

20 December 2018



Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of another busy term, I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on some of the term's events and to thank you for all your support.

Our Year Sevens have settled in well and made a really confident start to college life. Some of them have been visiting their old primary schools to speak to Year Six pupils about life in a secondary school. The girls made a presentation and held a question and answer session. Well done girls, you are great ambassadors for The Spires College.

It was wonderful to be able to congratulate so many of our older students for their exam success at last night's Award's Evening. They have so much to celebrate and are wonderful role models for our younger students.

Fundraising

I wanted to mention this first because I have been bowled over by all of the charity fundraising undertaken by our students and staff this term. You will be aware that students choose a charity for each Year Group to support annually but I think this year has really seen this taken to new levels. Our Magnificent Moustaches raised over £1000 for the Year Groups' chosen charities in November and I would like to thank every single person who took part in either growing a moustache (some more successfully than others!) or who made a donation to the cause. What a fantastic achievement.

Charitable work continued during the run-up to Christmas, firstly with the remarkable donation of food to Riviera Life Storehouse collected through our Reverse Advent Calendar. Thank you to all of the families who donated food items to this cause and to our Pastoral Support Managers and Tutor teams for co-ordinating the task.

As usual, the last day of this term sees us raising funds for Save the Children with our Christmas Jumper Day. The whole school looks very jolly and glittery today! As if this wasn't enough Christmas frivolity in one day, we have a Christmas Fayre for our students at lunchtime, in aid of the year groups' chosen charities, where they can join in with the Christmas spirit supplied by the Christmas Juke Box whilst enjoying some gingerbread, grabbing some last minute presents from our craft stalls, pinning the hat on Santa and sponging a teacher! Many thanks to Mr Veale and the tutor teams for organising this event and to all of the students who have been busy preparing their stalls.

Academy Conversion

You may recall that I wrote earlier this year to explain that the intended academy conversion was progressing more slowly than expected and would not take place until 2019. Since then, conversations with the Department for Education have continued and, unfortunately, they will not approve the conversion on the terms that we were proposing. The governors and I, in conjunction with the Learning Academy Partnership, have therefore decided that the best course of action is to remain as a local authority school as we do not believe that the compromises required by the DfE would be in the best interests of our students.

We are confident that it is the best course of action in the circumstances. We will continue to work closely with schools in the Learning Academy Partnership (LAP SW) for the benefit of all of our children, and will seek to ensure that this close relationship still provides many of the opportunities that being part of that multi-academy trust would bring.



Sport

The PE department has been very busy hosting events for primary schools including our gymnastics and trampolining festival, which was attended by 157 students from local primary schools and supported by our brilliant Sixth Form leaders and Year Ten students. The leaders were praised by staff for their fantastic leadership skills, support and enthusiasm.

Other notable sporting successes include our Year 10 Netball team, who beat three other teams in one evening (Kingsbridge Community College 12-3, St Cuthbert Mayne School 17-3 and Coombeshead College 6-2), and our Under 14 Basketball team who are quickly acquiring new players to add to their winning squad. Girls' Rugby is flourishing, supported by Exeter Chiefs who hosted some of our girls at a fantastic training session, working on their rucking skills, followed by a really interesting tour including the first aid room, physio's room, changing rooms, gym, ice baths and more!

Our Ten Tors teams continue to train with regular sessions on Dartmoor with Mr Moore, Mr Blacklock and other staff. The teams showed great determination on a recent session, facing 50 mph winds, hail and rain. Well done to everyone involved.

Outside of school, Mason in Year 8 has competed at an International Taekwon-Do Federation event, winning Gold in both patterns and sparring for his age group. Mason also entered the under 18s sparring event and was awarded Silver place. Well done Mason!

STEM

Year 10 Engineering students, Alex, Jenson, Abbie and Francesca entered the Torbay MADE (Manufacturing Activities Designed to Engage) competition. The students' interactive display board project was very well received by the judges and the students did a great job of presenting it. Engineers from Gooch & Housgo took one of the display boards with them to use at trade events. Congratulations to the team on their efforts.

Creative Arts

Our annual Christmas baking competition, the Yule Log Bake Off, was won by Lilly from Year eight. The judges were very impressed with all entries.

The cast and crew involved in our forthcoming production of *Little Shop of Horrors* are rehearsing hard. It's great to see and hear the progress of their performance. Tickets will be available in January: look out for the announcement when they go on sale.

Outside of college, we have students taking part in local performances, including a number of students who have been cast in the Summer Season show at Babbacombe Theatre. I hope that you are able to catch one of their shows and, to those taking part, break a leg!

Recycling with Terracycle

We're looking forward to launching a recycling scheme in January with TerraCycle, an organisation that reuses, upcycles and recycles practically all waste items instead of incinerating or landfilling it. We will initially be collecting the following items:

- Writing instruments – biro, markers, whiteboard pens, felt tips, gel pens, mechanical pencils and any other kind of pen you can name!
- Crisp packets.
- Biscuit and snack packets and wrappers.
- Toothbrushes (manual and heads of electric brushes) toothbrush packaging, toothpaste tubes, lids and packaging.
- Pet food packets – dry and wet food pouches and bags.

Full details will be published soon and there will be a dedicated page on our website.

Torbay Admissions consultations

The local authority is consulting on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, and on the schemes used across Torbay to manage the school admissions process. They have asked me to share this information with you. There is a link to the admission arrangements consultation below, along with one to another consultation they have asked me to bring to your attention:

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/consultations/admissions-policies-2020-21/>

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/consultations/relevant-area-consultation-for-school-admissions/>

PFA

In the new year I would like to explore the idea of setting up a Parents and Friends Association for the college. This would allow us to combine fund raising, parent feedback and support for college events. I will write with details after Christmas but please do give some consideration as to whether you would like to get involved.

If I could end on a plea that you use the Christmas break to ensure any missing or damaged items of uniform or school equipment are repaired or replaced so that everyone can begin the new year smartly attired and ready to learn.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable break across the festive period and thank you for your ongoing support of the college. We look forward to another successful year in 2019.

With very best wishes



Alex Newton
Principal