

19th December 2017

Dear Parent / Guardian

Re: Year 9 – End of term letter

We have finally reached the end of a long term and the girls will be ready for a well-earned rest. When they come back in January the focus will be on choosing their GCSE options; this starts with an assembly in their first full week back and the GCSE information evening on Thursday 18th January. Before they make their final choices in early March there will be assembly presentations from new subjects, taster day, individual interviews with either me or a member of SLT, and also parents' evening to provide feedback from individual subject teachers. This will inevitably be both an exciting and nerve-wracking time as our students take the next steps in their academic careers.

It has been a busy term with a number of activities taking place and I have been pleased to see so many members of the year group getting involved. Year 9 have recently started their visits to WADE which is a wonderful opportunity for students to develop their character, confidence and communication skills. This is a time-honoured tradition at the Holt School and something which is really appreciated by members of the local community. It has also been very encouraging to see the imaginative charity fund raising that the girls have been so proactive in organising and running. Notably Rachel and Kimiya in 9T and Zoe and Frankie's efforts from 9W in the recent PTA Christmas fair. They were extremely friendly, polite and a credit to themselves and the school. Year 9 have recently participated in a cake decorating competition with a particularly beautiful entry from Alice in 9T, which I had the pleasure of judging as well at the highly-anticipated Christmas door competition. It is wonderful to see the students' leadership and team work skills which help them make such a success for these seasonal opportunities.

The PE department have been very active as usual with girls taking part in many fixtures and competitions. Miss Godfrey, our acting Head of PE, personally commented on how fantastic Year 9 have been at volunteering to help at sporting events. So many girls give up their time at lunch and after school to help coach and umpire. In fact, seven girls in Year 9 were umpires at the Berkshire Primary School Netball Tournament and they were praised by the tournament organiser for how mature they were. So I would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to Isabel, Holly, Lucy, Millie, Lucy, Sophie and Mia for doing our school proud. All Year 9 forms participated in inter-house netball with 9W taking home the gold. The team effort and comradery amongst the whole year group was really impressive. In addition to this, Sophie also won the Spirit of Sport Award at the Wokingham Sports Awards for her contributions to volunteering in netball, and Abigail won every single race in the Reading Cross Country League. What a fantastic achievement and an inspiration to others!

With all of the amazing events and efforts of Year 9 this term, it is difficult to pick a highlight but I have to say I really enjoyed the Year 9 presentation assembly when students were recognised for their hard work this term. Not only were many envelopes of certificates awarded but we enjoyed eight performances and talks from a number of students in our year group. The assembly opened with a beautiful solo piano performance by Alice in 9T which engaged the audience superbly. Alexine and Yohana later impressed us with a rendition of 'Havana' and Harriet and Samara tapped their way across the stage to 'New York, New York'. As well as this we heard thoughtful speeches from Sanjana and Mia – the winners of inter-house badminton and the aforementioned 9W winners of inter-house netball. Emily, Lucy, Freya and Millie shared their recent success of their BBC radio broadcast whilst Miss Roberts from the English department revealed the winner of the Year 9 Christmas spooky story writing competition and frightened the audience before awarding Alice her prize. The assembly closed with an energetic street dance choreographed and performed by Kirsten and Abigail. I was so impressed by the level of achievement and talent and all of the students who participated should be very proud of themselves.

Looking at the first set of review data which was issued on Friday, it would appear that the vast majority of students are making progress in line with our expectations. It is important that our students continue to challenge themselves academically and achieve all that they are capable of by acting upon the targets they have been set by subject staff. It is also encouraging to see high levels of curiosity, perseverance and reflection in our year group which will ultimately prepare them for life past their school years.

Attendance in Year 9 is good for the majority of the year group, however, the overall year group attendance is 95.8%. As they start their GCSE courses in maths, science and POR in Year 9, it is important that students attend school every day as missing lessons impacts directly on achievement. Students who feel a bit under the weather should be encouraged to still come in to school – they can bring in and self-medicate over the counter medicines such as lozenges, paracetamol and Nurofen to help with period pains, headaches or coughs. These are reasons for absence which would not be accepted when they eventually gain employment, and so we need to encourage them to learn to manage these mild ailments as they grow older. We ask for your support in this matter to ensure our students get as much out of their education as they can.

I wish you and your family a very Happy Christmas and a restful holiday – we look forward to welcoming the students back on Thursday 4th January.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Gemma L. Priddy
Head of Year 9