

# Main French Exchange

Every year we are able to offer boys in years 8 and above the opportunity to spend almost two weeks living in a French family in and around St Macaire in the Loire region. Sightseeing and a variety of excursions are organised jointly with pupils from Talbot Heath School during most of the days and we are grateful for their participation and the support of their staff.

Highlights back in March of this year included a trip to Disneyland, Paris, using the high speed TGV, and a visit to Futuroscope, the moving image theme park; there was time to soak up the atmosphere of one of the most impressive abbeys in Europe at Fontevrault, meander among the caves and underground passages of a troglodyte village at Rochemenier, take in a castle or two between occasional bouts of shopping in local villages and towns. An impromptu visit to a hypermarket - a haven in a downpour- provided more than one pupil with instant souvenirs and gifts to take home. Ice-skating was an entertaining diversion, not least for those keen to practise their GCSE role play or indeed First Aid skills (...ask those who went!!).

May saw the return of the French pupils with their own packed programme of sightseeing in glorious weather conditions for the first 10 days. Apart from the very successful barbecue and disco organised by the English staff, pupils arranged a birthday celebration for one of the visiting French girls, others organised a paintballing session, some arranged for a last get together at Pizza Hut whilst the football televised that night claimed others, hunched over an Indian takeaway, to give our guests a true flavour of British life.

With many participants real friendships have clearly been established and it is only right to thank boys and their families for their efforts on this front. For the Modern Languages staff it has been rewarding to see pupils' confidence grow in their spoken French. Many boys have felt that, with a bit of goodwill on either side, a lot can be learned and accomplished, even in a couple of weeks. We know that several are hoping to see their exchange partners in future holidays of their own devising - surely the best compliment an exchange can receive. Sincere thanks are therefore due to Mr Bonds, Miss Darwin and Mr Hatch, who give so generously of their time and exercise great patience to ensure the smooth running of this annual event.

## What the participants thought.....

"I think that the exchange created new friendships, as I may go to my partner's house over the summer holidays. All the French students were excellent, and the places we visited made it the best holiday I have ever been on. It was a great success!"

"The French exchange was amazing and we met all sorts of people in France"

"I really enjoyed the exchange and learnt so much French that I am now moving to a better group!"

"I think that the French exchange was a good experience because staying with a French family improves your French greatly"

"Very good! I liked Disneyland very much and Futuroscope was interesting. My knowledge of France and the people who live in it has improved."