

A three day trip to the Isle of Mull for yours truly was a perfect way to unwind after a very hectic half term and so, as a result, I've come back fighting fit and ready for another busy period as we build up to Christmas. I hope that you all had a good break too and that, more importantly, all our students are "up" for a great few weeks of quality learning!

With that in mind, I wanted to draw your attention to our focus this week, after the AP1 assessments, which is to derive as many positives from the tests as possible and that means learning from mistakes too. We are trying to impress on all students that a "fixed mindset" is negative but rather with a "growth mindset", everyone can improve rapidly. Positivity and resilience are also key to success so, again, as parents I hope you will do your utmost to ensure that this message is supported at home.

This week Year 9 students have been challenged with improving the openings of lessons. Following a number of lesson observations and feedback from teachers saying that many students need to settle into their learning more quickly at the start of lessons, we have adapted the normal routines and are expecting all staff to deliver a 6 minute "silent starter" activity. Typically, this will be an activity reviewing previous learning or introducing new material that will be used later in the lesson. Overall, students have responded magnificently this week and so we look forward to embedding this new routine in an attempt to ensure that ALL students are GCSE ready.

The SEND Coffee morning on Wednesday was well-attended and it was great to meet a number of parents, especially of Y7 students who are clearly revelling in the secondary school atmosphere. I know that Mrs Knight and her team are passionate about supporting every student to fulfil their potential and in this area of provision it is even more vital that school and home have a very strong working relationship so all the more reason to hold events such as this. What I loved most of all, and even more than the wonderful cakes(!), was seeing the students "meeting and greeting" in the reception area and then looking at some magnificent work. As a parent who has been through a similar situation, I am by nature a "realist" and understand that the "ups and downs" experienced by all students can be magnified in children with special needs. Having accepted that though, I was very proud of the way that many of our students are really growing in confidence and that gives me much hope for the future.

We want to signal to all Y11 parents that the build up to PPEs has begun in earnest. Whilst the AP1 assessments have been a very useful staging post on the GCSE journey, the PPEs which begin on Monday 3rd December are a major test of how far students have come. We held a GCSE Information Evening just before half term and outlined for approximately two thirds of the year group a lot of the key issues that students and families can face in the run up to final exams. We are aware that many parents were unable to join us previously so we are holding another "catch up" event on Thursday, 22nd November at 4.30pm. This will last for around one hour and include an overview of how you, as a parent can support your child as they prepare for their GCSE examinations this year. However, the message to all parents in Y11 is that there are only 10 days to go before students cease "learning" and begin a week of focused revision before the first PPE on 3rd December. Whilst teachers have been modelling effective revision and providing opportunities in class time to prepare for the exams, we know that the successful students from last year were the ones who put in the hard work at home so well done to all those parents who have already taken steps to limit X-box time and put in place an hour-long revision slot each evening. After school revision sessions are a great way of accessing extra support from teachers and I want to remind parents that, every night after school, the Hub is open until 4.30pm for additional revision so please ensure that your son or daughter takes up every opportunity.

On the sporting front, I have become used to sharing lots of successes so it may seem at first glance that the U14 Girls' football team defeat, 5-4 to Rossett School on Thursday evening, is not a particularly significant event. However, anyone who saw the girls' efforts and team spirit would have to accept that they saw something very special. Under Miss Temple's guidance, a number of girls have only just taken up the sport and their development is rapid. On another day, if the girls had taken their chances, they might well have been through to the latter stages of the County Cup but what is certain is that they will come back all the stronger next year and I know this may be a bold prediction but if the girls continue to play "the Bedale way", hard and fair but highly competitive, I can see some major successes for the future. A really busy fortnight ahead for sport with over 50 students representing the school in fixtures - X-Country, football, boys and girls rugby and hockey. Next week is our first ever girls rugby tournament, we are taking Y7 & y8 team.

Next week, there are several events happening in school. On Monday evening, former students are returning to collect their GCSE certificates. This is a "drop in" event from 4.30-6.30pm where students will have an opportunity to catch-up with their old teachers and collect their official GCSE certificates.

On Tuesday evening, our annual presentation evening will take place to celebrate our achievements over the past year. This is an invitation only event. The Guest Speaker will be Mr Steve Patterson, Yorkshire County Cricket Club Captain.

In other matters, Amy Pointon, our student leader with responsibility for charity and community links, arranged for Michael Lowe, who has received the British Empire Medal from the Queen from the Royal British Legion delivered a remembrance assembly to Years 9 and 10 yesterday.

Mr Childe would like to remind parents/carers that the deadline for payment for the Y11 Leeds fieldtrip (£5) is Tuesday, 13th November.

Finally, with remembrance Sunday upon us, a number of our students have been involved in a service of commemoration at Ripon Cathedral today. Senior students, Talia Keane and Tafari Nicholas took leading roles with several others from different year groups participating in a dramatic performance during the readings. Look North came to interview some of the students during the rehearsal on Wednesday, and we were told that this may be screened at 6.30pm this evening, so remember to watch it just in case!

Date for Your Diary:

29.11.18 – Year 9 Parent's Evening