

19<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Dear Parent / Guardian

### Re: Year 9 – End of term letter

I cannot believe I am writing the end of term letter already; this year has gone by so very quickly. Our Year 9 students have achieved so much and contributed brilliantly to the Holt community; I am certainly a very proud Head of Year. It is wonderful to wish the girls well for the summer and give them the time and space to reflect on their successes and targets before embarking on their GCSE courses.

One of the main focuses of this term has been the end of year assessments. This can be a trying time for students as they get to grips with revising all of their KS3 content. It was pleasing to see just how organised Year 9 were in preparing revision timetables and a multitude of resources to help them study effectively. Year 9 also sat their PoR pre-public examination (PPE) in preparation for sitting their PoR GCSE, which is taken during Year 10 at The Holt. This is a wonderful opportunity enabling our students to gain a further GCSE qualification. I was impressed with the maturity the girls displayed in preparing for the PPE. With positive learning attitudes like that, our students are sure to go far when they sit their finals.

This term has also been one of great scientific success with many members of Year 9 participating in Physics and Biology challenges. Sam and Jay achieved the gold award in Biology whilst Emily, Hannah, Aalia, Yui, Aimee, Emma, Mia and Lucy all achieved gold awards in Physics. Of particular note is Sandi who achieved the gold award in both competitions; well done Sandi!

And Year 9's competition success did not stop there. We have been tracking the progress of our young magistrates' team throughout this year and are pleased to announce that The Holt School team came second in the national finals in Birmingham. We are so immensely proud of the students who took part and I personally want to thank them for speaking about their experience in year assembly, presentation assembly and for inspiring the current Year 8 to get involved in this wonderful opportunity next year. We were also fortunate enough to have six Year 9 students take part in the Ten Tors Army Challenge. Well done to Chloe, Noor, Ciara, Chloe, Freya and Krista for your dexterity and determination. We were also particularly proud of Sanjana's involvement in the FLL Robotics competition which saw her competing in the international final in Hungary with students from as far as Thailand, Brazil and Nigeria.

We continue to have some very talented musicians in Year 9 and this was showcased in both our end of year presentation assembly and the recent proms concert. A wonderful rendition of *A Million Dreams* from the ever-popular *Greatest Showman* was given by Isabelle, Amelia, Toni, Tilly with Kimiya accompanying beautifully on piano. Emily also stunned listeners at both the music concert and presentation assembly with her sensational piano solo. Suzi, Sylvie, Lucy, Ava, Alexine, Elana, Isabel, Kate, Isabelle, Jessica and Amy all gave stellar performances at the concert as well; very well done to you all!

Two of the year's most anticipated extra-curricular events take place in the summer term: the inter-house dance competition and sports day. Neither event disappointed this year and I am glad that I was not on the judging panel as the calibre of talent was like none seen before. 9T and 9G were joint winners of the dance competition with beautiful costumes, well-chosen music and choreographed routines which would give the professionals a run for their money. Both were performed again in this week's presentation assembly to the delight of form tutors and the rest of the year group. The Holt School sports day 2018 is one which will go down in history, not only for the sporting records established and beaten, but because of the wonderful atmosphere and sense of community. Our first ever colour-run took place immediately after the main events and the field was awash with

purple, orange and pink powder creating a sea of colour and excitement. With the sunshine, music and laughter, Year 9 made some memories which will probably stay with them for the rest of their school careers. 9C took the crown on sports day and all of our competitors can be proud of their amazing efforts.

In other sporting events, Year 9 continued to shine with Abigail winning every Reading and District Cross Country League race and representing Berkshire at the prestigious English Schools Cross Country Championships. Lucy also achieved National Standard in discus. The U16 Athletics team won the regional final of the Track and Field Cup. Well done to Fatou, Lucy, Grace and Abigail on such a momentous win! As well as this, the Year 9 Athletics team were crowned District Champions and the Year 9 Hockey team qualified for the plate final of the county finals for the first time ever. The Year 9 Rounders team won the PGL Netball tour and are now reigning SWIFT League Champions. It would be fair to say, that Year 9 have had an exceptional year in sport and we are incredibly proud of all of the girls who have given up their time for this. They have all shown such commitment and dedication.

This week over a hundred members of Year 9 went on an excursion to Lagoon Park in Reading. On one of the hottest days of the year, Year 9 spent an afternoon climbing giant inflatable obstacles and slides on an outdoor lake. The students had a fantastic time and came back exhausted from the physical exertion and no doubt, the many laughs they had along the way. From my point of view, it was lovely to see kids being kids again: not a mobile phone or make-up brush in sight – just lots of laughter and fun. This was a perfect way to reward the girls for the effort and hard work they have put into this year. For me, this trip along with the presentation assembly we had the very same day, was the highlight of the summer term. Seeing the students having fun, working as a team and showing humility in recognising each other's achievements was a wonderful way to end the year.

When the students return they will be Year 10 GCSE candidates and the next year will undoubtedly bring many challenges. I hope that the girls are excited to be starting the GCSE courses they have picked to do themselves, including deeper learning of pre-existing subjects and for some students, entirely new content. Year 10 will be having several assemblies and form time activities about GCSE mindset which will help them transition into Year 10 and prepare them for what lies ahead. We hope the summer break will be a time for students to rest and reflect, ahead of starting back ready to learn in September. On a practical point, students will have been asked to purchase several A4 ring binders and dividers in preparation for the notes they will be taking in lessons as we move away from exercise books in some written subjects at GCSE. Could you please ensure that your child also has a new academic diary to use to record her home learning and important notices. Your child will also continue to participate in helping at WADE until October half-term when the new Year 9's will take over.

My final point is about attendance; the average attendance of a Year 9 student for 2017-18 has been 97% which is the equivalent of six days away from school. Attendance has been good for the majority of the year group but as students start their GCSE courses, it is now more important than ever that students attend school as regularly as possible. There is a direct correlation between attendance and academic attainment at GCSE. We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that students can self-medicate over the counter medicines. We continue to ask for your support in this matter to ensure our students get as much out of their education as they can and that they are prepared for life beyond school.

This just leaves me to wish you and your family a very happy summer holiday; we look forward to welcoming Year 10 students back at 8:40 on **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September**.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Gemma L. Priddy  
Head of Year 9