through subtle use of language and not just arguing back, and how important it is to write everything down. Giving yourself time to respond when you simply don't know how to react is another useful suggestion which I have since used as it gives you space to think it through.





We would like to thank the following colleagues for contributing to this issue of the S7 newsletter:

- ◆ Collyer's
- ◆ Coulsdon College
- ◆ Ruth Davey, Reigate
- ◆ Stuart Robinson, Strode's
- ◆ Will Baldwin, Godalming
- ◆ Student Council, Woking
- ◆ The delegates of the S7 Leadership Programme

## Leadership Programme 2013 Feedback

2013 saw the eighth year of the ever popular Leadership Programme for Curriculum staff. The course, which runs over five days from February to June, is aimed at team leaders who currently have some sort of responsibility which includes a team member or members within its scope. The training is bespoke to sixth form college staff and focuses as tightly as possible on the changing needs and expertise demanded of managers in the middle of S7 organisations. Here you can read some of the feedback from the 2013 Leadership Programme:

*"Great to have had a knowledgeable expertise from within the sector informing all of the sessions."*

*"The principle of self evaluation as opposed to telling us how to do the job is very welcome."*

*"Good mix of courses that cover key management areas."*

*"It was great to have a project to carry out; something one would not make the time to do in a busy academic year."*

*"I have particularly appreciated the opportunity to look at a range of issues in a structured yet flexible way."*

*"Being on the course made me think about my role and how I approach it"*

## S7 Student Council Day, July 2013

In July of this year, the Woking College Student Council had the great opportunity to acquire and develop valuable association with student councils and unions from Esher, Godalming, Reigate and Strode's colleges at the S7 Consortium Student Council Day which was held at Godalming College.

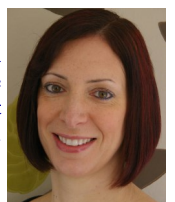
The day involved a number of useful activities in relation to how to successfully run a Student Council. At the start of the day there was an icebreaker activity called People Bingo, which was a good way to meet and get to know students from the other colleges. Afterwards, there was a presentation about 'what it means to be a Student Council' given by the Assistant Principal of Godalming College, followed by group discussion and a top tips swap shop exercise which was a way of sharing best practices used in each college. Following lunch, there was a further presentation on the issues facing Student Councils, including group discussions, and another presentation on the brass tacks of organising events. Finally, there was a chance for feedback and a brief evaluation before the end of the conference.

*The Woking College Student Council*

## A word from the S7 Manager

This has been an extremely busy year for both Sharon and myself, but we are delighted that it has culminated in the addition of two colleges to the Consortium. This provides us with new perspectives and me with a lot more travelling, but the first half of the autumn term has shown what a boost to the Consortium it has given. Working so closely together as a group of five certainly has its advantages in terms of trust, negotiation and support, but adding two more is challenging us to move out of our comfort zone in many ways and making us look at things from different angles, which is never a bad thing.

We are now organising nearly all of the staff development for the 7 colleges at a massively reduced cost, whilst still ensuring that it is bespoke to sixth form college education. We also have a record number of support groups, who not only meet, but also communicate via email on a regular basis. The consortium is well respected both inside and outside of the immediate vicinity and therefore has a national presence in the education world.



*Anna Loveday, S7 Consortium Manager*