



March 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

As the darkness of winter passes it is wonderful to look out from my office and see the spring flowers brightening up our grounds and our days. The animals too are enjoying the better weather and are at last able to escape their pens and graze outside on The Heights.

Another term draws to a close and I must say our young people have settled down well to very hard work in preparation for exams. I had a note last week from the Head Boy and Head Girl to say how much Year 11 appreciated having a second mock exam this month, giving them another opportunity to practise in exam conditions. I am sure that will stand them in good stead. As you know the new exams in GCSE English and Maths are now more challenging. English alone has eight and a quarter hours of exams – a daunting prospect! May and June are going to be very hard work for Years 11, 12 and 13. This will be the last year of AS exams in Year 12. From next year all A levels will be two year linear courses.

**End of Term Services:** these will be held on Friday 31 March as follows:

Year 7 will remain in school for a service in the chapel

Year 8 will be accompanied from school to Christ Church

Year 9 will be accompanied from school to St Paul's

Year 10 will meet at St Thomas's at 8.50am

Year 11 will have a service on Thursday. Those pupils not going to Alton Towers will be supervised in school during period 1.

Years 12 and 13 will meet at the Priory at 8.50am.

School finishes at the normal time on Friday 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Spring Concert:** I am sure those of you who were able to attend the Spring Concert last week were thrilled to see the range of talent on display. The concert had a film and musical theatre theme and it was great to hear so many familiar tunes. Well done to all the soloists - it takes a great deal of courage to perform alone in front of a packed and discerning audience. I have to say I greatly enjoyed my debut with the school orchestra and thank them for putting up with me! The Music department goes from strength to strength with a number of pupils winning prizes at the recent Mary Wakefield competition in Kendal.

I have attached our **Communication Policy** to this newsletter to give parents some guidance on communicating with the academy. As you are aware we are a very large and complex organisation and we have to have clear systems for dealing with the significant number of communications we receive each day.

**PE Department:** The last few weeks have been very successful last few weeks for the PE department – well done to all!

- Well done to the Year 7 Girls representing at the Lancashire Final of the Your School Games Athletics finals in Blackpool.
- Well done to the boys' swimming team on retaining the QEGS, Blackburn Quadrangular Trophy for the seventh consecutive year!
- Rhys Ashton (Yr8) competed at the English National Cross Country Championships in Nottingham (38th) and will also compete for Lancashire in the English Schools' Cross Country Championships later this month (Bronze in the Lancashire Championships).



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- Congratulations to our water polo under 15 team who secured a fantastic 3rd place finish in the U15 water polo national semi-final in Manchester.
- There was another Lancashire Table Tennis title for Tommy Kennedy (Year 11) who now goes on to represent Lancashire at the national championships.
- Congratulations to Rio Quarry, now the Lancashire 50m breaststroke champion with two silver medals in the 100m and 200m breaststroke events. Congratulations to Toni Fagan and Emily Verden (Year 12) and Zoe Oswald (Year 11) who represented Lancashire Hockey.
- Well done on a brave effort by the U18 1st XV rugby team, eventually losing 7-10 to St Edward's College, Liverpool, in the Lancashire Plate s/final.
- Congratulations to James Moore (Year 10) who has been selected to represent the North West Water Polo in the U18's Inter-Regional Championships.
- Well done to the Year 8-10 boys who combined to win the Cutty Sark Trophy at the Bolton School Fastwater Gala.

**Mobile devices:** We are becoming very concerned at the moment about the number of young people increasingly addicted to their mobile phones. Sleep deprivation is becoming a significant issue as children apparently routinely check their phones – particularly social media sites - throughout the night, worrying about what may be being said about them. Lack of sleep can seriously affect mental and emotional well-being as well as learning, and certainly reduces resilience. Can I encourage you to monitor your child's online activity and discuss with them their use of social media. By far the best approach is to ensure that children do not have access to their phones overnight. Unfortunately, once a child has a smart phone he/she has uncensored access to the whole world.

**Cyclists:** Could I please ask you to be aware of cyclists coming up along your passenger side if you are turning into Ripley, or dropping pupils off near the school, particularly when coming along Ashton Road in the direction of the hospital. As we know the road is horrendously busy between 8.15 and 9am. We have had one or two near misses recently.

**Events:** I hope to see some of you at our Taize service this week – a lovely quiet opportunity to reflect on God's love for us and His sacrificial gift to us of His Son. This week is our Lenten Charities week for Years 9, 10 and 11, again emphasizing our commitment to our strong Christian values.

**Personal news:** Time catches up with us all! At the beginning of April I shall have completed 11 years at Ripley. My time here has been happier and more blessed than I could ever have imagined. However, I feel that I have now completed the work I set out to do all those years ago and that it is time to pass the baton to the next generation, whose task it will be to shape the academy for the journey ahead.

I have, therefore, informed the Governors of my intention to resign from my post as Principal at the end of August. The Governors will now put in place processes to appoint my successor.

From September I will be focusing on my role as CEO of The Bay Learning Trust on a 2 day a week basis, supporting the schools in the Trust and helping the Trust to grow. As you can imagine, I will not be slowing down over these last few months of my tenure and it will be business as usual at Ripley!

*E Nicholls*