

16<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Parents

And so the Summer Term is here! Teaching staff began the week with a CPD day, focusing on cognitive science and led by Castleford Academy Trust who are one of our partner schools. As the best training always does, we felt re-invigorated by spending time in professional dialogue and some real thinking about how our curriculum and teaching are designed for effective learning.

The sunshine this week has also re-invigorated us – and the pupils – and it has been lovely to have everyone out at break and lunchtime on the fields. There has been plenty of outdoor learning too – I walked over chalk Maths problems in the Junior School playground this afternoon! Reception are lucky enough to have a new Mud Kitchen in their garden which they are using for outdoor learning. The kitchen has been kindly made for us by Mr Main – parent and husband of Mrs Main who works in both Wraparound and in Junior School. Many thanks to him for his hard work and generosity – the children are loving using the kitchen as you can see!



Mrs Dixon has sent me some lovely photographs of the activities which children were doing at our holiday club over the Easter period – I have to say that I made sure that I was in school on the day when the baby chicks and ducklings came to visit...



Year 10 have been really busy... At the end of March Year 10 pupils Tilly L and Fynlay W represented Polam pupils in a Darlington-wide pupil forum organised by Cllr Cyndi Hughes. Pupils were invited to speak to a panel of local councillors about their 'Life during Covid' experiences and those of their peers over the past months. Having received evidence from council officers, academics, mental health practitioners, youth groups and charities about what has been on offer, but councillors were interested in hearing from young people themselves. Councillor Hughes has sent me her

thanks to pass onto both students and said that the panel were 'extremely impressed by the thoughtful contributions from pupils from Polam Hall'. Well done to both Finlay and Tilly.

Year 10 students were also approached by our own Mrs Sharon Dixon to assist Wetherigg Animal Rescue Centre in its preparations to reopen to the public. Thirteen willing helpers repainted the barns and made the most of opportunities to meet some of the animal residents, including chicks, a snake and even a fox. Their efforts were very much appreciated and their energy and enthusiasm praised by the staff at Wetherigg.



Today Mr Pepper's Year 10 form group led their year group's Reading with a thought-provoking look at some of the national and international issues and current affairs which they believed may have been overlooked due to the pandemic. Taking advantage of a mature audience, the form dealt appropriately and sensitively with some challenging issues and stories and it was super to see students leading the assembly.

Today has also seen fifteen of our Year 9 students begin a careers project, with the launch of a One Vision sports enterprise competition. The students involved have until mid June to work in teams to produce a storyboard encouraging young men to have more motivation to access higher education via the medium of sport and leisure and linked to Middlesbrough Football Club, who will provide practical sports training for the boys after half term. This will be a nationally judged competition and the winner will have their design shown on YouTube.

Mr Robson has also asked me to pass on some careers notices this week:

1. Any Year 11 student who needs a further appointment with the external careers advisor needs to see him next week please to arrange an appointment for the week beginning 26 April
2. There will be work experience and college taster days coming up at the end of June for Year 10 - and parents should await a letter about this next week.

Mrs Mawson and Mrs Elsdon have sent me a report about the excellent way in which their Year 2 pupils have returned to school after the Easter break: *Year 2 have had a very busy first week back at school. They thoroughly enjoyed their Latin afternoon activities demonstrating their creative skills. We were able to enjoy the sunny weather this week in our Science lessons as we were exploring the school grounds looking for things that are living, that have once lived and that have never lived.*

*Afterwards we drew our findings into a table with chalk onto the playground for everyone to share! Have a lovely weekend in the sunshine!*

*Mrs Elsdon and Mrs Mawson*

Of course, the Year 2 staff have mentioned the event of the week in their report – I certainly couldn't write a newsletter this week without mentioning Latin afternoon! Most parents will know that we introduced Latin as our language in Junior School two years ago – supported by Classics for All, who funded the training for staff and the teaching resources for pupils. There is lots of research to suggest that Latin provides a good basis for language learning later in school as well as giving children lots of information about the roots of their own vocabulary and helping them to see connections between words in English. Miss Blundy has taken over the leadership of Latin this year and so she deserves the credit for Wednesday's events! Here is her report: *Salve! We had a very exciting afternoon on Wednesday in the Junior school. Staff and pupils came to school in Roman clothing ready to celebrate Latin afternoon. During the afternoon we had an array of activities including making Laurel wreaths, marching like a Roman Soldier, and creating Tabula. Miss Blundy was also very impressed by the effort that the children put in with their costumes and with learning the song Ecce, venit sol! The song is the Latin version of 'Here comes the sun' and sounded wonderful as you walked around the junior school! boni volutpat vestibule*



My final well done for this week is to Year 11 who have worked so hard through a week of assessments for their GCSE courses. They have been a real inspiration – and excellent role models for the rest of the school.

We've all had a great first week of term and are looking forward to next week. A reminder to Year 8 parents that it is parents' evening on Monday – virtually of course!

Best wishes

*K. Reid*

Kate Reid