

Our assemblies this week have been focused on supporting Y8 students to make good choices in their GCSE options and they have been treated to some great, really informative and useful presentations. However, whether they actually make the actual "choosing" any easier, I don't know....there are lots of great courses on offer and some students want to do them all! Next week should help matters though as there is an opportunity to meet staff and discuss potential options as well as focusing on learning and progress at the Y8 parents'/options evening. Rather than having two separate evenings in the space of a few days, we thought we would combine these two events and I hope that all parents will attend the session next week. We also hope that you have made use, if required, of the group tutors who have been tasked with supporting the process this year. Whilst the options booklet holds all the information needed for positive choices, we recognise the need to talk things through sometimes with someone who knows your child really well and our tutors are ideally placed to do this. However, if there are still queries and you need a senior member of staff to listen, then several of us will be around next Thursday. If you already envisage the need to talk to one of us, it would be handy to pre-book an appointment slot but, if you are unsure, we will be "on hand" throughout the evening to have an impromptu discussion. Please note that the deadline for these option choices will now be Monday, 18th March, as opposed to Friday 15th which is highlighted in the option booklets.

Feedback from a number of colleagues is very positive in the sense that the vast majority of Y8 students are clearly ready for their "next steps" and are taking the options process very seriously indeed. For the small minority of Y8s who are not yet "GCSE Ready", we are redoubling our support and monitoring to ensure that, before the end of this academic year, ALL students are able to progress into KS4 with confidence. Further up the school, we continue to challenge any negative learning behaviours but particularly those that are detrimental to the learning of other students. Whilst we are pleased to report that there continues to be a reduction, overall, in low-level disruption, we are still not satisfied and parents can rest assured that this will remain a priority at Bedale High School.

Not a week seems to go by when I am not commenting on some fantastic partnership events with our local primary schools but this week has been exceptional with the first day back seeing two activities. Firstly, we were able to host a primary Hockey tournament and it was thrilling to see such energy and enthusiasm! We have always played a key role in promoting sport throughout the area but, since Miss Temple's appointment, we are endeavouring to take this to a new level and more events are being planned throughout the remainder of the year and beyond. On Monday, the Science department hosted a Science afternoon for Year 5 primary pupils on the topics 'compression and tension'. The students firstly investigated Hooke's Law by increasing the mass attached to an elastic band and measuring its extension. They then plotted a graph of extension against mass and found that if mass doubles, extension doubles. They correctly concluded that the extension was proportional to the mass (up to the elastic limit). For the next activity the students were given a packet of spaghetti, sticky tape and elastic bands and using their knowledge of tension and compression, had to design and construct a bridge strong enough to hold a 1kg mass. There were two clear winners. All students worked hard, worked well in their groups and we were impressed by their ability to choose a suitable scale for their axes and plot a line of best fit.

Now that we are past the half-way point for the year, attention inevitably begins to turn to exam season, especially for our Y11s. Whilst many have made good progress over the duration of their GCSE courses, this is now the "business end" and it is vital that attitude and commitment are excellent in ALL cases if they are to achieve their full potential. So, to all Y11 parents out there, please note that we have another "revision week" next week where staff will be focusing on preparation for the second round of Pre-public exams which begin on Monday, 18th March. However, this in-school revision needs to be the "tip of the iceberg" and students must follow up with a robust revision programme at home if they are to demonstrate the significant improvement that many students still need to make from the first round of PPEs before Christmas. Yesterday, some of our Y11 ICT students received their first unit results for their GCSE qualification. There were some excellent results from some students, including Taryn Morgan-Okroy who gained a distinction* (scoring of 115/120). Other students, who did not prepare to the same degree, fared less well and as a result, will be required to re-sit and improve their grades in the summer. Miss Riley-Fox would like to highlight to Y11 parents/students that there is **a slight amendment to the attached Y11 PPE timetable** for English Literature on Monday, 18th March.

Friday, 15th March is Comic Relief Day and we will be supporting this at Bedale High School in a number of ways. Copies of '*High Jinx*' magazine filled with staff and student jokes, pictures and stories will be available for sale all week for the bargain price of £1. The magazine also includes some highly dubious caricatures of senior staff and we are currently debating whether legal action needs to be taken! Students will also be able to enter the guess the staff member by the baby photo competition! Finally there will be a staff v students football match on Friday lunchtime with students paying 50p to watch.

As you will be aware we have been pushing our students to get themselves organised so that they arrive at school fully equipped to learn. It is our belief that all students should attend school each day with a pencil case full of basic equipment rather than constantly rummaging through pockets and searching for lost items. On Monday (KS4) and Tuesday (KS3) any students without a pencil case and/or equipment will be provided with one and parents will be charged £2.50 via Parentpay. We will inform parents if their child is without a pencilcase and when payment is due. After this point refill packs consisting of three pens and two pencils will be on sale from the LRC.

This week, I also wanted to thank the vast majority of parents who are helping us, as a school, to tackle the endemic issue of poor attendance that was previously holding us back as a school. After a sticky patch just after Christmas, I am delighted that we are back up to "healthy" levels in all but a small minority of cases. Our aim, in the first instance, is always to work with parents and support students on attendance issues so that learning and progress are not compromised. However, where this has not had a positive impact, we have been following the LA "fast-track" procedures which have led to fines and prosecutions and we need to maintain this focus because, ultimately, we know that low levels of attendance are a major reason for low student outcomes. Early intervention is the key, it seems, so if you have any concerns about attendance issues, please make contact with your child's tutor in the first instance and begin to develop a healthy dialogue with them so they can be the first point of contact and an immediate source of support.

In other news, two groups of KS3 students took part in an exciting challenge to design and build a beacon with a flashing light at the annual Rotary Design Technology tournament at the REME Barracks, Catterick Garrison. Well done to both teams for their brilliant attitude to learning and determination as it was a challenging task. Students who took part will be presented with certificates in assemblies.

Miss Allsop would like to share with parents a fantastic opportunity for 14-18 year olds budding artists to attend a free art and design course during the Easter break at the Sunderland Glass Centre. She would also like to add her thanks for all of the support that you gave her in fundraising for the Art Department kiln, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone and can advise that we raised £2400.

Mrs Lumsdon will be holding an information evening for her Malta trip on Thursday, 21.3.19 at 5.30pm in her classroom and has asked if you could please ensure that your child has an up-to-date EHIC card for the trip. Mr Childe will be also be holding an information evening for the Iceland 2019 trip on Wednesday, 27th March 2019 in the main school hall from 5-6pm (see attached letter). In both cases these trips represent the best of what Bedale High School can offer.

Finally, I wish to draw to your attention that a vacancy has arisen for a parent governor. Attached to this e-mail is a letter providing more details about the role, what it involves and how you can apply. Please contact the school for a nomination pack if you are interested or contact me if you wish to discuss it further. The closing date for nominations is mid-day on 22nd March and if we receive more than one nomination we will then send out further information in respect of a formal ballot. If anyone wishes to help lead the school on the next step of our journey to excellence, then this is a great opportunity!

Have a lovely weekend!

Dates for your diary:

14.3.19 – Y8 Parent's Consultation Evening.
21.3.19 – Malta 2019 information evening for parents – 5.30pm in the Music room.
27.3.19 – Iceland 2019 information evening for parents – 5pm in the main hall.
28.3.19 – Y10 Parent's Consultation Evening.

Attachments:

Y11 PPE timetable, GCSE/PPE guide to revision and student guide for exam pressure.
Sunderland Glass Art Workshop for 14-18 year olds.
Letter for All Parents – Election of Parent Governor.
Iceland trip letter.