

Having been told all week that "It's coming home Sir!" I find that, despite the heroics, it isn't coming home, or at least not yet! Despite the England World Cup bubble being burst by Croatia, life in school remains very positive and upbeat, largely because there are so many exciting things happening. Our intrepid travellers keep sending reports from New York where they appear to be having a wonderful time and back here in school we have enjoyed a fantastic "Work Ready" week for our Y10 students. In its inception year we expected to have a few minor teething problems but these have largely been noticeable by their absence and, on the flip side, feedback from the employers who helped with our "mock interview" day was uniformly excellent. One person commenting that "the calibre of students was more than impressive, they were dedicated and far, far more organised than I am now, never mind when I was 15 years old". A range of post-16 providers were invited in as we challenge all our students to consider the next phase of their education and/or training. Again, feedback from the presenters highlighted what fantastic potential exists in this year group so, next year, we are looking forward to having a whole cohort of Y11s that is laser-focused on high achievement from the first day as they aim to set themselves on the path to success.

Mr Chapman advised that "Y10 have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into a wide variety of Work Ready Challenges this week. These include Monday with two presentations from Newcastle University and ASK about apprenticeships before students spending the day crafting letter of application for specific job roles. An extremely high quality was achieved despite pressing time limits! Tuesday was interview day! No fewer than 18 local employers took time out from their busy schedules to coach and then grill our students. They brought extensive and varied experience from a range of backgrounds including the RAF, Police Force, Retail, Charity, Finance, STEM. Our students unsurprisingly rose to the challenge with several employers feeding back they were blown away by the quality of student performance. One remarked it was the best such event he had attended in five years whilst another praised the staff and students for working so well together to produce such results. Students on Wednesday sent the morning focused on teamwork starting off with advice on what makes a successful team from the Year 10 football county cup winning manager Mr Bielby before a team building sporting challenge. Later in the day students were able to choose four from a range of eight post 16 seminars to attend. Providers included the RAF, Askham Bryan, Northallerton College, Richmond School, York College, The National Citizenship Service and Cleveland College of Art and Design. Thursday was trip day with students choosing to attend either a celebration of Yorkshire food and drink at the Wensleydale Creamery and Black Sheep Brewery. Alternative trips were available to receive training from a variety of business experts at the Riverside Stadium Middlesbrough and a University experience at York St John's University. It was great to get students out and about in a range of business environments".

At the other end of our age range, two induction days have emphasised the fact that we are getting a lovely cohort of new Y7s next year and I have challenged them to be "the best that they can be". Mr Gill described them as "wonderful" and confessed, "I wish I could teach them all!" The Y6 parents' presentation clashed with another event on Wednesday evening so numbers were somewhat depleted. However, it was great to see students being kitted out for their new uniforms and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting all the parents and beginning an association that will last five years and by that time, who knows, England may yet be World Cup winners!

We also hosted over a hundred Y5 students on our annual STEM day. This proved to be a really active, productive day and the energy of the primary students is highly infectious, even at the end of a very long term! Throughout the day, students rotated around 4 different workshops covering different areas of science and technology with the theme "sealife".

- Mrs Jennison and Mr Baty covered the science of fishing rods and why wooden fishing rods have been replaced with plastic and composite materials. Students modelled the flexibility of fishing rods using masses and wooden versus plastic rulers to see how flexible each material was.
- Mrs Rodgers covered the adaptations of different sea animals and how this helps them to survive.
- Mrs Bradley and Mrs Elsworth covered the nutritional benefits of fish and then cooked some fish flavoured with garlic and lemon to eat.
- Mr Brownless and Mr Fenner used the laser cutter and colours to get students to create fish-themed peg clips.
- Miss Allsop and Mrs Judd created plastic coloured jellyfish mobiles using cut-up pieces of recycled plastic bottles, sharpie pens and a powerful hairdryer!

Plans are now firmly in place for September. With a new and much improved timetable in place, and some very strong teachers joining us for September, we are confident that the 2018-19 academic year will start even more strongly. We are all excited about the change to our curriculum, meaning that current Y8s will be starting their GCSEs next term. They are clearly capable of stepping up and many are more than ready for the challenge. However, we would ask that all parents support us in this important transition, especially around the completion of Home Learning tasks. In class, recent weeks have highlighted the tendency for some Y8s to take their foot "off the gas" so we must work together to ensure a very strong start to all their GCSE courses. For parents of Y9, it is a similar situation but maybe even more important, if that were possible, to start strongly as this cohort only has two years to complete their preparations for GCSE exams. Although they have the same amount of time overall for each course, the fact that courses are squashed into two years means that everything is that little bit more intense so, again, I would urge all parents to work with us as much as possible as we "raise the bar" in terms of expectations.

Finally, as we head into the last week of this academic year, I wanted to thank all parents for their continued support. On a personal level, I have felt a strong connection with all parents and enjoyed that sense of "we're all in this together". As we look forward to another, very important year for the school, I think that maintaining this relationship is crucial. We know that we have largely transformed the school in little over a year but there is still much to do and we cannot afford to become complacent if we are to establish Bedale as a truly "great" school. Whilst we have strengthened the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and witnessed a major shift in student conduct and standards, we need the support of all parents in ensuring that our attendance is excellent next year, and right from day one. We aspire to become recognised as an "outstanding" school and some aspects of our provision are already starting to reflect this but, for too many students their level of attendance would better be described as "inadequate". For all our hard work and all the improvements that we are still keen to make, if students do not have good attendance or better, they will not achieve their full potential and, as a parent and a Headteacher, there is nothing worse than seeing great potential going to waste.

Have a lovely weekend!