

The tree is up and looking great, thanks to Miss Bradbury and her team of elves, but despite the imminent arrival of Christmas Jumper (and socks!) day on Friday 14th December, we're still very much focused on work mode and getting the most out of the remaining time that is left this term. We are looking forward to the end of term celebration assemblies which have become the hallmark for Bedale and Mr Kelly is focused on some great attendance for the majority of our students. However, for a significant minority, we still know that their poor attendance is likely to impact negatively on educational attainment so we urge all parents to work closely with tutors in the first instance to address any attendance issues and particularly in the build up to the end of term.

Staying on the Christmas theme, we are also looking forward to the Christmas "showcase" next Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December starting at 6.30pm. Tickets are £3 and will be available on the door. Mrs Lumsdon promises that it will be an evening full of music and drama to get you into the Christmas spirit. Pupils from all years will perform music from the charts, musicals and Christmas songs. You will also be able to see students perform extracts from their GCSE drama piece as well as extracts from the play "Blood Brothers". Refreshments will be provided too – what more could you want!

In school this week, Y11s have been sitting their PPEs and, with a few exams still left to complete next week, it is safe to say that they have proved to be a useful exercise even in simple terms of "readying" the students for the rigours of the final summer exams. Teachers are busy marking the exam papers so they can give feedback to students on how to improve and parents of Y11 will receive the AP2 report on progress straight after the holidays and ahead of the Y11 Parents' Evening on January 24th. This is a great occasion for parents and teachers to take stock together and focus on "lessons learned", even if it is the basic one of making sure that revision and preparation for the next set of PPEs is more effective so we do hope that all can attend. Likewise, we'd love to push the same message at the other end of the spectrum with our Y7 parents' evening next Thursday. Whilst it was great to see so many parents in attendance at the "settling in" evening earlier in the term, we are very conscious of capitalising on the great start that this year group has made by enabling them to maintain their development as they start to embed some valuable skills for future success. In both year groups, we would ask that, if you think you may not be able to attend, please make early contact with your child's tutor.

Our student-led assemblies this week have focused on a number of issues, including, at the start of the week 8JBI speaking to all of KS3 about the importance of resilience. Amelia Hamilton and Zac McCulloch showed off their hard work and resilience by welcoming everyone into assembly with some wonderful music, whereas other members of the form chose to speak about personal events in their lives. It was fantastic to see our Year 8 students perform and speak with such confidence!

Later in the week 9HRO presented some important information about the dangers of illegal drugs. This was followed by Kevin Hardisty and Janet Crampton, representatives from the Rotary club awarding prizes to four budding Masterchefs in Year 10. Congratulations to Catherine Bush, Molly Hanson, Jodie Wilkinson and Lucy Atkinson who have triumphed in their heat of the Rotary Young Chef competition 2018. In the next round they will be competing against finalists from Northallerton College to progress to the final round to be held at Betty's Cookery School in Harrogate! Well done girls and thank you to Mrs Bradley, their extremely proud mentor.

In terms of extra-curricular sport, our cross-country runners competed in the Area Championships yesterday. Held on a flat course in Northallerton, students once again represented Bedale with pride and Miss Mackinnon commented, "I was delighted to take our students to these trials and really impressed by their commitment. Josh Hammett (Y8), Katie Dixon (Y9) and Georgina Campbell (Y7) qualified for the area team, with Alistair Banks (Y8) taking one of the reserve places. A special mention goes to Katie who produced a storming run, her best of the year. However, I would just like to say that it was great to see all our students doing their best for the school and themselves".

From a personal point of view things are beginning to feel very strange knowing that I only have one term to go before partial early retirement beckons. Whilst I'm looking forward to a change of direction, I'm very conscious of getting the most out of my final weeks in school by working ever more closely with Mr Kelly. We have enjoyed a very close working relationship since day one and I have no doubt that he will continue to provide excellent leadership for the whole school. Many of the decisions that are being taken therefore, now need to be his decisions, so please expect to see Mr Kelly taking an increasingly prominent role as we aim for a "seamless transition", including an opportunity to work with all staff on our training day post-Christmas where he intends to outline his vision for the future direction of the school as we continue on our mission to become the best possible school for our surrounding communities.