



Penistone Grammar School Advanced Learning Centre Never Stop Flying

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Achieving Excellence through a Values Driven Education

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Dear Parents and Carers

We start our letter with a big thank you to all who attended one of our Fair Funding meetings which took place on Saturday, 4 March and Monday 6 March.

With all the high profile cases of underfunded schools within the press currently it is easy to underestimate or overlook the scale of the challenge we face here at Penistone. However; the amount of funding received by us per pupil is one of the **lowest amounts in the country** and currently does not cover even the *basic costs* we need to operate our school.

The introduction of the National Funding Formula looks promising for all secondary schools in Barnsley on paper however; this will have no impact if the Government implements it in the way it intends, leaving Penistone with less than half of the entitlement identified within the proposals.

We have a very small window of opportunity to influence the decisions being made and we need as many parents (current and future), supporters of the school and members of our local community to complete the DfE consultation by 22nd March. Full details and guidance information can be found on our school website where you will find a page on the subject of school funding.

It is fundamentally wrong that our children receive up to 50% less funding for their education because they live in Barnsley compared to students in other areas of the country. We need to challenge this now and urge you join our campaign by making our voices heard through the consultation process.

As you are aware, last Tuesday Channel 4 were in school filming for their upcoming feature focusing specifically on school funding, which aired last Thursday evening as part of C4 News. The News Team had identified Penistone as one of the poorest funded schools in the country and spent over 4 hours with us understanding our position and interviewing various people about the impact of this, including representatives of our parent and student bodies.

Through the many interviews that were conducted the team we witnessed firsthand the unwavering belief everyone has in our school and what we are all trying to achieve for our young people despite the funding crisis we face. This was communicated passionately and clearly by all involved and as leaders of Penistone Grammar School, to hear this message from the people who matter the most makes us even more determined to fight the injustice of both the current and proposed funding regime. The strength of feeling about the injustice we face also came through loud and clear at the parents' briefing meetings. Your support really does mean so much to us and we are determined to campaign relentlessly for the current and future students of our school. We are undoubtedly stronger together.

Moving on to other school items; once again we have lots to tell you and start with news from our Visual and Performing Arts Department:

A huge cast of students from year 7, right through to year 13 are working tirelessly to put the finishing touches to this year's annual musical production of 'Oliver'. We have had the privilege of watching many of the rehearsals and can guarantee the performance is one not to be missed. There are some spectacular production pieces that will make you want to sing and dance along, but there are also some stunning individual performances that will move you to tears. We would encourage you to come along to one of the performances which take place

throughout this week starting at **19:00** on **Tuesday 7, Wednesday 8** and **Thursday 9 March**. Tickets are available to purchase from our Main Reception and are priced at £7 per adult and £5 for concessions. You will be astounded to see what our students have achieved with only 7 weeks of rehearsal time!

Live theatre forms such an important piece of the Arts and Arts education. This year our Visual and Performing Arts team have increased the opportunities our students are given to experience live theatre. The most recent example has been a trip to see 'Cathy' by Cardboard Citizens at the Studio Theatre in Sheffield which our year 9 and 10 students participated in. This was an excellent example of live theatre with brilliant writing and powerful acting throughout. Some of our students had opportunity to take part in the 'forum theatre' section on the evening which they thoroughly enjoyed and which we are sure will prove as inspiration for their future work.

Increasing the number of enrichment opportunities, including educational visits, remains a focus for us and this year there are more chances than ever before for students to enhance their learning. We have captured just a few illustrations for you below:

During February half-term 42 students travelled to Austria for a week of skiing. As well as skiing-related activities including lessons, students were also able to experience a variety of alternative activities including ice hockey matches and nighttime tobogganing. The week culminated in an awards ceremony to celebrate the achievements of the group before they travelled back to Penistone having thoroughly enjoyed their time in the snow.

At Easter we will be taking our first trip in recent times to New York. Organised by the Enterprise department, students will spend 4 days experiencing the sights and sounds of one of America's busiest cities including a visit to Liberty Island, a Harlem Civil Rights guided walking tour and meeting with a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, a trip up the Empire State Building and a visit to the 9/11 Memorial Museum and memorial site. We will look forward to reporting in detail about all the exciting things our students have done on their trip in our April letter home to you.

In May, colleagues from the Languages Department will be taking a group of year 10 students to Madrid to experience the culture of Spain and practice their Spanish speaking skills first hand. During their time they will visit some of the city's most famous attractions including the Palacio Real, Madrid's stunning historical centre and the famous Bernabeu Stadium. This visit has been organised following the huge success of last year's trip to Paris and we are sure our students will find this equally valuable.

Closer to home and our A Level Business students will be attending an intensive exam preparation workshop in Manchester on 23 March. During the day all students will have the opportunity to get involved in a range of activities to test their knowledge so far and gain a real in-depth insight into what exam techniques AQA are looking for in the new Business A Level qualification. With over 42 different formulae and well over 20 different business models to understand and apply, this will be the perfect forum for our students to share their understanding and gain valuable tips from experts. As the workshops are held at Manchester's Vue Cinema, we are sure our students are also looking forward to the popcorn that will no doubt be on offer too.

As mentioned, this is just a small sample of the visits which have or are taking place during this year. Alongside this our Science department will continue to run Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, we have more World Challenge trips planned and other departments are running intensive study and revision weekend right through up until the main examination period in the summer. We are extremely grateful to all the staff who give up their time, often during the holidays or at weekends, to provide these opportunities for our students - thank you to you all.

There may be lots happening outside of school, but plans to enrich learning within school mean we will be equally busy on site:

During week 28 (week commencing 13 March) to celebrate National Science Week the Science department will be hosting their own Science Week celebrations. This has become an established part of our annual calendar and one which staff and students look forward to with anticipation each year. The theme this year is 'Change' and the department will be running a number of activities and workshops for students to get involved with. Please encourage your children to look at the range of events available on our FROG page and to sign up to get involved in some of the exciting things that are taking place.



During February our students received a visit from PC Fletcher who came along to share various experiences from throughout his career with our year 10 GCSE Citizenship groups. The students were enthralled by his stories and took every opportunity to ask lots of questions about the work of the police and particularly about the role they play in our local community. This is one of a series of events planned by our Enterprise department which will provide students with access to professionals and an insight into the work they do to support our community. Next month we are looking forward to welcoming a Magistrate and are sure our students are already preparing their questions to make sure they get as much from the experience as possible.

In terms of community initiatives, we are very proud to play a central part in our local community and are committed to ensuring it remains an area in which we can all feel safe and happy. You may have read in the Barnsley Chronicle (24 February edition) that concerns have been raised about the potential increased use of drugs within the Penistone community; we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the school's position. We have a zero tolerance approach to the possession, use, and/or dealing of drugs at school and will continue to serve the harshest of punishments for those who are found to be in breach of this. We have an active programme of educating our young people about the implications of any involvement with drugs and work with external agencies to support those who we feel may be vulnerable from or susceptible to drug abuse. If you would like further information regarding our work specifically in relation to this, or should you have any questions or concerns please contact us via email at inclusion@penistone-gs.uk.

This month we would like to congratulate the following students who have been nominated for our prestigious 'Student of the Week' accolade by their teachers for commitment to our core value "Be Supportive":

Daisy Airstone (Y11 Science); Kian Bennett (Y11 Mathematics); Jonathan Hepworth (Y11 Form Tutor); Ruby Kendrew (Y7 DT); Grace Maguire (Y11 DT); Daisy Mellor (Y8 Mathematics); Georgia Methley (Y11 Health & Social Care); Emily Nixon (Y8 DT); Adam Poulton (Y10 Science); Poppy Sheward-Skelton (Y11 Business Studies) and Thomas Taylor (Y11 PE). Well done to all our nominees.

As you will be aware, attendance at school is vitally important to enable all students to achieve their maximum potential. In the government report, "[The link between Absence and Attainment at KS2 and KS4](#)"; it was identified that **81.7%** of students with 100% attendance achieved 5 or more A* to C GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications including English and Maths. This was in comparison to **only 56.8%** of students with 94.9% attendance. This report serves as another reminder of the importance of good attendance at school and we would like to thank you for your continuing support to ensure your children attend school every day.

We would also ask for your support in reminding students that the procedure should they feel unwell during school time is that they contact a member of staff in the first instance who will make an assessment about their condition. Students should not phone home and request to be collected from school by a relative. Upon assessment, should we believe they are unfit to remain in school we will contact you directly to make arrangements for them to be collected. Again, we thank you for your support with this.

As we enter into March we are pleased to introduce you to new colleagues who are joining our staff team. From February, Mr Swift joins us to lead our catering provision as Catering Manager and Mr Williams will be working across a variety of subject areas as part of our Cover team. We are also pleased to inform you of a slight change to the role of Mr Kellett who will continue to work as a Learning Support Assistant 2 days a week, but will now also take on the role of PE Technician 3 days a week following the departure of Mr Brullo who leaves us to focus on setting up his own business; we wish him every success with this.

Before we end, we would like to remind you about some events which are approaching this half-term:

PARENT MEETING: CHANGES TO CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS IN Y10 AND 11
8 March 2017 from 18:00

Following the success of the first meeting held on 30 November 2016, Paul Crook (Associate Principal) will once again be outlining the implications of the changes under the new curriculum and assessment regime for the parents of students specifically in years 10 and 11. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session ([sign up to attend here](#)).



YEAR 10 PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' EVENING

16 March 2017 from 16:00 to 19:00

This evening will provide a valuable opportunity for you to discuss the current progress of your child with their individual subject teachers, as well as giving you chance to ask questions or find out more about what they need to do to secure success in their learning. Appointments can be made via our online booking system which will be open from **08:00** on **Wednesday 8 March**, closing at **midnight** on **15 March** ([accessible here](#)).

PARENT MEETING: E-SAFETY AND FROG

30 March 2017 from 18:00

Hints, tips and advice for parents to keep their children safe online followed by an open forum looking at the school's virtual learning environment (FROG) and the role it plays in supporting teaching and learning ([sign up to attend here](#)).

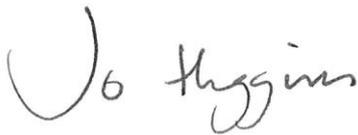
YEAR 7 PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' EVENING

6 April 2017 from 16:00 to 19:00

This evening will provide a valuable opportunity for you to discuss the current progress of your child with their individual subject teachers, as well as giving you chance to ask questions or find out more about what they need to do to secure success in their learning. Appointments can be made via our online booking system; for those parents new to this instructions are available to download from [our website](#). The booking system will be open from **08:00** on **Wednesday 29 March**, closing at **midnight** on **4 April** ([accessible here](#)).

Finally, we look forward to seeing as many of our year 11 students and their parents at tonight's **Year 11 GCSE Survival Evening** which is taking place between 16:00 and 19:00. This evening is essential as we approach GCSE examinations. There will be a variety of presentations and talks which will focus on a range of topics including how you can support your child at home and how students can get the most from revision. You will also receive examination information and top tips from subject specialists who will be on hand to answer all your questions throughout the night.

Yours sincerely



Jo Higgins
Principal



Paul Crook
Associate Principal

