

WH/RNM/SEPTLET

14 September 2010

Part of the 'Excel Learning Trust'

Dear Parents, Friends and Carers,

Our term has got off to a good start and there has been much to celebrate.

SUMMER RESULTS

During the summer we were delighted that for the fourth year in a row our school broke records with our results. At GCSE 92% of the young people achieved 5 or more good GCSE passes, far exceeding nationally set targets for the school and an increase of 12% on last year; while young people achieving 5 or more good GCSEs with English and Maths increased by 5%. I am very proud of the young peoples achievements, it is a fantastic outcome and well deserved. We have been pleased to see so many of these young people return to our Sixth Form.

The GCSE success came a week after record A Level results; we sustained an impressive 98% pass rate for the third year in a row, and 60% of all our grades were at A*, A or B. 17 young people achieved straight A grades across all their subjects and despite a worrying national trend, over 120 Boston Spa young people secured their places at Universities including Oxford and Cambridge.

I am pleased that our school is sustaining significant year on year improvement, it is what our young people deserve. Our communities can be assured that our commitment to seeing these high standards sustained and raised yet further is absolute.

CELEBRATING YOUNG PEOPLES' ACHIEVEMENT

We have a number of events in the coming weeks designed to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our young people, Year 11 Tuesday 21 September, Year 8 Wednesday 22 September and Year 9 Thursday 23 September.

We also look forward to meeting the parents of our new Year 7s' at the forthcoming parents' evening on Thursday 14 October.

Our annual Open Evening is on Tuesday 28 September starting at 6.00pm. We look forward to meeting friends, parent's and carers. As usual this day is a training day.

EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

Results are important, because they create opportunity and choice for our young people but they are not everything that our school is about. Our commitment to the development of the whole learner remains absolute. We were pleased over the summer to be notified that the British Council and the Department for Education had upgraded our 2009 International School's Award to the full Award for 2010. It is very important if we are to achieve our ambitions for our young people that we remain outward facing. This award includes and recognises amongst others, our continuing work in Bangladesh and our new link in South Africa with the Sithengile Senior Secondary School in Durban which is being led by Mr Potter and Miss Blakey.

SCHOOL VALUES

One of the changes we have made is to the way that we describe our school value and expectations to our young people. In every classroom in our school there is the same sign which defines our school as one where:

Everyone is treated with respect

Everyone makes progress

No-one steals learning

These are our key expectations of every single member of our community. Every class will have discussed these with their teachers so that we all understand what this looks, feels and sounds like in every class. We continue to be grateful for the support of home in helping all our young people understand these values.

SAFETY

As you may be aware there was an accident at the front of school on Thursday last week. We are all fortunate and relieved that the injuries are not serious. An ambulance was in attendance very quickly, and the young man was supported brilliantly by members of our staff and some of our young people. Can I ask that you take this opportunity to remind your daughter or son of the standards of sensible and safe behavior that we all expect from them while travelling to and from school?

UNIFORM

Our uniform is an important way we sustain and celebrate our sense of school community. Details are in the planner, but can I take this opportunity to highlight the guidance on plain black shoes and that hoodies or colourful tops or those emblazoned with logos are not allowed to be worn around school. It is our expectation that our uniform suppliers will provide a Boston Spa School cardigan this autumn.

ATTENDANCE

When we look at the 92% of our young people who achieved 5 or more good GCSE results, the common factor is that they all had reliable and routine attendance. Conversely the 8% who missed out includes those who missed too much school. The key message is that those who attend also achieve. We are grateful to all those parents and carers who support us by building the right expectations at home and hold a firm line on school attendance. There is no such thing as 'holiday leave' and in common with the other Leeds secondary schools the occasions in which our school will support a holiday request in term time are truly the exception; our default position is that all young people should attend school for 190 days unless they are ill.

ROBIN DONALDSON

If you have been associated with our school for a time you will be sad to hear of the death of Robin Donaldson after a riding accident. Robin taught at our school for over twenty years and retired from his post as Head of Languages in 2005. He was a man held in great affection by students and staff. He was both kind and thoughtful and always great company. Those that worked with him or were taught by him understandably developed great loyalty to him and all of us who shared time with him have many great memories.

STAFFING CHANGES

We have appointed well to our staff, and are delighted to welcome many talented and professional colleagues to our teams. Some existing colleagues are undertaking new roles; Miss Cathcart is leading on all matters to do with Inclusion, ably supported by Mrs Wheelhouse, Miss Harrison and Miss Morrell. Mrs Blackley has taken on the leadership of Year 8 and Miss Horgan is leading Year 7. Mr Carmichael is also in a new role leading on Safeguarding which includes both child protection and attendance. We have also welcomed Mrs Adams as our new school nurse. You can contact all these colleagues via the telephone numbers on the letterhead.

Last summer saw the retirement of our Vice Chair of Governors Mrs Anne Byrom. Anne has been an incredibly loyal servant of our school for the last eleven years, and we are most appreciative of all that she gave to us.

OUR SCHOOL SITE

Over the summer we have continued the investment in improving our site. We are refurbishing the Library and Reception areas and we have built new teaching and work spaces. We have continued our programme of removing our flat roofing; we have installed some new fire doors throughout the site and removed the remaining asbestos. This has been our busiest summer in site development since the building of the Science block and we are indebted to Mr Bringins who has managed all these projects brilliantly.

Today we welcome further contractors on site, as we start construction of our Indoor Tennis Centre. It has been a real challenge getting to this point and we have faced many barriers at each step of the way. Congratulations are due to Mr Harper without whom this project would never have got to this exciting stage. With no weather delays we anticipate completion at the end of January when we will be able to make the facility available to our primary partners, our friends at West Oaks School and community groups.

FINALLY

The rise in standards of achievement for our young people is not something that happens in isolation; it is underpinned by the partnership and support we have received from parents and carers. We do not take this for granted and look forward to developing it further with you.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Headteacher