

24<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Dear Parents

On Tuesday evening we held our Open Evening for Year 7 entry in September 2022. This was the first big event that we have held in school since March 2020 and I think we were all a little apprehensive about it. Senior School teachers and site staff had spent a lot of time making sure that school looked its best – there has been real joy in reclaiming the classrooms as subject spaces after the bubble areas of last year! In the end we needn't have worried. Around 500 people came through the doors of the Liddiard Theatre, with different times given to families from different primary schools. I gave my talk three times to space out the number of people, which meant I had very little voice left by the end of the evening! It was lovely to be able to welcome our current Year 6 parents as well as so many new faces. Year 10 and Year 11 were amazing as tour guides as ever – exemplifying the confidence that we expect from Polam students despite the fact that they haven't had any practice at this kind of experience in the last two years. The feedback left by our visitors was excellent and it was lovely to be able to show school off again as we used to. Now that we have one such event under our belts, I think we all hope that we can start to invite parents into school much more regularly

It has been a week for our students to show off our Polam values. On Thursday Year 10 Sports Leaders went out of school to help with the Darlington primary multi-skills sports festival. The following email is from Alison Raw, from Darlington School Sports Partnership:

*We just wanted to pass on our massive thanks for providing leaders for today's events and offer some feedback. Firstly we had 250 Y1/2s from 10 primary schools in the town who were kept very busy and active developing their agility, balance and co-ordination skills. We are focussing on this year group this year as these children have missed such a lot of their schooling and opportunities for physical, social, emotional and mental development. The event involved a carousel of 8 skill stations, all led by your super leaders.*

*Your young leaders were a total credit to your school and to themselves. They were extremely helpful, polite and enthusiastic and conducted themselves brilliantly at all times. They were excellent role models for the younger children and they took their activity and adapted it, extended it, changed elements to make it more fun for the participants and took ownership.*



*We really appreciate you allowing them out of school for the whole day, and how lucky we are to have such support from you – especially after the last 18 months. However, we do feel they really embraced the opportunity to develop their creative thinking, use their own initiative, hone their communication skills in considering the language they use with little people, ability to collaborate and work together - they worked really well in pairs and 4s, organising themselves, the equipment, the young children and maximising the time for each rotation. They remained fully engaged and keen throughout the whole day, when often delivering the same thing over and over again can become a little tedious.*

*We feel and hope they got such a lot out of the day in terms of life skills and personal development. The staff from every single school who attended commented to us about how brilliant they had been and wanted us to pass this feedback on to you. And we mean every single school! This is a first in 20 years on my doing this job!*

Well done to those Year 10 Sports Leaders! Of course, being an all-through school, our pupils got to experience the event from the other side as well, with some of our Year 2 children being attending the event! Mrs Elsdon has sent me this information about what Year 2 have been up to this week:

*Year 2 have been busy this week! On Thursday we were lucky enough to attend a Multi Skills Festival with Miss Coggins which the children thoroughly enjoyed. The pictures below show some of the activities that the children took part in with such determination and amazing teamwork - true Polam learners.*

*Today, the children have made a spacesuit in DT, using their design features from last week. I was so impressed with their collaboration skills - well done Year 2! Mrs Elsdon*



Mr Wilkinson's competitive spirit was at work again this week – this time in Rugby. This is his report about the games that the U15 team played on Tuesday evening:

*On Tuesday the U15 boys rugby team travelled to Allen's West near Egglecliffe school to play a Rugby 10s competition. In the first game we started very slowly conceding 3 tries however made some changes and managed to score 2 super tries from Ollie Robinson who found a gap and Hayden H who muscled his way through to score a great individual effort. With more time we probably would have won but the score ended 22-10. Another highlight was Adam L's tackle on the biggest lad on the pitch - about 6ft5!*

*In the next game we were up against tough opposition in Ian Ramsey School but again showed great resilience and determination. The game was even for long periods but Polam's tackling in defence and counter rucking was superb. Oliver R stole the show finishing off a tremendous run which started in our own 22! Thien Ahn D ripped the ball and started the move off, Lewis*

*P made excellent ground on the wing and then Oliver dummied his way through with some clever running. The game then went through a very strange period of play where both teams could have scored yet for some great defensive tackles. The game was stretched as Polam choose to kick the ball but fortunately we managed to win it back and eventfully score again from Hayden H. Polam win 12-0*

*The final game against St Bedes was a very physical game with both teams showing aggression. This game could have easily gone Polam's way but unfortunately Bedes broke through to score the only try of the game. 5-0. All boys should be very proud of their performances. Again I'm blown away by the commitment and determination shown by this great set of lads! Well done.*



Year 11 have had a busy week of Careers talks and events, organised by Mr Robson, who has written this report

*Year 11 undertook a very successful visit to QE Sixth Form College on Monday of this week at which they were given information about pathways to higher education or apprenticeships, as well as taking part in some taster activities, ranging from TV and Media, through Science and English to tackling problems in Psychology, Sociology and Ethics. Students impressed the lecturers at QE with their willingness to learn and participate, and student feedback was great.*

*This was followed by presentations later in the week from Darlington College, Middlesbrough College, Ask Apprenticeships and, next week, Northern School of Art. This should be giving students in Year 11 food for thought as they prepare for their outside agency careers interviews individually between now and the end of January.*

*It is never too early to apply and students should check websites for times of virtual and face to face open events. In the next few weeks the Library Extension should be filling with information from providers and there are computers in there which students can use to apply for and search courses. Top tip - do not only apply to one provider - it is easier to withdraw later than join.*

*Year 11 please feel free to come and see me at any time if you need further advice - and parents and guardians please do not hesitate to contact me.*

My thanks to Mr Robson for organising the programme. Year 11 will now begin their independent interviews.



Over a screen we have also held events this week for Year 2 and Year 6 parents to inform them about the end of keystage tests that their children will be taking this year. Thanks to all parents who attended and to the staff for running these events – I hope they were useful.

Tomorrow the PHPA are running their 'Teddy Bear's Picnic' for Reception and Year 1 children and their families – keep your fingers crossed that the weather holds. And next week I am delighted to say that we are once again going to be able to hold a real Prizegiving evening, which I am very much looking forward to.

I hope you and your family have a good weekend – especially if you are brining your teddy to school!

Best wishes

*K. Reid.*

Kate Reid

*K. Reid.*