

Dear Families,

I cannot quite believe that we have already reached the Christmas holidays and I that have completed my first term as Head Teacher at Spen Valley High School; it really has flown by. As always it has been a very busy term so I would like to take the opportunity to share with you some of the work that has been done to develop our practices to ensure that we continue to deliver high quality provision and some of the fantastic events and enrichment activities that have taken place this term.

**Support for students with their exams:**

As you will be aware results took a dip in 2018, for several reasons, and since September we have developed our existing systems to include a more forensic analysis of student performance data. This enables teachers to identify the specific needs of each student so they can support them in the most appropriate way. This has been invaluable for all students but especially in Year 11 where this more 'streamline' approach to intervention enables us to manage the students' time more effectively and avoid them having to make the decision of which session to attend. A large number of students have embraced this opportunity and attended the 'Grand Plan' intervention sessions and I believe this has focused them for their recent mocks during which their behaviour was impeccable. To help them with revision we have also supplied all Year 11 students with a 'goody' pack including highlighters, post-it notes, index cards, revision cards and a range of other materials to help them develop their own study notes. We have also purchased GCSE pod for **all** students, not just Year 11, and this can be used to help with revision but also develop students' self-confidence by learning about a topic before the lesson.

**Teaching, Learning & Assessment:**

We have developed our processes for the Quality Assurance (QA) of Teaching, Learning & Assessment to measure the typicality of teaching across the school. This includes; no-notice Learning walks and work scrutinises which is triangulated with student data. We have also introduced full subject area reviews to develop our middle leaders and as a result of this we are able to share good practice and implement any necessary action points.

**Attendance:**

As you will know student achievement is directly linked to their attendance; it is essential that they attend school each day so that they can not only access the expertise of their teachers but also benefit from working with their peers, and participate in enrichment activities. Last year this was another area of the school that dipped and to address this, since September we have developed our tracking of student attendance and I am delighted that our attendance has improved to 94.1 % (for the same time last year). Many thanks to parents and carers for supporting our attendance policy and enabling us to improve this figure. However, I must also point out that despite this improvement we are still below our target of 95% and whilst we do appreciate that there are rare occasions when a student has a genuine illness that makes them unable to come to school, at all other times we expect them to attend regularly and develop the good habits required for the world of work. As you know we already have a policy of not authorising term-time holidays and anyone taking holidays during the school term will be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

**Behaviour:** Having introduced a new Behaviour Policy last year we have been further developing this since September. To improve the behaviour in corridors and aid the flow of movement around the school site we have introduced the one-way system and to support students with any specific barriers they may face to their learning we have enhanced our Personalised Learning Provision. In line with DfE guidance we have also introduced new sanctions such as Saturday detentions and Late shifts to avoid students missing valuable learning time and as a result have successfully reduced the number of Fixed Term Exclusions. I would like to thank families for supporting us with this. The vast majority of students have adapted well to these changes and a recent external review praised the behaviour of the students in the classes visited.

**Enrichment opportunities and experiences:**

As part of our Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural programme in October we held another 'Spenrichment Day' where students were taught about a range of topics that are relevant to them as young people in modern day Britain. This included a Dragons Den activity for Year 7; a presentation from 'Prison Me No Way' to Year 9 students and a full day on the benefits on healthy living and fitness to Year 10. Year 8 students visited Fountains Abbey where they combined historical and geographical investigations.

Many of our students have taken part in a wide range of trips and visits over the term. In September our Year 7 students attended a residential at Fan Woods as part of their induction. This gave them an opportunity to participate in outdoor activities and team building tasks. In September we sent two student representatives to the Battle Fields of Belgium as part of the events marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War One. Continuing with this theme I was extremely proud when our Lead Students led a parade of students from other local schools at the Remembrance Day Parade in Cleckheaton.

During the October Half Term our Business & Enterprise students visited a range of different sites in Belgium as part of their studies around industry across Europe. These included the Cocoa Factory, the Steel Artois Factory and a chocolate manufacturer. They also visited the European Parliament and the Planetarium and through the trip strangers commented to our staff about the excellent behaviour of these students. As part of their Key Stage 4 studies Drama students have undertaken a visit to Media City in Salford and our Geographers carried out their urban study project in Leeds City centre.

In sport our students have participated in matches in a range of sports including netball, rugby and football. I was particularly delighted with our victories over local school in two Floodlight Football tournaments for Years 8 and 10. Earlier on in the term we also visited Whitcliffe Mount for a table tennis tournament where both teams played very well and result of a draw was a fair reflection of the high quality from both teams.

As always here at Spen the performance department has entertained us this term. As part of their Key Stage 4 examination work Year 11 Rock School students performed their pieces including some original compositions to an audience of parents and staff. Then to round off the year this month we were delighted with the Trust Carol Concert at Dewsbury Hall which saw children from across the Trust come together to take part in this truly inspiring event. Working together in a truly inspiring event. And finally as the term has come to a close, last night we were privileged to hold our annual Christmas Concert where we were treated to an evening of music, drama, dance and gymnastics.

As the term comes to an end we unfortunately are saying 'goodbye' to two colleagues who are moving on to pastures new. Mrs Yeoman's, who has been a French teacher here for 11 years, is leaving to spend more time with her family. Mrs Richardson, Pastoral Officer for Year 10 is leaving to take up the valuable role of working with children who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Whilst we are sorry to see these colleagues leave but we wish them well in their new ventures. I am pleased to welcome back to the MFL Department Mrs Shaw who will take over some of Mrs Yeoman's groups and parents of children in Year 10 will be pleased to know that Mr Everett, an experienced Pastoral Officer is joining us in January to lead this Year group.

As you can see this term has been incredibly busy but very enjoyable. Please remember that school re-opens on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January with lessons commencing as usual at 8.30am. It only leaves me to thank you for your continued support to the staff and students at Spen Valley High School and wish everyone a very happy and rest holiday and a peaceful New Year.

