



November 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

The Advent season is upon us already. On Monday week we had the lighting of our Advent wreaths in both the chapel and the sixth form centre, marking the beginning of this season of anticipation and hope. We will be thinking about Advent, alongside this term's topic of Forgiveness, in our worship and in our prayer life together.



November has been a month of hard work and intense focus with students getting to grips with new GCSEs and A levels. This is a difficult period with very limited exam practice material and no previous experience to help us judge what will be needed for the new grading systems. We are sure, however, that high levels of literacy (in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar) and numeracy will be very important across the board. Pupils are now regularly given spellings in subject areas and lists are also printed in the journals. Many mathematical formulae now need to be learned by heart and knowing times tables is also now a necessity.

**Behaviour Policy:** Our young people continue to impress me with the way they conduct themselves in this large community. It has been helpful this term to clarify for pupils what we expect in terms of behaviour through the launch of our new policy in September. Progress leaders have conducted a number of assemblies since then focusing on Respect, on Manners, on Language and on the Ethos and Values which hold our community together. It has been very encouraging to witness increased politeness and courtesy across the school this term.

**PSHE:** This month we had our first Spirituality Day with Year 8 as part of our PSHE provision. The focus was 'Poverty and Homelessness', and the year group spent the day learning about and responding to this issue in a variety of ways. Pupils started the day in forms making paper bags out of old newspapers which then had to be sold to our sweatshop owner for just a few pounds to buy our family food for the week. The experience gave great insight into the lives of some of the world's poorest people, but was probably more enjoyable than it would be in real life. Pupils then heard from various people who work with the poor and the homeless. Talks were given by the Olive Branch, Christ Church night shelter, about our school charity the Funzi and Bodo Trust, and finally about a recent school trip to the townships of Bloemfontein.

**Exchange visits:** This month we have welcomed two students from our partner school in Australia and 17 pupils and two staff from our partner school in Paris. The group from Paris have a very busy week ahead visiting Chester, Liverpool, the Lake District and Old Trafford and the Imperial War Museum North, as well as spending time in lessons here.

**The Ripley menagerie:** We are grateful to have received the gift of a number of new animals for the farm, from Wennington school. The pygmy goats, mini horses and chickens have settled in well to their new homes and have attracted much attention from staff and students alike.

**More able provision:** We have embarked on a pilot enrichment project with our more able pupils in Year 7. Pupils have been studying etymology, higher level textual analysis and current affairs. They have also been learning the skills of debating and are now studying The Odyssey and Beowulf – and they certainly seem to be enjoying the challenge!



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## Music

**Music Practice Rooms:** We are delighted with our new suite of Music Practice Rooms; these were officially opened in November and named "The Humphreys Music Practice Suite" in recognition of the support given by Margot and John Humphreys for our Music Department. We are also very grateful for the donation of pianos for each of the rooms by a number of friends of the school. The rooms are being fully and productively used now. I am sure you will hear and see the results in even better performances at the Christmas concert.

**Music Department of the Year:** The Music Department has made it through to the final five schools in the national Music Department of the Year awards. Fingers crossed for the final decision in January!

**Remembrance Day:** We were pleased to provide a number of buglers for our Remembrance Day ceremony, both at Ripley and in the town centre, where Sam Virdie played for the Royal British Legion, appearing later on local BBC news. Thank you to all the young instrumentalists who played extremely well.

## Sport

**Swimming:** We were thrilled that our Junior Boys relay team qualified for the National Finals. The boys had a fantastic experience swimming in the London Olympic pool. They were 24th and 25th respectively in the medley and freestyle relays, both swims within 1 second of their qualifying times at the NW regional finals earlier this year. The boys were up against some very good teams, with only five state schools in the country ahead of them. Well done indeed!

**Twickenham Rugby Trip 2016:** This month 44 Year 8 & 9 boys travelled south for a busy and fun-packed weekend of rugby. On arrival in London the group were greeted by The Grey Court School in Richmond, who were the perfect hosts for competitive fixtures. The 6:30am start, along with the long coach journey, didn't appear too much of an issue as the Ripley teams recorded two wins and a draw against the hosts, playing some fantastic rugby.

The England versus Argentina Autumn International was a bruising, physical encounter packed with incident. A 27-14 England victory was a great opportunity to see world-class players in one of the best stadiums in the world. Following the game, the boys headed off for a night of bowling and relaxing before travelling back to Lancaster early on Sunday morning.

And so we start the run up to Christmas! I hope you will join us for our Christmas events; our concert takes place in the Ashton Hall on Tuesday 6th December (tickets available from reception) and our Carol Service is in the Chapel on Wednesday 14th December – we would love to see you at these! It is a special joy at this time of the year to see our chapel and entrance hall decorated so beautifully for us all to enjoy. Thank you so much to the Friends who make this possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Nicholls".

Principal