

December 2018

Dear Helsby High School community and friends,

I would like to start by wishing everyone a lovely festive season and a very happy and successful 2019. At this time of year, we look back over the year just past as well as looking forward with excitement to the year ahead.

For Helsby High School 2018 has been a very successful year with students of all talents and abilities achieving a wide range of successes. For Year 7 it has been settling into their new school while many of our young people have achieved fantastic successes in a range of activities including sport, music, dance, cooking, science, maths, engineering, computing, art, English, drama, enterprise and many more. Our social media regularly features most of these and it is often hard to keep up with the wide range of students' talents.

Over the last few weeks alone our young people have been involved in many activities including a fantastic production of "Into the Woods", a lovely Carol Concert, community Christmas events in Helsby and Frodsham, success in the Rotary Young Chef competition & the Senior Maths Challenge and many sporting events. These are just a few of the many opportunities that we offer at Helsby to develop the experiences and self-confidence of our students.

During 2018 I have had the pleasure of accompanying Year 12 on a Business/Media/History visit to London and in October I went on the Year 11 History visit to Berlin. It was a great privilege to spend time with our fantastic young people who were a real credit to their families and communities. They were polite, courteous and fun to be with. They not only had to put up with having their Headteacher along, but had to accommodate his odd sense of humour too.





Such visits require hours and hours of preparation by the leaders, in these cases, Mrs Dougherty for London and Mrs Llewellyn for Berlin. In addition, staff give up so much of their own time to accompany the visits. I am very proud of the range of experiences and visits that I report each term to the Governors.

Academically 2018 has been a very successful year for our students with our GCSE Class of 2018 achieving an outstanding set of results which placed the school a close second for secondary schools in Cheshire West and Chester. At A level our students also gained some wonderful results and overall made better progress than students nationally. The students were, rightfully, proud of their achievements as they were presented with certificates and awards at our packed GCSE Celebration Evening and an equally good night at the A level celebration on Wednesday 19 December.

Back in May we were delighted that Ofsted confirmed what a good school Helsby is and one in which the local community should be very proud. We are continuing to do our best to improve the facilities at the school and we were delighted to open our newly refurbished netball courts at the start of December. This has been possible due to a valuable top up grant from the Marshes Community Benefit Fund (MCBF). We look forward to hundreds of students and members of local community clubs benefitting from the superb new courts for years to come. We are currently working with Frodsham Junior Football Club with the aim of opening an Astro turf facility being opened at school (possibly as soon as 2020).



At the end of this term we say farewell to two colleagues from the Mathematics department: Mrs Whitley is leaving us after 4 years at Helsby and her A level teaching expertise will be particularly missed. We would like to wish her well as she is planning to complete a PhD in the near future.

Mr Fuller has made a valued contribution to organising the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme as well as to the maths department over the last 2 years. We wish Mr Fuller well as he starts his own business to set up his own Consultancy. A fantastic opportunity has evolved over the last 6 months for him to run a business in Triathlon and Running events and in Outdoor Education.

As you are probably aware I also leave Helsby High School at the end of term. After reaching my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier this month I feel the time is right for me to step back and, although I intend to do some work, it will be on a part time basis. I am looking forward to having more time for travelling, swimming, sailing, golfing and hill walking, although Mrs Dowler has ideas about lists and chores!



I have been teaching for over 37 years. After graduating in Physics from Durham University I stayed there to do my PGCE, in 1980, with initial placements in Consett. I started teaching at

Neston in 1981 before becoming Head of Physics at Blacon in 1985, Head of Science at Sutton in St Helens in 1988, eventually being promoted to Deputy Headteacher there in 1997. I began my first Headship in January 2004 back in the North East, at Haydon Bridge in Northumberland.

I was delighted to be appointed as Headteacher at Helsby from September 2010. The school had amalgamated with Frodsham College in 2009 and I am very proud that our school is now considered as the school for all young people across the communities we serve. The successes of the school have been possible due to the hard work of a talented staff, the support of a strong Governing body, effective partnership with families & other schools and the great young people that we have here.

While recent years have been financially challenging and a time of significant curriculum change, I believe that the school is in a strong and settled place furthermore, we are expecting to be oversubscribed for the new intake in 2019. I am sure that my successor, Mr Martin Hill, will bring fresh ideas and skills and that he will lead the school forward to increased success in the future.

I would like to thank those people who have said and/or sent kind words about my tenure as Headteacher at Helsby. It has been humbling to receive such comments and a privilege to lead such a fantastic school. As I say farewell I would like to send you all my very best wishes for the future.

Kind regards



**John Dowler**  
Headteacher