

Dear Parents/Carers,

I do hope you were fortunate enough to watch one of our performances of 'Oliver!' last week. If not, you missed a treat as over 70 pupils worked on and off stage: acting, dancing, singing, in the orchestra or as stage crew, front of house or in technical support. Students and staff put a huge amount of energy and time into making this show happen and the standards of the performance were incredible. I am unashamedly biased, but the quality and sheer enjoyment of the cast and support team were exceptional!

Other highlights of this last half term have been the participation of all Year 10 and Year 12 pupils on the separate mock job interview days. These involve every student getting the opportunity to be interviewed by a visiting professional from outside of our school. We're deeply indebted to the solicitors, police staff, business leaders, engineers, electricians and professionals from a whole host of local firms who gave up their time to enable these events to take place. This does not happen in many schools and we're proud of this great opportunity that connects pupils to the world of work. Year 11 students have experienced our first ever 'Sixth Form Taster Day' and also received expert advice on how to revise and work independently from a new link, visiting psychologist Dr Martijn van der Spoel. This is an approach we are seeking to build on. Just this week Year 9 have experienced a powerful workshop on 'County Lines' and a number of fortunate students are experiencing Spanish culture and language in Malaga as I type, whilst others are off to Austria over half term on the school ski trip.

School Improvement

I wrote in my last letter before Christmas about our feedback from Ofsted and we are working hard as staff on three key priorities:

1. Developing and improving our curriculum:

We are changing the shape of our timetable for September 2020. We will be moving to five one-hour lessons a day (as opposed to six fifty-minute lessons). We will also move to a two-week timetable. These changes will reduce the wasted learning time incurred with movement between lessons across a big site and will also enable more depth and opportunities for extended writing and other tasks. This is important in an educational environment where pupils need to concentrate for longer periods of time, working more independently and thoughtfully. Although the two-week timetable will be slightly more complicated for students to follow, it will enable greater flexibility and more balance between subjects in the timetable. We are maintaining our very broad range of courses and building Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) learning into the regular curriculum. This is because these real-life subjects are vital to prepare our pupils for the world beyond school and to connect them to the relevance of their education. We are also delaying students taking their options until Year 9. This is because we want them to have three years experiencing the full breadth of the curriculum, to enable them to be better prepared to make the best choices of courses, and to move away from an educational culture where we were too focussed on testing and preparing for exams and the GCSE courses. As you can imagine, staff are working hard on re-writing their curriculums to prepare for these significant changes.

2. Improve our support and challenge for all students:

We have developed a new system for sharing information and for recognising and supporting the needs of students in lessons. We have also been working hard with curriculum leaders and all teachers on how to support and personalise students' learning in the classroom more effectively, looking at how best to both support and challenge all. In this respect, we have been working closely with teachers in neighbouring primary schools to share good practice on how to continue the learning from primary school to years 7 and 8 in particular. This work has been led by our SENCO and our teaching and learning team.

3. Improving the ethos and culture for learning:

We have brought in an external, national trainer to work with all staff on building relationships and supporting all. We have also re-launched our rewards and celebrations policy and are celebrating good behaviour and effort much more widely and regularly. We continue to develop our behaviour for learning system and our School Student Council and prefects are growing in significance. It is due to this that we turned the Staff Room into a common room for students in Year 9 to provide more indoor spaces for social times.

Pupils' Successes

Over 45 students from a variety of year groups have been giving up their time to help run events for primary school children and develop their own leadership skills in PE. Since September there have been 19 separate events and the ever growing group of leaders have helped put on everything from a swimming festival, rugby tournaments, netball festivals, dance opportunities and a cross-county at Haldon. These events take place through the School Sports Partnership and form part of the Teignmouth Leadership Award Scheme. A special mention should go to Ruby Britton, Lacy Mitchell, Dominic Slader, Owen Cayless, Jack Rodwell, Will Burton and Sam Mayhew for already achieving their bronze leadership award.

In November we entered our Year 12 and 13 students into the Senior Maths Challenge. This is a national competition consisting of 25 multiple choice maths and logic problems which inspires students to achieve and broaden their maths experience beyond the curriculum. Alex Jeffs came top in Year 13 and Amelia Tapp and Cameron Scollick were joint first place in Year 12.

Seven TCS pupils took part in the Regional U16 underwater hockey championship on 25th January in Newport, Wales: George Colley, Louis Atkins, Noah Innis-Kruger and Seb Curle (Year 11), Yasmin Barnes (Year 10) and Lucy Bamforth and James Strutt (Year 9) played with Team South West, made up of players from the clubs based at Dawlish and Plymouth.

Leah Warren (Year 9) has been called up to play rugby for Devon U15s. In addition to their selection for Exeter Chiefs, Jack Parr and Jude Baker-Hands (Year 11) have been selected to represent Devon U16 rugby along with peers Luca Barbot and Noah Innes-Kruger. Jack has also been given responsibility of being the Captain for Devon!

Ashley Morris (Year 10) came eleventh in the Devon Schools U16 Cross-Country Championships, one place outside of qualifying for the national competition. However, with another year to compete in this age category, he looks set for a top position and national qualification next year.

Georgia Stans (Year 12) is currently beginning preparations for the ITF World Cup in Koper, Slovenia in October of this year to represent the PUMA England taekwondo team. She will be competing in the International open championships on 8th February as well as the Holland Cup on 23rd and 24th May.

General Points

We would be grateful for your support as ever on some ongoing issues. There have been a few complaints from Network Rail about student behaviour on the trains on the way to and from school, in particular the train to Dawlish. If your son/daughter travels by train, please remind them that they are representing our school.

Our standards of uniform are generally quite good but there is room for improvement. It is important that all adhere to the same standards and practices if we are to be fair. Coats over blazers and jumpers (for Years 7 and 8) are important but hoodies aren't coats and wearing them provokes unnecessary challenges from staff. Similarly, pupils arriving in school wearing excessive make-up, facial piercings or with extreme hair-cuts or colours isn't helpful. We are grateful for your support.

Finally, please can you ensure that you sons/daughters come into school with a filled water bottle. They can refill this around the school site. The number of pupils who buy a bottled drink each day is staggering and the rubbish around our site and the environmental impact of this are both hugely significant issues.

Key Dates

15-23 Feb	Half term
28 Mar-13 Apr	Easter Holiday
14 Apr	Staff Training Day (non-pupil day)
8 May	Amended May Bank Holiday
11 May	Main national exam period begins (GCSE and A Levels)
20 May	Parents' Forum
23-31 May	Half term
24 Jun	Last possible date for GCSE exams
26 Jun	Last possible date for A level exams
30 Jun	Year 8 Parents' Evening
29 Jun-3 Jul	Year 10 Work Experience Week
6-12 Jul	Year 12 Work Experience Week
17 Jul	Last day of summer term

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours faithfully,



James O'Connell
Principal

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