

Dates for you diary:

Jan 7- Spring Term Begins

Feb 17-21 - Spring Half term

Mar 30 - 13 Apr -Easter Holidays



Hello and Merry Christmas

As I start this newsletter we are in the middle of assessment week, looking forward to the beginning of festivities in the last week of term. By the time the young people arrive back at home over Christmas they will hopefully be exhausted and in desperate need of a long mid-winter rest!

Assessment week was in its own right one of the highlights of the term. For students everywhere its slightly behind going to the dentist in the list of favourite things and to see everyone coping superbly, managing anxiety and focussing well through exam conditions was tremendous. Well done to you all (staff included!).

Other highlights have been entering the Young Mathematician of the Year (well done to the Whinfell number crunchers – Guy, Ben and Mason) and getting through to the second round of the National Boccia Championship, to be held in Liverpool in January. We also entered the Comic Art Festival and decorated ‘Charlie’s Café’ in town, made Christmas gifts for Save the Children, had a visiting artist teach us how to do paper-cutting art and had Norway Day as part of our themed ‘foreign day’ programme. The competitive streak held strong and we had a hand-writing competition (won by Tristan) and a creative writing competition (won by Seb). Well done both of you.

Within the home there have been a huge variety of activities and trips including Halloween, going to the zoo, Brockholes, exploring the Lakes, Lightwater valley, pamper night, jump rush, Blackpool and so on and so on...the list really does seem endless and is a reflection of the imagination and energy of staff.

As always in life there are comings and goings and we have been lucky to have had Ben, Seb and Vincent join us this term. For all three young men, the move has been a huge change and they have coped with it admirably. Seb and Vincent joined more recently but Ben arrived at the beginning of September which seems a long time in the past. He now does seem like a Whinfell ‘old-timer’ which goes to show how well he has done. Joe moved back home to go to college and live independently, having passed his driving test and having his own wheels. Well done Joe!

Another Whinfell old timer unfortunately leaves us shortly.

It is with real sadness that we will have to say bye-bye to Tracy who leaves us in mid-January. I think there is sometimes a danger of assuming that you can speak for everyone, but on this occasion I feel confident that I can. Tracy has been a cornerstone of the success of Whinfell and has been an exemplary Registered Manager. She has been a tremendous advocate for the young people and has worked passionately to make Whinfell the Outstanding provision it is. Her contribution is immense and has resulted in Whinfell repeatedly achieving the very highest judgements that Ofsted can give. We don’t chase the ‘Outstanding’ label but it is satisfying when the team effort is recognised appropriately; Tracy has played a huge role in leading, motivating and inspiring that team. She will always be part of the Whinfell DNA - and I know that she won’t be able to resist dropping in from time to time. Good luck from all of us with whatever you do next!

On a brighter note, earlier in the term the efforts of the Whinfell team were recognised at the Cambian Awards where we came top against over 300 other schools and homes, winning the Team of the Year Award. That put us through to the Care Tech Awards and we rightly won that one too. We have a nice plaque and certificate but once again it is most satisfying for the staff to get the recognition they richly deserve. I am sure you share my admiration for them and will join me in giving, on behalf of the young people, my heartfelt thanks.

Having started this a few weeks ago, I can now close on a properly festive note. In the last few days we have had our Christmas talent competition, a visit to church where there were some fantastically confident readings and a morning making decorations and presents. As I write the lads are just returning from a great trip to the pantomime so I am bracing myself for dealing with an afternoon of double-entendres and ribald jokes (nothing new there, eh, Josh!).

I know everyone has very diverse plans for Christmas and so whatever you do, wherever you go and whomever you share it with, have a good one.

Chris



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM US ALL!

Everyone has a personal best