

28<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Dear Parents

I always look forward to coming back to school after a holiday or half term – but Monday morning dawned with the sight that no Headteacher wants to see when they open the curtains: snow in the rush hour! It was falling and it was falling thickly. By the time I made it into school it was clear that a significant number of staff were going to find it tricky to make it in. School, of course, looked beautiful in the snow. Fortunately, Polam is always good in a crisis and everyone pulled together! My genuine thanks to all the staff who made it in – some of whom has three or four hour journeys to get here.



After such a dramatic start the rest of the week has seemed rather tame in comparison! On Wednesday Mrs Ryan organised a netball tournament at school. Here is her report:

*Year 9, 10 and 11 girls played netball against Durham school on Thursday. The year 11s were playing against Durham's 6th form students and with an injury to Lily Edwards, Rosie McElvanney was thrown in at the deep end to play shooter for the 11s. Year 10s played a hard game, getting beat in the last quarter despite leading the first 3 quarters. Year 9 girls played very well. All teams were beaten on the night but were excellent and worthy in defeat.*

Well done to all the girls involved! Year 11 girls have also had an opportunity to focus on their Maths this week, with our thanks to Mrs Bartholomew Miller who came in to deliver a 'Girls in Maths' day for them. Here is Mrs Jones' report:

*On Thursday all Year 11 Girls had the opportunity to work with Mrs Bartholomew-Millar for our in house Girls in Maths Day. The day focused on improving the girls confidence and resilience ahead of their Maths exams. The girls learnt about various exam coping mechanisms, stress*

*tips and that there is a wider issue of Maths anxiety in girls across the country. The students also worked on various Maths problem solving tasks and worked through an exam booklet which they could then take home with them to work on ahead of their up and coming mocks and summer exams. The girls also enjoyed a pizza lunch together and the feedback from the day was incredibly positive and that they really enjoyed learning about various stress coping tips ahead of their exams. A huge thank you to Mrs Bartholomew-Millar for coming in and organising such a great day!*



In Junior School this week we have had a focus on positive behaviour for learning. I have sent our new Community Rules out to parents – we hope you will support us with these at home. One of my favourite moments of the week was visiting Miss Blundy's classroom to find that she had translated the rules: Ready, Respectful, Safe and Kind into Latin!

In Senior School Reading on Thursday 7S gave a Reading about Leap Years – with lots of very complex statistics about the number of people who are born in a Leap Year, who apparently we have to call 'leaplings!'. At the end of their Reading Mrs Barker introduced this year's House Music competition to great excitement. This will have two elements: The Young Musician of the Year competition and the Big Sing. The Young Musician of the Year competition is open to all Senior School pupils who play an instrument or sing – whether they do this inside or outside of school. I do hope you will encourage your sons and daughters to take part! The Big Sing will be for Year 7 and Year 8 students who will prepare the songs in Music lessons and CC Time.

I have been asked by Mrs Brown in Junior School and Mrs Squires in Senior School to remind everyone that it is World Book Day on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March. In Junior School all pupils are to come to school in their pyjamas, ready for a bedtime story – and to bring a potato to be made into a character from a book! Senior School students are also to come wearing their pyjamas, onesies or dressing gowns – otherwise they must be in full uniform. There are lots of exciting book related activities planned in both parts of school – as an English teacher this is one of my favourite days of the year!

Some of you will know that Mrs Teasdale leads our group of student LGBTQ+ Ambassadors in the Senior School. This week she attended the Darlington LGBTQ+ network meeting, at which Councillor Wright asked if schools could circulate some questions about Darlington Pride. She has asked me to add these to the newsletter. The council are hoping to make Darlington Pride a family friendly weekend event and therefore would like as many voices from children and adults as possible.

The questions are below – if you have any thoughts that you would like to share please could you email Mrs Teasdale directly: [teasdale.h@phs.woodard.co.uk](mailto:teasdale.h@phs.woodard.co.uk) by 21st March.

- 1) What do you think the aim of Darlington Pride should be?
- 2) What times do you think it should take place?
- 3) What services/stalls do you think should be invited/promoted?
- 4) What entertainment should be included in the event?
- 5) How do you think we could raise money to support the event?
- 6) Have you any ideas of what events/activities could be part of the day?
- 7) Would you like to be part of the planning/delivery of the event?

A reminder that it is Year 11 and Year 13 parents evening on Monday – we do hope to see all parents of these year groups if at all possible as this is their last parents evening before the examination season begins. Please do bring your sons and daughters with you as they are the ones sitting the examinations and staff will be discussing exactly what needs to be done in these vital final months.

Here's hoping that next Monday morning is less stressful than this for all of us!

Best wishes

Kate Reid