The year began with the great news that over 50% of Year 11 had just achieved an A or A* grade at GCSE in 2006. With this level of success it was perhaps unsurprising that we had our largest ever intake of students into the Sixth Form wishing to study A level sciences, with more than a third of the whole Sixth Form opting for Chemistry. It is very pleasing to buck national trends in declining numbers for these subjects – across the country as a whole, it seems that young people are turning away from sciences and choosing what are perceived as easier A levels. However, it not just numbers that matter. At A level results have been very pleasing, reflecting the hard work put in by pupils and staff alike, but pride of place should go to the A level Physics class of 2006-7, with an outstanding 93% of pupils achieving A or B grades. Indeed, the only person to miss out scored a C grade, hardly a disgrace in a subject as challenging as Physics.

ABOVE LEFT: TOP MARKS FOR ABIGAIL SHARMAN. RIGHT: SCIENCE INVESTIGATION TEAM

Lower down the school, year 10 have embarked on a completely new GCSE Science syllabus. We felt strongly that our more able pupils would be best prepared for A level if they had covered more than the syllabus specified as the bare minimum, so from this year, the top two sets have embarked on an ambitious programme of separate GCSEs in all three sciences. The course is modular, with exams taken in January and June of Years 10 and 11, and already our pupils have risen to the challenge. Top of the class is Abigail Sharman, who managed 100% in her first Chemistry and Physics papers, although she only managed a paltry 98% in Biology! Many others are close behind, and we look forward to their continued success in year 11.

On other matters, the department has been involved in several out of class activities this year. In November 2006, we were fortunate enough to host a Royal Society of Chemistry lecture in the new Headmaster Porter Theatre, by Dr Ilya Eigenbrot of Imperial College. His talk about fuel cells gave us an insight into an exciting energy source of the future, and we were impressed by his demonstration that hydrogen is, in fact, a safer fuel than petrol, by exploding a bubble of the gas in the palm of a nervous volunteer's hand. Physicists had the chance to hear a day of lectures in London on matters pertaining to A level Physics, as well as going well beyond, and attended a lecture by well-known writer and broadcaster, Simon Singh, author of 'Fermat's Last Theorem'.

November also saw a group of lower school pupils take part in a science competition at Bayer Crop Protection in Norwich. Kit Wells-Furby, Charlotte Pring, William Twentyman and Caroline Reid performed admirably, achieving fourth place and just missing out on a prize. Other trips included visits to the University of East Anglia to study Analytical Chemistry and take part in a related team competition, though we sadly couldn't repeat our success of 2006. We are also very grateful to Dr Stephen Ashworth of UEA for the donation of a UV-visible light spectrometer, a very valuable (in more than one sense) piece of kit for A level Chemistry.

The past year has seen a few changes within the department. In September we gained two new faces. Heather Gibson joined us from Canada where she had just finished her teacher training. Heather has brought lots of new ideas and resources with her, and pupils are sure to benefit from her imaginative approach and enthusiasm in the classroom. Heather specializes in both Biology and Chemistry. Mary Alvis (wife of James, Director of Sport) joins us as a part time Biology teacher for Years 9-11, with a wealth of experience in teaching younger years.

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to one of the school's longest serving members of staff. Martin Myers-Allen has taught Biology and Chemistry for longer than he cares to remember (at Framlingham), and has been a huge influence and inspiration down the years to countless numbers of pupils. As a classroom teacher he has limitless energy and enthusiasm, and a volume control varying from loud to very loud! His quick wit, imagination and, perhaps less well known, his artistic streak have livened up many potentially dull lessons of theory, and his ability to make Science relevant and memorable is second to none. On seeing a trolley laden with visual aids for Martin's next lesson, it is a challenge for other staff to guess what topic he is teaching. A typical lesson might feature a globe, cling film, an aerosol spray, a plasticine dinosaur and some grass – I'm sure it made perfect sense to the pupils in the lesson!

As a colleague Martin has always been a pleasure to work with, volunteering for extra tasks that need doing and helping out in any way he can, but lest anyone think he is perfect, he did once teach half a term of the Year 10 course to a Year 9 class by accident. In his defence, he cannot be accused of failing to stretch the pupils!

Martin leaves us to become the Master of Brandeston Hall. Our loss is definitely their gain, and we wish him every success in his new role. If Brandeston pupils want an insight into their new Master, I shall simply quote one of this year's Upper Sixth biology students when asked what they felt about their teacher. 'Myers? What a legend!'

Dr Richard Higgins, Head of Science