

Dear Parents

As we head towards February half term, it marks halfway point of the school year. However, in reality for Year 11, they are much further than halfway and they are quickly heading towards the final weeks of their time at William Howard School. After almost 12 years of compulsory schooling, the final 12 weeks until the first GCSE exam are so important for them, to finish their school career, meeting their potential and being proud of their achievements.

Students continue to be focused in lessons, making a positive start to the term. One student showing an exceptional focus through Year 11 is Gwen Mearns. She was recently awarded the weekly Headteacher's Award and thoroughly deserved the accolade as it reflects her consistently conscientious approach to her GCSE studies alongside her commitment to swimming, training and performing at an outstanding level.

I asked Gwen to contribute to the newsletter this half term and share how she maintains motivated to work hard in school and swimming:

Hi, I'm Gwen. You may think that I get good grades because I'm "just naturally clever." In reality, my grades come from hard work and determination.

After GCSEs I plan to go to Sixth Form and study PE, Biology and Chemistry. These will suit my aspirations to become a sport physiotherapist in the future. I have high aims and I need high grades to achieve this. GCSE exams are one of the checkpoints along my way to a larger goal.

I swim a lot outside of school and I think this has also given me a positive mindset towards studying. My motivation in swimming, which carries over to schoolwork too is, and has always been, to see how well I can do and to push my limits.

If you see me on a Friday, you can often tell (from my complaining!) that I'm tired, but it doesn't stop me from trying to achieve my end goal of seeing what the highest grade I can get is. I'll slog through the hours on a Friday after getting up at 04:45 for two hours of swimming if it means I get a better grade in the long term.

How do you know if you can do better at a subject if you don't revise and try your hardest? Even then, there are always little mistakes to pick up on and improve for the next time.

Exercise in general really helps me and I'm sure I'm not the only one who would agree (I promise I'm not being paid by Mr Anderson to say that!). It's a way to escape revision and schoolwork for a few hours per day and focus on something that I enjoy with all my heart. It's good to have breaks regularly during revision and sport is a great way to lose yourself and forget all your revision struggles for a while.



To support all of Year 11 to do their best, there is an extensive intervention programme in place across many subjects. You have all received the programme – please encourage your child to attend the sessions, they will undoubtedly make a difference if regularly attended. In addition to this, all homework is now revision focussed. Students will receive a homework checklist every Monday to support them in planning their week. While this may well contribute another 8 to 10 hours of work per week, students must realise that it is only through consistent hard work over the next 12 weeks that they will make the improvements they are capable of.

Key GCSE Exam Dates

Mock exams	Weeks commencing 19 February & 26 February
First GCSE exam	Thursday, 9 May
Final GCSE exam	Wednesday, 19 June

Whilst the message is clear to students about what we expect, it is important that they remember the purpose of hard work. Gaining the best GCSE grades they can might just make the difference for their next steps in what is a competitive working world.

Work Experience

Prior to Christmas, students got a feel for this world of work through their work experience. It was with immense pride that Miss Elliot and I read some of the feedback given. Many students really did excel themselves:



Huey Bailie

Huey completed his work experience as a gold and silversmith in Italy in such an exceptional way. Throughout, Huey worked with professionalism and maturity. Part of his work entailed helping recycle and purify silver to make wire and sheet for the workshop. He also helped make components for a necklace. Huey approached his work experience from start to finish showing responsibility and resilience throughout.



Max Starkey

Max has proven to be a pleasant and polite young lad, demonstrating exceptional initiative throughout his time here. He not only follows instructions well but also showcases genuine enthusiasm for hard work. His dedication and work ethic have truly made a positive impact during his time with us.



Elliot Howell

Elliot has been an absolute delight to have in the class. From the beginning of the placement, he has been very willing to take part in all activities which have ranged from working with groups of children, making props for the nativity performance to supporting with Christmas lunch. Elliot has shown enthusiasm and initiative throughout the placement. He particularly enjoyed developing the children's interest in junk modelling by showing them how to make a rocket and then working with groups to model and support them to create their own rocket. Elliot has developed good relations with the children and adults within the classroom, nothing has been too much trouble. It has been a pleasure to have Elliot with us for work experience and we all wish him the very best for the future.



Sophie Allison and Louis Archibald

This is the first time we have had students on work experience and I have to say they have been brilliant, totally respectful both to staff and, most importantly, our residents. It can be quite daunting for young people coming into Rosehill due to the nature of our residents' illness. People living with dementia can present in many different ways, both Sophie and Louis have shown empathy, kindness and total respect to everyone. It has been a pleasure to have them at Rosehill.

We hope that the work experience helped students consider their future options and what they might want to move onto post Year 11. It is now important they attend information sessions for all the providers they are interested. Carlisle College, for example, have information sessions in January, March, May and June. We had our own open evening on Wednesday, 10th January and it was great to see so many students considering joining our Sixth Form. If you need any support or careers advice, please get in contact sooner rather than later.



Finally, I would like to congratulate the Year 11 football team on their derby win, as they beat the Sixth Form team on penalties.

This is the second year the event has run and it was a great way to finish the term before Christmas – well done to all students involved.

I would also like to wish the best of luck to all Year 11 students taking part in the school play this year. Many of you have made an amazing contribution through the years and I look forward to the performance this year. Well done for your hard work and commitment.

Thank you for your ongoing support and, as always, if you have any questions then please get in contact with me or Miss Elliot - we are here to support students through to the end of Year 11.

Mr Anderson, Director of Learning (Year 10)

DAnderson@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk