

For those of you, and I know there are many, who follow us on Facebook, you will be aware that Miss Allsop has been involved in a number of community projects since joining the school and, most recently, she has been working with staff at The Millings so that some of our students can develop confidence by working with residents. There are some lovely photos and you can access our Facebook site via the school website by clicking on the Facebook icon at the top of the opening screen. This builds on a fantastic "Ages Together" project earlier in the year that featured some of the residents telling their stories with several of our students listening and using them as inspiration for pieces of Art. Truly a fantastic project that shone a light into a past era that is in danger of being lost forever. It was wonderful to see these mutually supportive relationships flourishing as a result of this project.

My own assemblies this week have focused on positive changes within the school and, following on from the national "Anti-Bullying Week" we have been talking about the impact of our new tutor groups systems and the leadership from Miss Bradbury and Mr Chapman as Heads of KS3 and KS4 respectively. All children now have an immediate point of contact on a daily basis and the introduction of our Pastoral Support team means that throughout the day, there is always an available adult to discuss any concerns. Once any issues have been reported, we always do our best to "nip things in the bud" but, as you can appreciate, this is not always easy. Many issues are rooted out in the community and most seem to begin nowadays outside of school via a smartphone. The single biggest factor, however, that has generated improvement is the change of culture and most important of all, the students themselves are "buying into" what we are about as a school in ever increasing numbers. My assembly was frank in its message that "bullying" is part of the human condition and that it can exist in any school or, for that matter, any workplace. Despite the improvements, we must therefore always be vigilant and, as well as reminding students that "You are not alone", I also appealed to them, regarding bullies, to "Let them keep living in the darkness and we'll keep walking in the sunlight".....sounds very "cheesy" but I assure you it has more impact when you watch the YouTube clip! I only hope that our students continue to respond in the way that they have been doing and I look forward to your support should the need arise. It was wonderful to have one of our Y9 students, Sammy Rowley, playing the piano at the start of assemblies this week and our young musicians continue to play a key role in setting the right tone for reflection at the start of each day.

Next week is obviously a BIG week of PPEs for our Y11 students and we wish them (and their parents!) the very best as they target last minute revision over the weekend and throughout the period of their exams. We know that the pressure of exams can be great and that is why we try to "train" our students to "manage" that pressure as much as possible. One effective method is to start revision early and build up over time rather than putting it to one side and then "cramming" in the final weeks and days. Many are getting this message but too many are not, so I would urge all parents to hold those honest discussions around effective preparation for exams, lock up those x-boxes until after a revision stint, and seek to support your child on a practical level by bringing regular treats/rewards. For a small number of students, it can be that they work too hard and, again, please be aware of this and contact school if you think your child is over-doing things. Some students put themselves under too much pressure and this needs careful management too - whilst exam nerves are generally a good thing, causing the adrenalin to flow and improving performance, going into an exam feeling tired and anxious is not helpful. As a Headteacher, I can confidently give this advice but, as a Dad I have to admit that I know it is often easier said than done! However, school and home are in this together so let's keep communicating.

Thank you to all those Y9 parents who attended parents' evening last night and especially to those who had such kind things to say about the school and the changes that we have been making. As part of our school self-evaluation, we organised a whole school "audit" of teaching and learning this week which also looked at "leadership and management" and the plans that we have in place to maintain our current trajectory. Whilst we are awaiting the final report, it is safe to say that the review was a success, highlighting the great work of the current leadership team. Their commitment to the school for the long term is not in doubt so, when I do leave, you can be confident that Tom Kelly will be doing his utmost to maintain the school's current pathway to success. Looking at the parental surveys from last night, there are several areas for us to work on and we will come back to many of you who have left names to help us identify the source of what I suspect are individual concerns. However, the thing that delighted me was that you gave us the thumbs up for the final question, "Has

your child been well-supported in settling in to KS4 and starting their GCSE courses?" 99% of parents agreed or "strongly agreed" and Mr Gill, who oversees curriculum developments says "this would seem to vindicate the decision to move to a three year KS4 and settling Y9s in to their courses has been one of our prime objectives so I'm delighted to get this feedback. We know that our AP1 data is encouraging but, as the students learn more of the content, it's vital that they all maintain a positive attitude to learning, have great attendance and keep doing their homework!"

I would also like to give you all some advance notice so that you can dig out those Christmas jumpers. Yes, it is getting round to that time of year again and, on 14th December the student council's Community and Charity Links team, led by Y11 student Amy Pointon, are organising a Christmas Jumper Day. However, in response to a request from Year 7, we would like to extend this to a Christmas Jumper and Festive Sock Day with the intention being that we split the money raised between 2 charities: Save the Children and Cancer Research UK (Kids and Teens). Students are asked to bring in a £1 donation if they wish to participate. Full school uniform must be worn however, the blazer can be replaced with a Christmas Jumper, and the more festive the socks – the better!

Dates for the Diary:

- 11.12.18 – Christmas Showcase starting at 6.30pm.
- 13.12.18 – Year 7 Parent's Evening.
- 14.12.18 – Christmas jumper and sock day for charity.