



June 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

Examination season is finally over! Students have been impressively calm and relaxed for the most part. I think the staff felt papers were fair though it is clear that the level of difficulty is increasing, particularly in the way the questions are phrased. High level literacy skills are now really important for every single subject. Please do continue to urge your children to read!

We are often asked whether we are winding down towards the end of term; in fact we tend to wind up, with non-stop trips, visits and events. We try to record all these on the news section of the website. I hope you find time to have a look at them. Here are a few highlights:

- Year 7 and 8 enjoyed their own sports' day with nearly every pupil taking part in an event. Our annual sports day for all years comes up in the next two weeks, weather permitting!
- Our 270 year 7 pupils, as part of the Archbishop of York's Young Leaders' award, were out and about in Lancaster and district last week doing community service. They worked extremely hard in schools, parks, graveyards, community centres and rivers trying to make the environment better. We are very proud of them!
- Our choristers sang Matins in Liverpool Cathedral in June and 80 of our singers rehearsed with the BBC singers for their televised performance in the Albert Hall at the Proms in July.
- The Duke of Edinburgh award has been in full swing this half term with both silver and gold expeditions taking place. I was thrilled to be able to present 14 Gold medals to our Year 13 pupils a couple of weeks ago. They will all be invited to the Palace in the coming months. It really is a remarkable achievement to complete the many challenges involved at the same time as A levels.
- Our swimming teams had almost a clean sweep at the Inter-schools' swimming gala while the U15 water polo team became National Final Bowl champions.
- Trips and visits went into top gear this half term with outings to Stratford, London and Normandy, as well as our Geography River visits and Agriculture and Horticulture visits to local farms.

This has also been a month of farewells and hellos – we had two very moving leaving services for year 11 and year 13. Year 13 students choreographed their service beautifully with a mixture of speeches, readings, tributes and musical performances. It was quite inspiring to see the students ready to leave us and ready to take up their place in life beyond school. It is a great privilege for those of us who work in schools to watch our young people develop from shy year 7s into confident and articulate year 13s on the brink of adulthood.

We welcomed our 273 new Year 7 pupils on two separate intake days this month to sample life at Ripley. They all seemed to be smiling by the end of the day which is a good start! Pupils left having survived the large site and the canteen and with their new journals and Michael Morpurgo's "An Eagle in the Snow" to read over the holidays as part of our transition project. It will be great to welcome them to Ripley in their new school uniform in September.

To add to our colourful Music ties we now have some very splendid Sports' Ties. These are awarded by the PE department for contribution to school sport. It is great to see quite a number of pupils are now wearing these ties with real pride.



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We are currently in the process of electing a new Senior Student Team for the Sixth form and a new Head Boy and Girl and Deputies for the Main School. I am very grateful to the outgoing teams for the superb contribution they made to Ripley over the last year.

Rehearsals are well underway for "Beauty and the Beast" in July. I understand that tickets will be on sale shortly, do watch out for notification as I am sure sales will be brisk.

A number of members of staff are leaving us at the end of this year:

- Mrs Edwards (Director of Business and Finance) is retiring
- Mr Harris (Mathematics) will be taking up a post as Deputy Headteacher at Walton-le-Dale School in Preston
- Miss Garne (Mathematics) has moved to London to take up a post in one of the Ark Academies
- Mrs Kilshaw (English) is moving to St Aidan's Preesall
- Mr Farquharson (History) is moving to be Head of History in Garstang Academy
- Mr Buyers (Physics) is taking up a post in St Wilfrid's Academy in Blackburn
- Mr Macbeth (DT) is taking up a post in Brighton
- Mrs Douglas (DT) is taking up a post at Casterton Preparatory School
- Miss Brumwell (DT) is taking a post at West Lakes Academy, Cumbria
- Mrs Casey (Health and Social Care) is retiring
- Miss Mason (Academic Mentor) is leaving to train to teach with Teach First
- Miss Robinson (Art Technician) is leaving to train as a teacher

We wish all these colleagues well and are grateful to them for their contribution to Ripley over many years.

We continue to work on improving our facilities; the work to improve our drive has begun. A number of car parking spaces are being created just inside the main gates on the left to allow visitors to park prior to signing in at the Lodge. As part of our tightening of security, barriers are being erected at key entry points, including at the Lodge to control the flow of cars down the drive. As you will know the main drive is one of the busiest areas of school with hundreds of children using it throughout the day.

Our annual Open Evening takes place on Thursday 7 July; as usual, school will end at 12 30 on that day. Term ends on Wednesday 20 July at 12 30 with our end of year services in our local churches in the morning. I will write to you before then with any further details and information. On a legal note I need to inform you the Government has recently updated privacy notices for pupils. Please see the updated notice at <http://ripleystthomas.com/about/policies/>.

Thank you once again for all your support and prayer over this year.

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

Mrs E Nicholls  
Principal