



Dear Parents

12 January 2024

Welcome back to the new term. I hope everyone had an enjoyable and restful Christmas and New Year. The pupils arrived back looking smart and appearing happy and eager to get down to business. If your son or daughter is suffering from any form of anxiety relating to the start of a new term, then please let us know so that we may help.

Given that we have enjoyed a fairly lengthy break, your son or daughter may have had a growth spurt since the end of the Christmas Term. If this is the case, then you may need to purchase new items of uniform, for example, a longer skirt. Please do use the second-hand uniform facility whenever possible. If any doubt about uniform matters, first check the lists which can be found on the school website, and if that does not help, then call the School Office for guidance.

Assembly this week took place on the Tuesday, and I used the song 'Changes' by David Bowie to examine reflection, making changes to oneself and having the courage to do so even when others disagree. I then moved on to resolutions and the ingredients of a good resolution. Whilst I had a list in my mind, I needn't have done so as the pupils identified them all. They are:

- Be realistic ~ resolutions should be challenging but achievable
- Write it down and have a plan ~ break the resolution down into steps and use reminders, for example, a fridge magnet, notebook or computer
- Commit to it but be flexible ~ it should be something desirable and it may have to be adapted; don't give up when encountering obstacles
- Track progress, for example, with a journal, and have rewards along the way

I finished by saying that David Bowie was often referred to as a 'chameleon' because of changes he made to his appearance, music and life, and this is arguably evidence of his reflective nature, which we all might learn from.

In addition, resolutions are not something just for 1 January; indeed, the need not wait for the first day of the New Year, the first day of the month, nor a Monday, nor any other erroneous start point. They can be made at any time, on any day and during any month.

Finally, the word and question of the week are 'authenticity' and 'how do I stand up for what I believe in even when others disagree'. These will be explored by colleagues in tutor time, and possibly in lessons and clubs too.

Incidentally, I did not name David Bowie initially but used a series of clues for the pupils (and staff) to guess who I was referring to. Surprisingly, one pupil took only two clues to accurately identify him: 'he was born David Robert Jones' and 'his birthday was 8 January'. I was surprised by this knowledge, especially given how old David Bowie would have been today, and I would like to reiterate my 'well done', which came with House Points, to Isaac Heather for his music trivia expertise. For the sake of completeness, it took Mr Lacey only one clue to guess the celebrity, but he does have the benefit of seniority!

Congratulations go to our Mock Legal Trial team who at the end of last term came third on the Island, very narrowly missing out on a first or second spot. Similarly, praise also goes to our Senior and Junior Choirs



who sang in a community carol concert, telling the story of the nativity. We performed three songs – ‘Little Donkey’, ‘Calypso Carol’, and ‘It was on a Starry Night’. The combined choir sang very well, and their disposition, attitude and behaviour were all commented on favourably by members of the public.

The weather has now turned and you should have received a letter from me regarding *snow and adverse weather days*. The letter is a precautionary measure and I do hope that school closure is a very rare phenomenon. Please familiarise yourself with the content of the letter.

The Children’s Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza, has launched ‘The Big Ambition’, a national survey of children and young people across England.

The Big Ambition aims to hear from children across England on what they think is important. In the lead up to the next General Election, the Children’s Commissioner wants to take children’s thoughts, opinions and ideas to decision makers, to make sure that the Government hears young people’s voices on what they think needs to be done to make children’s lives better in England.

The Big Ambition survey will be open until Friday 19th January and the link is:
www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/thebigambition

Finally, Senior School pupils are about to begin their internal examinations, and whilst I hope that everyone has revised thoroughly, I also want to share a few thoughts on context and perspective. Firstly, the exams are internal and are useful for identifying gaps in knowledge and understanding; secondly, they are only one measure of progress; thirdly, personal circumstances differ and some pupils have faced revision obstacles over the Christmas period; and lastly, if they do not go well, it is very fixable. As I have said many times on the topic of growth mindsets – it is how we respond to setbacks that is the better measure of character and potential. Above all else, pupils must talk about how they are feeling and share their concerns. As well as talking to staff, the prefects have established an ‘exam clinic’ for any pupil to go along and talk about exam related matters. I urge everyone sitting exams to do so in the knowledge that the outcome is less important than the process, and that help is on hand – it will never be refused and pupils need only ask.

Turning to individual pupils, Ruby Hart, Year 5, has won through to the second round of the ‘BBC 500 Words 2023’ story competition with her submission, ‘Diary of a Carrot’. Since the competition was first launched in 2011 by Chris Evans on the Radio 2 Breakfast Show, it has received over one million stories from children throughout the UK. This is what the competition organisers said to Ruby: “*We received thousands of entries and only around 5,000 go through for the second round of judging by the Reading Agency. You should be very proud! We’ll be back in touch with an update when we have selected our shortlisted stories in January.*” Good luck to Ruby for the next round.

Reports

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| 1. Tues 9 Jan | Easter Term Began |
| 2. Thurs 11 Jan | 2023 Leavers’ Certificate Collection |

Future Dates & Events

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| 1. Mon 15 Jan | Exam Week Commences (Senior School) |
| 2. Tues 16 Jan | S1/S2 Girls, Hockey Match, Free School |



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