

WH/RNM/NOVLET

5 November 2010

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to take the opportunity to bring you up to date with our school news.

OFSTED

Since my last letter to you we have had an OFSTED Inspection in PE. All of the judgements for Achievement, Quality of Teaching, the Quality of the Curriculum, and the Effectiveness of Leadership and Management were good or indeed outstanding. The report describes our staff as *'a strong team of highly committed staff with high levels of enthusiasm and expertise who work well together towards the common aims of raising standards and making improvements for all students'*. Our young people are described *'as competent performers in a range of sports and activities'* with a *'good understanding of and commitment to a healthy lifestyles'*. OFSTED observed that they were *'able to work independently'* and that *'behaviour is good and students are enthusiastic and committed'*. It is a good report, and we are encouraged by what OFSTED have said, but never complacent. We have reflected on what we have learnt through their visit and will be applying that in our new School Improvement Plan across all subjects.

SPORTS COLLEGE

There has been much in the media about the Government's 'Comprehensive Spending Review'. Regrettably there has been what I can only describe as some lazy journalism in a few of the local press reports about the impact of the cuts on Sports Colleges including Boston Spa School, suggesting that we were losing many thousands of pounds in funding. All the advice we have, from both the SSAT and the DFE, is that the funding we receive for our Sports College Specialism will continue, although some of the prescription and conditions around how we use that money will be removed.

At Boston Spa School we have used specialism to build a distinct character and ethos for our school. This has seen the standards of achievement rise each year for the last four years. The OFSTED report says that *'Sports College status makes a considerable contribution to the ethos of the school, the achievement and well-being of students, and the quality of teaching and assessment across the school'*. We will continue with this mission, making sure that the level of achievement in the 2010 results, where 92% of our young people achieved 5 or more GCSE at grades A* to C, is not only sustained but is also improved upon yet further. Our commitment to this is absolute.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Last year we were recognised for maintaining the Investors in People standard for ten years. 2010 was the year we were due for assessment once again. I am delighted to report that we have once again been found to meet the standard. The report describes Boston Spa School as a *'highly principled school'* where *'there is passion and commitment from the Leadership and staff to deliver high quality learning experience for their every pupil'*. The assessor found that throughout the staff there was a *'commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning to progress standards, individual competence and outcomes'*. It is a great encouragement to have our school spoken of in this way and Governors will shortly review the full 18 pages of the report. As with the recent OFSTED report we look to use what we have learnt about our school to shape our next steps in school improvement.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

Both OFSTED and Investors in People are valuable tools in our self evaluation. In order to yet further progress our school improvement we have commissioned an independent company, Kirkland Rowell, to undertake a comprehensive review of what we do well, and where we can continue to improve. This will involve considering the thoughts of all of our young people, our parents and carers and our staff. Kirkland Rowell will start their work this November which will include distributing a questionnaire to all of our families, with the other surveys being completed in school. We would be really appreciative if you were able to take the time to complete and return the survey as your views need to be a significant component of our future school improvement planning.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

In the next few weeks we will be holding a number of events in school that we will all do together as a school community. We will, as is our usual practice, stop the school for a minute of silence on Armistice Day, to recognise the sacrifice made by others in the service of our country. To help us all understand the cost of these sacrifices, and to support the British Legion, we will for the first time create a Remembrance Day field at the front of school.

On Friday 12 November 2010 we will be taking a full part in 'National Takeover Day'; hundreds of our young people have already applied for the opportunity to undertake an adult's role in school on that day and it is great that so many want to be involved. The event was launched in school by Kathleen Gaunt (Year 11) who led our weekly staff briefing before half term. This is one example of the many ways that young people will be able to contribute on the day.

On Friday 19 November 2010 we will be glad to be supporting the annual 'Children in Need' appeal with a non-uniform day, in return for £1 donation, made in tutor time. This is also national Anti bullying week and a group of Year 8 and 9 students are going to lead a school wide focus on this.

In January we will hold a series of events to raise awareness of the ongoing relief work taking place in Pakistan following this summer's devastating floods. At the same time we will be holding some fund raising events to support the work of aid agencies in their relief work.

ARTS EVENTS

On Thursday 18th November the internationally acclaimed pianist, Richard Meyrick will be visiting us. He will lead a workshop for our musicians during the day and perform a recital in the Main Hall at 7pm, including work by Chopin and Liszt. Tickets are £3 and £2 for concessions and are available from Mrs Williams in the Music Office at break, with cheques made payable to 'Boston Spa School'. This is the second time Richard has supported our school in this way, and I know that all who attended the evening last time would agree with the Daily Telegraph review, which described his "*thrilling technical wizardry*"

On Monday 8 November 2010 a group of our young people are performing Shakespeare's 'The Taming of the Shrew' at the Carriageworks Theatre as a part of the Shakespeare Schools festival. The cast have worked really hard under the direction of Miss Heath. This is a brilliant opportunity for the young people to perform on the professional stage, and tickets are available direct from the Carriageworks Ticket Office.

SCHOOL SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

It is a matter of great regret that across the country the School Sports Partnerships, such as that led from Boston Spa School will come to an end in August 2011. This is a result of the spending review. I have been proud to be associated with the work led from Boston Spa School, where we have been supporting 58 primary schools, 8 secondary schools and 2 special schools in providing great sporting opportunities for young people across the east of the city. Thousands of children have been both participating and competing. Many will have been inspired to try new sports, or to retain a physical activity as a part of their healthy lifestyle, while others will have learnt lifelong lessons about personal qualities such as team work, commitment or leadership. OFSTED found that our Partnership '*brought great benefits, especially to primary schools*', and it has been our privilege to work with these colleagues. We are looking at ways that we can possibly retain the best of the provision.

DIARY DATES

The last half term gave us many good opportunities to meet with our parents and carers. Your partnership in learning is important to us and we are always appreciative of the time that you give us. Looking forward we have:

11 November 2010	Year 11 Subject Consultation Evening from 4.30 pm
2 December 2010	Year 12 and 13 Subject Consultation Evening from 4.30 pm
9 December 2010	Year 9 Subject Consultation Evening from 4.30 pm
14 December 2010	Year 8 Reports will go home
6 January 2011	Sixth Form Awards Evening, for last year's Year 12 and 13 at 7.00 pm
13 January 2011	Year 9 'Options' briefing for parents at 7.00 pm
1 February 2011	Annual Review day, when school is closed, and all our families have the opportunity to review progress made so far this year and set new targets that look forward.

I welcome the opportunity to meet many of you at these events; I continue to appreciate your partnership with us.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Headteacher