

December 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am sure that every term in every secondary school is very busy - and the Autumn Term 2019 at Helsby High School has certainly been no exception. I hope the following provides you with an insight into the highlights of what has been a very exciting term for the school.

Year 11 and Year 13 Awards Evenings

Two of the most special moments in the school's calendar are when we share the GCSE and A-Level examination successes of last year's Year 11 and Year 13 cohorts with the students and their parents. The Year 11 Awards Evening on Monday 25th November was well-attended and much appreciated by former Year 11 students and their parents, especially the inspirational input from our guest of honour, Nathan Maguire, a former student and current Team GB Paralympian. At the time of writing we are looking forward to our Year 13 Awards Evening on Wednesday 18th December, when another former student, Jack Watson, will be our guest of honour.



Year 11 Pre Public Examinations (PPE) 1 Results Day

Ready to emulate the success of the summer 2019 GCSE cohort, we are really pleased with the progress of our current Year 11 students as they enter the final stages of their preparations for their GCSE examinations in 2020. Following their first set of PPE examinations in November, they collected their latest predicted grades at a 'Mock Results Day' event on Monday 25th November and for the majority this hopefully provided much reassurance and confidence. There is still much work to do, with intervention plans being finalised for the Spring Term, but the students' determination and focus will hopefully be rewarded with well-deserved success next year.



Staffing Update

Sadly, Mrs Cummins is leaving Helsby at the end of this term to take up a full-time English teaching post at Weaverham High School. We wish Mrs Cummins well and thank her for both her English teaching and also her leadership of the school's Learning Resource Centre (the 'Library') in recent years. Her teaching will be covered by existing members of the English department, with Mr Parkes teaching some PHSCE lessons in the Spring Term. We are also looking to appoint a full-time Learning Resource Centre Manager for January onwards so that the school's provision for the support of students' reading can be further enhanced and developed. We recently welcomed Mrs Hamilton to our Science Technician team and are also looking forward to Mrs Woods joining us as our new Curriculum Support Manager in January. We very much hope both colleagues will enjoy working with us in the school.

Governing Body Update

Following distinguished service as Chair of Governors, Mrs Brenda Ratcliffe stepped down as Chair in September - the school is immensely grateful for the huge contribution Mrs Ratcliffe made to the school in this role, her commitment and support unwavering during her time as Chair. Miss Gail Fullbrook, former Headteacher of Frodsham CE Primary School and Helsby High School governor for many years has now taken on the role of Chair of Governors, with Dr Andy Morley the new Vice-Chair. We are grateful to both for their willingness to support the school in these crucial roles as it looks to further develop in the future. We will also be holding an election early in the Spring Term for the two parent governor vacancies which were advertised recently.

Primary School Partnerships

I have really enjoyed visiting all of our wonderful partner primary schools in recent months. We have really good relationships with all of the schools and as the 'Frodsham And Villages Schools Partnership' we were recently successful in securing £25,000 of funding to facilitate an innovative joint curriculum project. As part of this project staff from the High School have been meeting with primary colleagues this half-term, developing a deeper understanding of the curriculum at both primary and secondary level and looking at ways to make the transition to high school even stronger in terms of students' learning. Eventually this work should lead to agreed curriculum expectations across our primary schools, which the High School curriculum will then be built upon. Students coming to Helsby from our partner primary schools in the future will therefore benefit from a 'joined-up' curriculum in all of their subjects in a unique way as a result of this pioneering project.

Extra-Curricular Activities

A key part of the wider Helsby curriculum offer is the substantial extra-curricular provision which staff provide for students. There is not enough space to do justice to them all here so I will merely pick out a few of the many highlights this term:

- The Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award expedition on a very wet weekend in September, successfully attended by 59 of our intrepid Year 11 students.
- The Year 13 'Artists in Tuscany' visit during the October half-term, with their impressive work currently displayed at the Weaver Hall Museum in Northwich until late January 2020.



- 'Anti-Bullying Ambassador' training attended by Year 9 and 10 students, who now offer their support to fellow students in the Student Support Centre.



- The Year 7 and 8 boys' cross-country team, winners of both the local and regional finals, leading to being finalists at the national championships in Derbyshire in early December.

Please do follow the school's Facebook and Twitter pages for full details of all of our students' wonderful achievements.



School Production

Early December saw our annual school production, 'This is ME', written and directed by Mrs Cross, Expressive Arts Faculty Leader. As always, the quality of the production was really high and the thought-provoking play was enjoyed by fellow students and family members in a packed hall as it ran for three consecutive nights. Thank you to Mrs Cross and her team for all the work that went into the performance and a big well done to all the students involved.

Christmas Festivities

One of the things that is special about Helsby High School is the way in which it puts itself at the heart of the local community and at no time of year is this more evident than at this time of year, with a variety of Christmas events having taken place this month in conjunction with, and support of, our local community:

- At our Chester Cathedral Christmas Concert on Tuesday 10th December we were joined by 200 students and their families from our partner primary schools in our 'Bound by Sound' celebration. The evening was a fabulous occasion, in a very fitting and atmospheric venue, allowing students of all ages to showcase their musical talents to a very appreciative audience of parents and members of the wider school community.



- On consecutive weekends in early December, our students played their part in the local Frodsham Festival and Ho Ho Helsby celebrations, once again supported by the Expressive Arts Faculty, entertaining visitors with a wide range of music and providing a wonderful backdrop to our local festive events.
- I have written before about how thoughtful our students are in terms of thinking of and supporting those less fortunate than themselves in the local community and Christmas provides another opportunity for them to demonstrate this. Students of all ages across the school collected enough provisions to put together over 100 Christmas hampers, which they have helped to deliver to elderly residents in the Helsby, Frodsham and Elton areas. As I write this early in the final week of term, students are busy preparing to welcome and entertain over 80 guests at our annual Senior Citizens' Christmas Party and will donate £1 each for local charities as part of our 'Own Clothes Day' on the final day of term.



Helsby's 70th Anniversary Celebrations

As I am sure you will already be aware, the school is celebrating its 70th anniversary this academic year. Students took part in a competition earlier this term to design logos for the anniversary, which will be used in a variety of ways throughout the year. A very successful Community Coffee Morning was held in September, which was well-attended by the local community and included visits by former students of the school, with more events planned for 2020 including a Spring Concert in St Paul's Church, Helsby on Thursday 26th March and a VE Celebration Tea Party in school on Thursday 7th May.

Friends of Helsby High School

The school is very grateful for the support of all parents, but a particular mention should be given for the fantastic work put in by Mrs Critchley and other parents to re-launch the 'Friends of Helsby High School' parent-teacher association. Their first event, a Quiz Night in November, was a great success and although the money raised will be of real benefit to students, knowing that there is a group of parents so willing to support the school in so many ways is very much appreciated. Thank you to all parents involved in this work and all those who attended the Quiz Night. Please do contact the school if you would like further details about how to get involved in the group and its work moving forwards. Alternatively, please request to join the private 'Friends of HHS' Facebook group.

I hope the above gives you a taste of the many and varied areas of work in the school this term. Thank you to all parents and carers for your on-going support, working in partnership with the school. I hope you have a wonderful, peaceful festive season when it arrives and wish you all the very best for the New Year.

Merry Christmas from Helsby High School!

With very best wishes,



Martin Hill
Headteacher