

WH/RNM/NOV11LET

7 November 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING

I am looking forward to welcoming our Year 11 families to our Sixth Form Open Evening on Thursday 10th November at 6.30 p.m. It is an opportunity for you to meet our teachers and talk about the options available after this year. We have adapted our curriculum following a response to consultation with Year 11 with the expectation of being able to meet their ambitions.

It is a good time to join our Sixth Form, with a record 99% pass rate at A Level and 92% of our University applicants gaining a place of their choice. The evening is only the start of our support for Year 11, and any family wanting advice about the way forward should speak to either Miss Sweeney or Mr Rumsey.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

As is our tradition, school will stop and stand in silence for two minutes this Friday as a tribute to those whose lives have been lost in war. Through the last two weeks our House assemblies have seen a fantastic personal presentation from Mrs Varley about her parents, which has brought home so powerfully the message of Remembrance Day. If you would like to see it there is a link on our school's web site in the Head's Blog for 4th November.

If you and your family would like to join us at the front of school next Friday at just before 11.00 a.m. we would be delighted to see you. We hope that a key role in the ceremony will be played by the young people who have immediate family members currently in the Armed Services. If this is your daughter or son, and you would like them to take a lead on the day please contact my PA, Mrs Rushton via School Reception.

FRIENDS OF BOSTON SPA SCHOOL

I very much appreciated the opportunity last week to meet with Julie Slingsby and Diane McElwee, who are the new Chairs of the Friends of Boston Spa School. It was a particular pleasure in the meeting to be given a very large cheque from their fund raising activities. This will be used to replace the curtains in the Main Hall. We are very grateful to the Friends for their support and look forward to their Quiz night this Friday 11 November 2011 at 7.00pm. If you would like to be involved with the Friends please contact Diane by email using dianne.mcelwee@zanmail.co.uk.

STEPHEN LAWRENCE AWARD

We were very pleased last half term to be awarded the Stephen Lawrence Education Standard. This is an Award designed to identify good practice in promoting race equality and achievement and to encourage all schools to place a commitment to racial equality at the centre of their curriculum, policy and practice. The granting of the Award to our school recognizes the fact that our values and ambitions for all our young people are exemplified in our practice, and that there is a whole school commitment to them in both word and deed. It is an Award that everyone in school can take credit for, but particular praise is due to Mr Potter who led our school through the assessment process.

YEAR 7 HOUSE ACTIVITY DAYS

Our Year 7 have made a great start with us, we are so pleased with their attitude and commitment. It was lovely at the end of last half term to hear of their success on our House Activity Days at Yeadon Tarn, where they took part in canoeing, problem solving, orienteering and a climbing wall. Everyone had a really good time, helped by the surprisingly good weather; they all learned new skills and got to know new friends and teachers a little better in a different, challenging yet safe environment. I am really grateful to Mr Mackenzie and all the staff and young people who contributed to the events.

HOUSE APPOINTMENTS

One of the reasons we introduced a House system into our school was to create opportunities for young people to undertake leadership roles in school, and I enjoyed the opportunity this week to meet our new Head Boy and Girl for each of our Houses and all of our new House Captains for each year group.

The House Captains are all named on the school website in the Head's Blog for 4th November. However, special congratulations are due to Luke Bretton and Polly Orton who have been appointed Head Boy and Girl of Cooper House, to Bethany Newman and Tom Bleasby who have the same roles for Donaldson, Peter Dobbs and Zahraa Akhtar for Thompson and Emma Hammond and Nathan Curtis who have the same responsibilities in Bucktrout.

ROYAL SOCIETY YOUNG PEOPLE'S BOOK PRIZE

We have been helping to choose the 2011 Royal Society Young People's Book Prize, one of the world's most prestigious awards for Science writing. As part of an innovative judging process the winning book will be selected entirely by the young people. Edward Chapman, Christopher Hepworth, Toby Hirst, Will Meadmore, Jake Smith and Joel Summerfield, started work on this in June, under the care of our Librarian, Mrs Chapman submitting our school vote for "The Icky, Sticky Snot and Blood Book", with "How the World Works" coming a close second. The national decision is announced on 1st December.

ROTARY CHEFS

I was really pleased that we have again participated in The Annual Rotary Chef Competition, with nine young chefs entering. Congratulations to Claire Roberts, Sam Porter, Keiran Roche, Hifzah Mahmood, Amy Martin, Charlotte Hodgson, Laura Eatwell, Courtney Fisher and Bradley Smith, who each prepared and created a two course healthy meal for under £10. Our winner was Charlotte Hodgson (with her goat's cheese and caramelized onion quiche with new potatoes, green salad and dressing) with Claire Roberts coming in a creditable second place. Charlotte now competes against other schools at Thomas Danby College, where she will be judged by Simon Gueller from the Michelin Star Box Tree Restaurant.

UNIFORM

I would want to express my appreciation for all the support we have had from our families for our new uniform. There is unanimous praise throughout our communities for how smart our young people look.

The last piece of the jigsaw is, of course the plaid skirt. For Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 we will be introducing the 'Boston Spa plaid' skirt from the start of next term in January. We are, of course, happy for girls to continue to wear black trousers, but if a skirt is to be worn it should only be the plaid one. The skirt is available for order from APC now. With the delay in delivery from the start of this term I do not think it is fair to ask a Year 11 girl to buy a new school skirt for less than two full terms, so we will allow black knee length skirts to continue to be worn by just Year 11, although please do not let me discourage any Year 11 from choosing to wearing the new plaid!

ATTENDANCE

When we review our examination results from last summer, we again see the pattern that those that attend also achieve, and we do not take for granted the support we receive from our families with this. If you are concerned about the attendance of your son or daughter and would like advice or support please contact our Attendance Improvement Officer, Mrs Gabby Mahey, via Reception.

We do not, except in the most exceptional circumstances, support applications for holidays taken in term time. I am again grateful for the good practice and responsible choices made by nearly all of our parents in this respect. A tiny number of families still choose to take holidays during term time, where we will, in future, bring our practice into line with other Leeds schools and seek fixed penalty notices through appropriate legal process.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Headteacher