

Dog-lover takes on new Reader role

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African celebration will inspire us all

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As our only church secondary school records massively-improved GCSE results, we say:

FRANKIE Stanley already has 11 GCSEs in the bag. The 15-year-old wants to pass more in his final year at St Luke's and then train to be an architect.

Only four years ago his parents were desperate for him to go somewhere else because of the reputation of St Luke's School. Now he's proud to be part of the success story at one of the fastest-improving comprehensives in the country.

His attitude reflects the new confidence of pupils at our diocese's only church secondary school. Morale is sky-high after the school leapt up the GCSE league table this year.

A total of 42 per cent of 16-year-olds left in the summer with at least five top grades between A* and C – a massive jump from 26 per cent in 2003 and 11 per cent in 2002. It meant more of them walked straight into decent jobs or college courses. And so many pupils in Frankie's year have passed GCSEs one or two years early that next summer's figure is bound to be even better.

"I came from Somers Town, but my mum and dad wanted me to go to City Boys' because of what St Luke's was like," said Frankie. "Now I'm glad I'm here, because we're succeeding and other schools are having to catch up. I want to get as many qualifications as I can and become an architect."

Classmate Victoria Baskerville, 15, from Fratton, also has 11 GCSEs already. She said: "People used to say St Luke's was a bad school, but now they say we're lucky to be here. I want to go to college and study law."

Part of the school's success came from the re-writing of the curriculum three years ago to allow each pupil to choose the mix of academic and vocational qualifications that suits them best. They are also encouraged to take GCSEs and GNVQs one or two years early,

DIDN'T THEY DO WELL!



(Left to right): St Luke's pupils Neal Till, Jade Rayner, Victoria Baskerville and Frankie Stanley, who already have 11 or more GCSE passes each, get down to more studying

whetting their appetite for more qualifications later.

Bishop Kenneth was so pleased with the improvements that he dropped into St Luke's last month to sample the feel-good factor for himself. And parents have been ringing to see whether their children can transfer there from other schools.

Headteacher Krysia Butwilowska said: "For a long time, people didn't want to come here because of its reputation and showing in the GCSE league tables. Part of the change was my confidence that we needed to offer a rad-

ical curriculum that included vocational qualifications, and we were ahead of the game on that.

"Now we have pupils telling each other how important it is to come to school, and staff recruitment is very successful because we are pioneering new ideas. These results are just the tip of the iceberg – there's a real enthusiasm among staff, governors, parents and pupils.

"I believe we will be a genuine diocesan secondary school that parents from across the diocese will want to send their children to because of its Christian ethos. It's not difficult to get to – there's a

railway station next to us."

And the chairman of governors, Professor John Craven, said: "The dramatic improvement owes much to the leadership of Krysia Butwilowska and her senior team. We have staff of very high quality and dedication, and we are confident that the school can continue to improve to serve future cohorts of pupils even better."

The school will be hosting a day of celebration on October 15, St Luke's Day, which will include activities for pupils and a reception for governors, staff, diocesan officials and others.

blesséd

Chilled worship on cards

ALTERNATIVE worship is coming to the Isle of Wight this month.

Blesséd on the Island, a multi-media youth Eucharist, will take place at St Mark's Church in Wootton at 7.30pm on October 15.

The service will be similar to previous Blesséd services held at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Southsea, and St Peter's, Petersfield, using images projected onto walls, videos and a worship band, Shortfall.

But organiser says this Blesséd service will be more relaxed and ambient than its predecessors to make better use of a more intimate venue.

Blesséd organiser the Rev Simon Rundell said: "We're celebrating the feast-day of St Teresa of Avila, a great mystic, so this will be less vibrant and more of a mystical encounter with God.

"Shortfall will play an acoustic set, the vibe will be chilled, and people will be able to engage with God in a relaxed way. There will be opportunities to participate in the intercessions."

The vicar, the Rev Kath Abbott, who will lead the Eucharist, said: "Having seen how effective these Blesséd services have been on the mainland, I thought it was about time we experienced it on the island.

"We're inviting people from all denominations on the island, especially church youth groups."

Anyone interested in attending can contact Kath on 01983-882213. See www.blessed.org.uk for more details.