



May 2017

Dear Parents and Carers

We have been focusing on Creation as our theme in worship this term; God's gift of this wonderful world has been particularly evident as we have seen our own grounds blossom into the fullest expression of their beauty this last month. Ripley is such an uplifting place to work and learn; one of the sights of this term is always seeing our young people enjoying lunchtime picnicking on the chapel lawn whilst watching the animals graze in the paddock. We are very grateful to God to have such beautiful surroundings which undoubtedly contribute to all our well-being.

Examinations:

The exam season has begun again, with GCSEs and AS levels now well under way. It was very pleasing to see our year 11 pupils all having breakfast in the canteen this week on the mornings of the GCSE English Literature and the Mathematics examinations, surrounded by revision guides, cue cards and exam texts. Year 11 have worked hard and deserve to do very well. This will be the last year for AS levels as all A levels become 2 year linear courses as from September with students studying only three A level subjects. Exams continue until 26 June, a long and gruelling stretch for our young people.

Congratulations to a number of our young people who have excelled themselves in competitions and challenges recently:

Luke Wilkinson, one of our Year 13 students, has been awarded at place at Sir James Dyson's newly established undergraduate Institute of Engineering and Technology. Over 1200 young people applied for this prestigious course for 25 places. The Dyson Institute offers a rigorous, high quality Engineering Degree with teaching from Warwick University, alongside a paid job. Students will emerge debt free, an attractive prospect for any young person!

Sarah Robinson, Rosie Park and Hannah Trimnell have won the NW regional award in the Shell "Bright Ideas" challenge. Their idea was to shrink a hydro-electric system and generator and place it into drainpipes on large buildings and skyscrapers to create energy to power cities from the waste material pouring down the building. It seems an extremely good idea to me! As North West regional winners of 'The Bright Ideas Challenge', the school has won £1,500 and the girls from the winning team have also won a tablet computer each, and a fully funded trip to 'Make the Future Live', Shell's festival of ideas and innovation, on Thursday 25 May, in the Olympic Park in London.

Nathan Halford, Martin Walls, Catherine Venum and James Martindale have won the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) challenge competition hosted by Westholme School. The team had to complete a number of challenges in each of the disciplines; apparently our team was extremely tenacious and determined to succeed.

Martin Walls has won a prestigious Gold Award in the British Biology Olympiad challenge. This competition enables students to demonstrate a wide knowledge of the subject and to be suitably rewarded and publicly recognised by the award of medals, certificates and other prizes. Martin has the opportunity to attend the Royal Society of Biology's annual Educational Awards Ceremony in London on Friday 7th July.



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Duke of Edinburgh Award

We are now in the midst of the busy expedition season for the Duke of Edinburgh awards. Bronze expeditions are taking place each weekend with groups of 40 students trekking and camping around Silverdale. The Gold expeditions take place later this term in the Lake District. I am very appreciative of the time and commitment that many of our staff members give to this award. The D of E at Ripley goes from strength to strength; over 800 young people have now completed one of the Awards, perhaps next year we will reach the landmark of 1000! I would love every single young person to enrol on this award; it is a life changing experience, developing character and resilience and a whole range of skills for life.

Air Cadet Force

We are currently looking at expanding our offer to our young people through setting up an Air Cadet Force at Ripley. A Cadet Expansion Programme has been set up jointly by the DfE and the Ministry of Defence, financed with a £50m grant from the LIBOR fines. The Cadet Expansion programme is seen now as the pinnacle of the Government's Character Education strategy. Our initial aim is to have 30 cadets and to start from September 2018. Cadets follow a syllabus covering looking after uniform and equipment, the RAF, airmanship and airfields, radio communications, cyber courses, ethical hacking and map reading etc. There is a system of badges to work for; blue, bronze, silver and gold. Pupils can study towards BTECs in public services and in Music and can also gain the Institute of Leadership and Management qualifications. Time in the classroom is supplemented by camps, visits to RAF bases and Cadets can, and do, learn to fly gliders alone by the end of their time in Cadets. All trips, travel and subsistence are paid for. This all sounds like a wonderful experience and we look forward to seeing our first cohort of cadets.

Ripley Scholars

I am delighted to report that our Ripley Scholar Programme continues to thrive; this initiative allows students to have a gap year at Ripley after the sixth form contributing to the life of the school, as a preparation for life at university or in employment or training. In September we will welcome back:

Adam Robinson, working in the Chaplaincy
India Harding, working in the Music Department
Anna Watson, working in Learning Support
Victoria Knipe, working with the D of E team

There has been much to celebrate in the PE department:

- Congratulations to our athletics teams, all of whom have qualified for the NW region B Finals after half term.
- Our netball teams finished the season in fine form with Year 10 and 11 girls winning the district tournaments. Both teams have been tournament winners since Year 7.
- Our U13 water polo team finished third in the NW region tournament in Manchester.
- Congratulations to Holly Hunter, Year 10, on winning the Young Achiever of the Year Award at the 2017 Preston Guild Hall Sports Awards.



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- Our swimmers had a wonderful weekend at the NW regional championships in Manchester with a number of first places:
 - Will Ritchie: 200m breaststroke, 100m breaststroke, 200m freestyle relay
 - Tom Dugdale: 50m and 100m butterfly
 - Rio Quarry: 20m and 100m breaststroke
- Well done to the sixth form on a closely contested 1-0 district cup football final win against Morecambe High.
- Congratulations to Ben White, Year 10, and Hollie Crabtree, Year 8, on their recent golf performances in the Lancashire Schools Championships with Ben and Hollie winning the Team 1st nett shield.

The Music department have also been busy:

- A level pupils have given a lunchtime concert at Trinity URC Church
- The senior girls' choir have been performing in our sixth form assemblies
- The Concert Band and Jazz combo played for the annual Ripley Fun Run
- The Chapel Choir trebles provided a "ragazzi choir" for Lancaster and District Choral Society's performance of Carmina Burana.

Our Farm: A recent article in a national paper has highlighted what we at Ripley already knew. From managing anxiety, and improving focus through to increasing engagement, studies have shown that animals can be extremely beneficial to a school environment. Ripley is one of only 110 schools around the country which has a school farm. Our pupils benefit from this in many different ways. By helping to grow vegetables and rear the livestock our children learn about the connection between farm and fork. The bond that is established between the pupils and our animals also helps with their self-esteem and confidence. We are grateful to Julia Ripley for establishing the farm and delighted to see it going from strength to strength. We hope very much that we will have a baby alpaca before too long.

In the midst of a busy term we realise again how fragile life is; our thoughts and prayers as a school community have been very much with all those affected by the atrocious evil of what took place in Manchester. We continue to pray for those coming to terms with the reality of loss and injury and for the security services as they seek to prevent further attacks.

We look forward to the last half term of the year, with its many trips and visits running alongside exams and to Open Evening for admission in 2018, as the whole process starts again!

I wish you a restful half term.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "E Nicholls".

Mrs E Nicholls
Principal