

Last night's Y7 parents evening was another great opportunity to meet lots of you and I'd like to thank all those who completed our questionnaire and gave the school, the teachers and the tutors in particular, the big "thumbs up". It was great to read your positive comments about how your children have settled quickly, made new friends and are now making really good progress in their learning. Whilst there are, inevitably, things to follow up in the days before the Christmas break, I was delighted with one comment in particular from a parent about the range of "experiences" that her daughter has enjoyed in her first term at Bedale, saying that she was "throwing herself into" Bedale High School: football, rugby, rock painting, netball, charity events, cross-country, reading challenge and even learning CPR on the "Restart a Heart" day. Impressive stuff in just a term and we aim to keep those opportunities coming so, hopefully, 2019 will provide an equally packed programme for all our students.

Earlier in the week, our "Christmas Showcase" thrust a number of our students firmly into the spotlight and Mr Kelly was extremely impressed at the 'vast array of talent' on display. From first time performers to the 'pros' in Year 11, the audience were treated to an incredibly enjoyable evening thanks to the hard work and commitment of all those involved. Huge thanks must go not only to the students but also to Mrs Lumsdon and Miss Cropper for pulling things together, and then to all the staff who stayed behind to support the event and serve teas at the interval. It really was another special Bedale occasion where our students are quite literally given a stage to show off their talents. In an era where many schools are cutting back on the performing arts, Bedale remains committed to the promotion of Music and Drama both within the curriculum and as an extra-curricular activity.

Christmas dinner on Wednesday was served by a motley crew of staff, including yours truly, and after my "bah humbug" moment of last year, I reinstigated the Bedale tradition of Christmas music and Christmas crackers. The dinner was lovely, probably the first of many and, for me personally, I suspect the cheapest by far!!! The festive music helped to create a jolly atmosphere and has helped to ease everyone into the right spirit for our "Christmas Jumper and Socks Day". Organised by the student council and Miss Bradbury, this event is in aid of Save the Children and Cancer Research UK (Teens and kids). The latter is linked to Phoebe Harrison who wrote a very persuasive letter to Mr Kelly and Miss Bradbury asking for the "Christmas Jumper day" to include socks too for this great cause. Fingers crossed but we are hoping to raise a reasonable amount for both charities.

As PPE results are being fed back to Y11 students, it is worth bearing in mind the most important thing is that the process is a "learning process" in itself so in one sense, the really hard work starts now as students reflect on how they can improve for PPE2s in mid to late March. Congratulations will be going to all those students who took the advice and revised effectively.....in a number of cases, we have seen big improvements from the Y10 exams, and at the top end, we are already seeing some outstanding performance with students actually achieving grade 8 and 9 on full GCSE papers. As ever, our advice is to work hard but work "smart" by targeting the right things and, above everything else, work "sustainably", and it may well be worth remembering that "it's a marathon, not a sprint"? After the Christmas break, we will be asking students to maintain their preparations by gradually stepping up the intensity so that, by the time they reach the summer exams, they are fully in control and can, as a result of their hard work, go into their final exams with confidence.

10SNO presented a student led assembly this week to Years 9 and 10 about having a positive self-image and ignoring fake online images of celebrities. In another example of students trying to improve school life, a group of them (Lucy Shirt, Tom Beighton, George Nicholson and Izzy Sanders) met with Mrs de Roche our Catering Manager to discuss their ideas for improving the options in the school dining hall. The meeting was prompted by questionnaire replies made at the recent Year 9 parents' evening, a true example of democracy in action! Hot topics discussed included labelling of sandwiches, chicken noodles and salads. The message from Mrs de Roche was that all feedback and suggestions are welcome and a number of changes will happen as a result of the meeting. Students are more than welcome to pop in and speak to her about a favourite dish they would like to see on the menu. The students learnt a lot about healthy schools status and rules we have to follow to maintain this. Also the difficulty of knowing how much to make so food is not wasted and the impossibility of pleasing everyone! A massive thank you to Mrs de Roche and the students involved.

Next week is the final week of term and a very important one for many of our students whose attendance has slipped below the thresholds set by the Local Authority. We thank all those parents who have supported the school's stance on this and, for several students, we have seen a marked improvement. However, whilst it doesn't sit easy with me, we have had no choice other than to follow the guidance and to pursue several parents through the legal system where students' education is being put at risk. After fines and attendance panels have not had the desired impact, we have been forced to go through the PACE procedures and issue Education Supervision Orders in the hope that this will resolve the situation. Fortunately, these are, currently, isolated examples, although there are many students who are sitting just below these levels so, in the run up to Christmas, it is vital to maintain excellent attendance levels. As a school, we encourage early contact from parents, initially via the tutors, to deal with any potential absence - by working in partnership, we would aim for excellent levels of attendance, thereby increasing chances of ultimate success. Where excellent attendance cannot be achieved, and we recognise that there are various legitimate reasons why this may not be the case, it is our intention to support students and parents to minimise any likely impact on learning and progress.

And finally, if any parents are looking for last-minute stocking fillers this Christmas then look no further than our top recommendations for educational joy this festive season:

- Various pencil case components to replenish stocks - top of the "missing" item list are black biro pens for completing classwork. Students go through these at a rapid rate so several spares are a must!
- Green biro pens for responding to marking;
- Highlighters;
- Pencils, sharpeners, rulers and erasers;
- Packs of cue cards, A4 ring binders, dividers, plastic wallets and notebooks to aid revision particularly for our Year 10 and 11 students;
- Study guides. If in doubt check with school to make sure they are for the correct exam board. Several of these available via parent pay;
- Scientific calculator - Mr Moulding suggests a well-known supermarket is selling a really good version at a discount price!

Dates for your diary:

21.12.18	Break up for the Christmas holidays at 3.20pm.
8.1.19	School open as normal.
7.1.19, 10.1.19 and 17.1.19	GCSE PE Rock Climbing trip.
9.1.19 at 1pm	Year 11 - Information Technology GCSE Exam.