



December 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we draw towards the end of a very busy first term in this academic year, I would like to share with you some of the many wonderful achievements of our pupils and some updates about other important school matters. This has been a long term compared to the other terms in the academic year and pupils across school have been working very hard. I am very proud of the excellent behaviour and positive attitude shown by our pupils.



Christmas Services

Our Christmas services take place in the morning on Friday 22 December as follows:

- Year 7 will be staying in school and having a service in the chapel.
- Year 8 will be going to Christ Church; pupils should come to school as normal, they will walk up to Christ Church with tutors.
- Year 9 will be going to St Paul's; pupils should come to school as normal, they will walk up to St Paul's with tutors.
- Years 10 and 11 will have their service at The Priory and should meet there at 8.45am. They will be accompanied back to school by staff.
- Years 12 and 13 will have their service at St Thomas's and should meet there at 8.45am.

School will end at 12.30pm on Friday 22 December; the following buses will be available outside school at 12.30pm: 935, 500, 501, 502, 503, 567,487 and the 581 (across the road). Pupils should go to the bus station for 55A, 55B and 80 and to Scotforth Road for buses to Garstang, Catterall and beyond.

Christmas Concert and Carol Services

I hope many of you were able to enjoy our recent Christmas Concert and our Carol Service; both events are a splendid way to end the year and celebrate not only the truth of Christmas but also the talent of our young people.

Year 11 Mock Exams

The first set of Year 11 mocks have taken place over the last week. Mock exams are vital in giving pupils the opportunity to practise exam skills, especially time management, and in helping teachers to assess progress. It is very pleasing to note that pupils have behaved impeccably throughout the exams.

RAF Cadet Unit at Ripley

We recently received notification from the Ministry of Defence that Ripley has been approved to open an RAF Cadet Unit from next year. The MOD sponsored Cadet Forces are widely recognised as one of the most successful youth organisations in the UK. By providing a safe place for young people to develop through undertaking challenging activities, underpinned by the values and standards of the Armed Forces, the Cadet Force will make a significant contribution to our wider curriculum offer at school.

Outstanding Teacher Training at Ripley

As many of you will be aware, Ripley is a centre for teacher training as part of its work as a National Teaching School. Ofsted inspects teacher training providers as it does schools and we were inspected this term. I am delighted to report that our teacher training provision was graded 'outstanding' in every single area. This is a fantastic achievement and tribute to the work of Mrs Bostock, Director of Teaching School. Given the national shortage of teachers in some subjects, it is great to see us bucking the trend in identifying and training the very best new teachers.

Staff changes

At the end of this term we say goodbye to Ms Graham, our Academic Mentor, and Mr Donald, our Groundsman. We wish them both well in their new jobs and thank them for their contribution to Ripley.

Following interviews this term, the following changes have been made to the Senior Leadership Team:

- Mrs Walmsley has been appointed as Vice Principal (Curriculum, Standards and Achievement)
- Mrs Benter has been appointed as Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Standards KS4)
- Miss Robinson has been appointed as Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Standards KS3)

In addition, Mrs Backhouse replaces Miss Robinson in her role as Assistant Subject Leader (KS3) in maths. Miss Walsh and Miss Robertson will jointly lead Y8 as Progress Leaders until the end of this academic year, taking over from Mrs Benter.

Tower works

I am glad to report that the significant remedial works to the tower at the front and rear of school are drawing to a close. The work has been painstaking due to the age of the building but the result has been very pleasing and restores our wonderful building to its former glory.

Car Parking

As of January 2018, the front car park near the lodge must not be used for parents to drop off children in the morning or pick them up at the end of the school day. As parents will appreciate, with over 1700 pupils entering and exiting the site, it is not safe for cars to be around.

'The Fastest Boy in the World' Literacy Event

At the end of September, students in Year 7 spent two days celebrating literature across the curriculum as part of the school's annual literacy event.

Students spent the two days in their form groups, exploring the novel 'The Fastest Boy in the World' in fun and exciting ways from learning about Ethiopia in Geography, to crafting Olympic medals in Art to becoming Olympic athletes and journalists in English. At the end of the two day celebration, students showed off their athletic prowess and worked as a team in Ripley's own Olympic Games. Well done Year 7!



National Poetry Day

For this year's National Poetry Day, students in KS3 took part in an inter-form competition to write a poem about the chosen theme, 'freedom'. Each form entered at least one poem and made Mrs Garnett's job as judge a very difficult one. Well done to all forms for taking part and producing some wonderful pieces of poetry and congratulations to the winning forms: First place: 7Gornall-White – a collection of haikus; Second place: 8Baker; Third place: 7Owen

Reading Leaders

This year, students in Years 10 and 12 have submitted letters of application to be part of the paired reading scheme for students in KS3. Successful applicants then took part in a training afternoon to ensure they had the necessary skills and knowledge to support their Year 7 or 8 mentees. So far, English teachers and library staff have been thoroughly impressed by the maturity and support provided by the Year 10 and Year 12 Reading Leaders during their weekly paired reading sessions. Well done!

Drama and Performing Arts

On Tuesday 7th November the Year 12 BTEC L3 Performing Arts students performed 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' as part of the Shakespeare Schools Festival at the Grand Theatre. They performed alongside casts from Willow Lane Primary School and Giggleswick School. The ensemble of eleven were professional throughout the technical rehearsal and really did make a good impression. Their maturity was praised throughout the day. The performance itself was a lively interpretation of this comedy in a melodramatic style. The audience response was brilliant! The appraisal we received shows just how amazing these eleven students were in their first assessed piece. Very well done to all involved. Their next performance will be an interpretation of 'The Snowman' by Raymond Briggs in the style of Frantic Assembly (Physical Theatre).

On Wednesday 8th November Year 10 and 11 GCSE Drama and BTEC Performing Arts students travelled to the Storyhouse Theatre in Chester to see Frantic Assembly's 'Things I Know to be True' by Andrew Bovell. This is a beautiful and moving piece of theatre that weaves physical theatre into the narrative. Pupils enjoyed a Q&A session with the actors afterwards. Storyhouse is a brand new state of the art theatre that also houses an interactive library that our students had the chance to explore pre-show. It was great to be joined by our Australian exchange students too.

On Tuesday 14th November the Year 11 GCSE Drama pupils performed their devised pieces for an invited audience. We were joined by parents as well as staff and drama pupils from Penwortham Priory. Our pupils conducted themselves in a professional manner; their performances were top class.

RAIR (Raising Aspirations, Increasing Resilience) Champions

We received the following report from Jenna Downing (Senior Athlete Mentor, Youth Sport Trust).

"I had a fantastic experience working with a cohort of Year 9 pupils at Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy on the Youth Sport Trust Programme 'RAIR'. Over my three visits the Year 9 students grew in confidence, their social skills and team skills improved and they developed some fantastic ideas to make a difference in their school and improve the aspirations of others.

The group were passionate about developing an anti-bullying campaign as part of anti-bullying week to show the impact of bullying on others and how, by introducing random acts of kindness, school can be a nicer, more friendly place to be. As part of this the students planned and delivered an inspirational assembly to spread these important messages to the whole of Year 7. I was so proud of the group for an incredible inspiring speech; each and every one of the students spoke with confidence, with passion and with pride, and were commended by the Principal at the end, which was an absolute pleasure to see. Now the group must carry on their project by creating an anti-bullying wall in school, to remind pupils of their key messages, in order to continue the legacy of their work.

I would like to say a huge well done to all the RAIR Champions. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience working with all of you; thank you for your efforts, your contributions to the programme and willingness to make a difference, and above all thank you for making every single visit so much FUN, I had a blast! All the best for the future!"

Jenna Downing

Policies

Can I draw your attention to the following new policies for parents to be aware of:

- Review of Marking – Centre Assessed Marks
- Privacy notice: How we use pupil information

These can be found in the Policies section of the school website <https://www.ripleystthomas.co.uk/parents/policies>

Admissions Arrangements

We are currently consulting on amendments to our admissions arrangements. A copy of the proposed arrangements can be found on the school website at: <https://www.ripleystthomas.co.uk/main-school/admissions/guide-to-admissions>

News from the sixth form Sixth Form Examinations

We have a formal examination week for students in Years 12 and 13 beginning Monday 8 January. During this week, lessons will be suspended and students will have study leave, with the requirement that they attend school to take their exams. The Sixth Form Centre will be open for students to make use of our excellent study facilities.

Sixth Form Open Evening

The Sixth Form Open Evening is on Thursday 1 February. We look forward to welcoming Year 11 students and their parents/carers to this evening.

Sixth Form Enrichment

The sixth form enrichment programme is up and running, offering our students a diverse and exciting range of activities and opportunities. Our three careers academies for aspiring teachers, engineers and healthcare professionals have got off to a strong start, with students already engaging in a range of workshops, group projects and work placements. Students also have the opportunity to access short term enrichments to broaden their skills and open up new areas of interest. Our Chinese Language and Culture enrichment, delivered by the Confucius Institute at Lancaster University, continues to be very popular with students who enjoy both the challenge of language learning and the opportunity to practise a range of traditional skills.

In recent weeks, sixth formers have had the opportunity to listen to talks from leading academics about studying both Law and History at university.

Year 13 students have been working on interview skills to support their applications to a range of degree courses and apprenticeships. Mock interviews, delivered by the sixth form tutor team, members of SLT and an external expert from the business world, have proved extremely beneficial in helping students prepare for what can be a daunting experience!

UCAS 2018 Update

145 applications have been sent to UCAS which represents 85% of the cohort. We are now working with five former students who are making an application through Ripley.

To date students have received 403 offers. Many students are being invited to interview and we are proud to report that all have subsequently received an offer. Courses requesting an interview include Nursing, Teaching, Design and Sciences. Additionally we have two students who have been invited to interview at the University of Cambridge.

Apprenticeship Update

Students are being encouraged to apply for Degree and Higher apprenticeships and we have welcomed representatives from EDF Energy, BAe, The Civil Service and The BBC (virtual via Webinar link) in the last few weeks who have informed us about their apprenticeship programmes. A group of sixteen Year 13 students will be attending an Open Day at BAe (Submarine Division) in December. Students are making applications for programmes including Finance, Business Management and Engineering.

Christmas Charities

The Year 12 students are currently involved in fundraising for the Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service. This includes a sponsored 22 mile bicycle ride and a cake sale including hot drinks! We are also collecting donations of sleeping bags, coats, gloves, hats and socks and will deliver these at the end of term.

A friendly boys vs girls netball match was held earlier in the term to raise money for St Johns Hospice. The Sixth Form took part in Christmas Jumper Day on Friday 15th December raising money for Save the Children.

And finally, can I wish all pupils and parents a peaceful and enjoyable break. I hope that the blessing of the Christ Child will enrich your life this Christmas and through the coming year.

Best wishes,



Mr M Wood
Principal