

December 2017

It has been a real privilege this term to be a part of such a busy, caring and high-achieving school community. The range and quality of the activities with which the students engage is fantastic and I give a flavour of these below.

In sport, students have represented the school at netball, football, cross-country, basketball, hockey, golf, table tennis and rugby with more opportunities than ever before for boys and girls to participate. I am grateful to many parents this term for braving the notorious weather at Castle Dyke weather and supporting the school teams. In swimming, Tom Wilkinson (S1) is Yorkshire Champion and highly rated in the UK. An excellent recent Christmas Concert and the splendid Carol Service bear witness to the high standards of music at Birkdale and to the large number of pupils who participate. Birkdale musicians have also played or sung at Disneyland Paris and at Whirlow Farm and at a number of other fund-raising events. In Drama, a fine production of the play 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest' showcased some impressive talent.

This year's Senior School Charity is The Children's Hospital Charity and several events from non-uniform days to a form competition to raise money, overseen by our student run Charity Committee, have already taken place. The school also raised several hundred pounds for the Poppy Appeal this year.

In academic matters, teams have represented the school in many national and regional competitions including reaching the national final in the European Youth Parliament Debating Competition; Ellen Knight has been selected to represent the UK at the international stage of this competition. Sam Pickup will represent Birkdale and the Yorkshire region at the national finals of the Historical Association Great Debate competition in Westminster. A number of visits have enhanced classroom learning this term, including several Theatre trips, a Classics trip to Lincoln and an Art trip to London. A group of Physics students visited CERN, the European centre for Particle Physics research, and were inspired by the scale and ambition of this project. Guests to the school have included the classical story teller Katy Cawkwell, the broadcaster and theologian Dave Tomlinson and the Chair of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon MP.

The Friends Of Birkdale School (FOBS) committee has also been very active, organising a memorable and enjoyable Quiz earlier this term. I am most grateful for your support of FOBS events, which have raised money for a number of clubs and societies.

Could I remind all parents of the importance of naming the pupils' clothing and their other possessions? The school currently has a large number of un-named items in lost property and it is frustrating that we cannot re-unite them with their owners.

The 11+ and 16+ scholarship examinations take place next term. Pupils already attending Birkdale School are of course eligible to attempt the 16+ Academic Scholarships. It must be emphasised that the

award of a Scholarship is dependent on academic excellence: the majority of scholarship holders go on to secure places at prestigious universities. Sixth Form Sports Scholarships are also available. The closing date for entry for the Sixth Form Scholarships is Friday 15 December 2017. Please note that the initiative to enter for the Sixth Form Scholarships lies with you as parents: there is no preliminary round and no invitation from the school to enter. At 11+, pupils who do particularly well in the Entrance Test on Wednesday 24 January 2018 will be invited to take the Scholarship Examination on Thursday 8 February 2018. Lower School and Sixth Form Music Scholarships are also available: the last entry date for these is Wednesday 14 February 2018.

I would like to remind pupils in S5 of the importance of revision over the Christmas holiday for the mock examinations which begin on Monday 8 January 2018, the day before the formal start of term. The U6 students will take A level mock examinations during the week beginning 26 February 2018. This is the week after half-term and full details will follow shortly; clearly the students should spend some time over Christmas reviewing this term's work in order to be prepared and take full advantage of this practice opportunity.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and to wish you and your families a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P.M. Owen". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Paul Owen
Head Master