

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a great two weeks and enjoyed a slower pace of life. I have heard some lovely recounts from various pupils, most of which talked about experiences rather than presents which is quite refreshing. The pupils have come back with a lovely buzz and have settled into the term very well.

Training day on Monday was a mixture of practical and theory sessions focused on teaching and learning. Having conducted just over 50 lesson drop-ins during the first term, I had a clear understanding of what I wanted to develop during this term.

We began our practical session with a focus on the power of questioning. Mr Brennan led the session by demonstrating the impact of timely questioning in order to challenge and stretch pupils. Although his group didn't move through the tasks as quickly as the other group, they showed a much deeper understanding of the task. Often in lessons, pupils view success as moving through the activities as quickly as possible. Through challenging questions staff are able to check pupils have a full understanding before moving on.

Mr Foord led an Outdoor Adventurous Activity (OAA) with staff working in small groups. The focus was on the role effective success criteria to allow pupils to make rapid progress and have independence in their learning. The group that didn't have the learning intention or success criteria shared with them really struggled with the task. I am sure Mrs Anderson won't mind me mentioning her frustration (she didn't know she should feel this way) as it highlighted to the team that this is how our pupils feel at times and the impact it has on their learning. This was a far more powerful activity than a theory exercise.

The third practical session was led by Mrs Etheridge. She was later described as a 'magician' with the blend of practical learning and questions she posed as we moved through the Van der Graaf experiment. The way Mrs Etheridge framed and re-framed her questions based on our responses whilst working with the whole group was impressive. The other important aspect was how engaging learning is when working in a practical manner.

Over the next few weeks we have further CPD sessions after school to develop these aspects. The day was the perfect start to a term. There has been a great deal of conversation this week with staff reflecting on how this influences their planning and delivery. I am grateful to lead such an enthusiastic and committed team. I am already looking forward to visiting lessons this term to track the progress.

Staff are busy organising fixtures, visits and trips. During Worship this week, we challenged pupils to try new activities and establish new routines to support their personal development. Clubs will begin over the next week and you will receive information about these.

Year 7 spent the morning session focusing on alcohol awareness through our annual Time in a Bottle workshops led by Paul Stevens. I remember watching this for the first time in 2009; it was a very real and believable performance. I am sure the pupils will take on the important messages given and thanks to Mrs Robertson for organising.

Have a great weekend and I am sure pupils are already looking forward to some extra time in bed after the shock of the first week back.

Kind regards,

Mr Christopher

## A WEEK IN PICTURES

Mrs Weir found the Van der Graaf experiment quite hair-raising!



Year 7 Time in a Bottle Workshops

