



**Teesdale School
& Sixth Form**

WINTER NEWSLETTER

December 2020



Dear parents, carers and friends

As we approach the Christmas holiday and reflect on this term, I feel a real sense of pride. It has been an extremely challenging term in very difficult circumstances, but one in which our staff and students have really gone above and beyond. The school environment has been very different to what we are used to with one way systems, bubbles, zones, sanitising, staggered breaks, face coverings and double lessons to name a few, which are all now part of normal school life. You have all been outstanding in your efforts to follow the new expectations and keeping everyone safe has been a huge cohesive effort.

We recently celebrated the twelve days of Christmas and Mr Henderson has worked wonders creating the annual Christmas video, which certainly raised a lot of smiles. The sixth form have sent Christmas cards and video messages to the Beaconsfield Care Home and the whole school have made significant contributions to the local TCR Hub's care package project. The willingness and engagement of our students in supporting the wider community continues to be an inspiration.

Despite the challenges we have faced, our students have continued to achieve success.

Finn Goodman, a member of the Royal Yachting Association, was selected for the regional training group that recognises his potential to progress within the British Sailing Team and hopefully onto Team GB! Ben Arundel and Thomas Cuthbert were recently awarded Oxnet programme places - an initiative provided by Oxford University to support students in preparing for further education. The application process is a very challenging one, with applicants from all over the country so the two boys have done exceptionally well to be accepted and we are very proud of them. Some of our Year 11 students have excelled on the DoFE bronze award in what was a challenging weekend in tough weather conditions. Hearing success like this makes us very proud of our students and I am sure there will be more successes next term.

With current restrictions, it is going to be a different festive season for us all, but as we draw near to the end of term I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your overwhelmingly positive support and wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy 2021.

Dan Pilling

Dan Pilling, Head of School

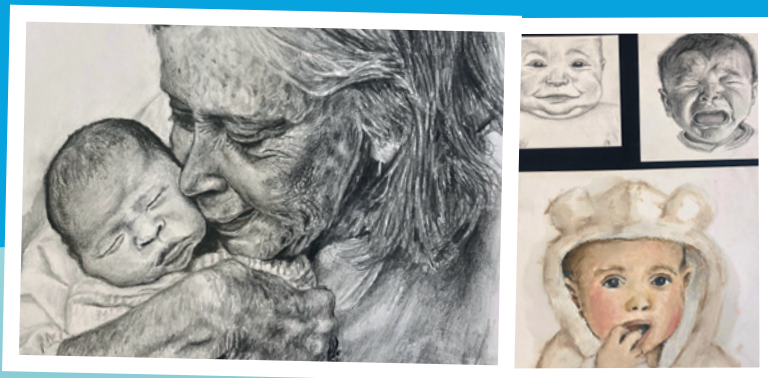
Care package project

Students and staff across the school have been busy collecting donations as part of a fantastic local project.

A group of our Year 10 students have been volunteering to help support the TRC Hub's care package project, which has been running throughout the coronavirus pandemic. The project aims to deliver food parcels, household goods and cooked meals to those particularly affected by the pandemic.

Students and staff alike have worked together to promote the cause, make donations, collect items ready for delivery to the Hub. Christmas will be different for us all this year however it may be very difficult for some people in our community. What we can achieve by working together is hugely important and we would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all those who have donated and been involved in the project!

Budding artists!



Two students, Lewis in Year 12 and Jimmy in Year 11 have blown their teachers away with the high level of fantastic artwork produced for their A level and GCSE courses.

Lewis' art portfolio explores the concept of life and death in the most intricate of detail. His exceptional artistic skills enable him to create a range of mixed media pieces for his coursework from both full and close-up perspectives. Lewis depicts the true essence of many intense emotions. What an amazing start to your A level course Lewis, we are so excited to see more!

Shape, colour and texture is the topic that Year 11 are

currently exploring, and Jimmy has wowed us all with his incredible design skills with a fabulous fashion statement. The boned corset and sweetheart neckline spectacularly compliment the female form whilst the choice of fabric, with it's rich tones and tactile nature, meet the brief of the project perfectly. Well done Jimmy, it's fantastic to see such a skilled fashion piece in your portfolio.



IMPORTANT DATES for your diary

Due to the uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, we cannot commit to any fixed school events at the moment.

Please keep checking our website and social media channels for the latest updates.



Fantastic artwork!

This term, Year 7 have been focusing on the formal elements of art to master their tonal shading skills. An accurate and even layering of harmonious colours is the key to the perfect blend, which Abbie has achieved amazingly in her graffiti piece (left). Her bold use of bright colours has made Abbie's work stand out from the crowd, well done!

Inuit art uses pattern and symmetry alongside drawings of animals indigenous to the Canadian Arctic. Year 8 have been exploring the culture behind art whilst researching the work of artist Kenojuak Ashevak. Lewis has demonstrated exceptional skill with his wonderful blending of bright colours throughout (right). Lewis focuses on the finer details in all his art and this piece is no exception!

We're social!

Follow our social media accounts to stay up to date with all of the latest news from around school!



@teesdaleschool



@teesdaleschoolandsixthform



Students' eco-friendly initiative

Just over a year ago a group of students from all age groups put forward their ideas to create an ecological, eco-friendly area for our school... let's see how they got on!

A designated nature area was set aside in one of the school's enclosed areas and a preliminary group was set up with the aim that Teesdale School would eventually become an eco-school.

With the help of North Pennines AONB Planning Officer, Simon Wilson, work proceeded quickly on the nature area. Students requested a pond, bird feeders and nest boxes. Students also liaised with a hedgehog rescue who set aside two hedgehogs that couldn't be released back into the wild but could take sanctuary in our area. However, due to covid, this had to be put on hold.

The feeding area has become a great success with many of our common garden species including blue, great and coal tits, chaffinch, robin, blackbird, house sparrow, dunnock, goldfinch, collared dove, woodpigeon, magpie, jackdaw and crows all visiting for snacks. The pond is teeming with invertebrates and, during summer, a southern hawker dragonfly was spotted laying eggs! We are looking forward to seeing some colour in the spring from our newly planted bulbs and a bug hotel and geology corner are also underway.

Ask the teachers!

We asked teachers from around school to complete this sentence: 'Christmas wouldn't be the same without...'

Mrs Bissicks: "Watching The Muppets Christmas Carol on Christmas Eve with my children. They are all grown up now but we have watched this film on Christmas Eve for as long as I can remember. They all come back to our house for the holiday and it's the signal for us that Christmas has started. We wander round the house afterwards, eating sweets and humming and singing: 'after all it's only one more sleep till Christmas'."

Mr Pilling: "Eating my traditional one sprout of the year because they are horrendous!"

Miss Todd: "Lots and lots of twinkling Christmas lights because they're so cheerful! They make us sparkle along with them."

Mr Clayton: "Three different stuffings for dinner because as a child my grandparents would each bring their own versions and insist everyone ate theirs!"

Miss Lavery: "My Granda making Christmas the most

special time, including making his own advent calendar each year for us to complete on the build up to Christmas Day. He will always be Santa Claus to me!"

Miss Donahue: "Watching Home Alone because it demonstrates the unbridled ingenuity of one youth using the junk in the garage!"

Miss Donnelly: "Sitting on the stairs and pretending Santa hasn't been, and wearing silly hats at the table...personally I prefer deely boppers."

Mrs Bell: "Pigs in blankets. Why? Just because."

Mr Henderson: "When I think of Christmas... I remember as a child rushing excitedly downstairs to find a scalextric track or subbuteo table all set up and ready to play. Now as a parent, Christmas Eve is a time to read instructions and assemble toys, and I appreciate how much my own childhood gifts were wrapped in love, time and patience!"

Radio drama group

Mrs Bissicks' online club, the Radio Drama Group, have been working on a special version of 'Twas the Night before Christmas' just for us!

A small but dedicated group of Year 7 and 8 students have experimented with tone, pitch, pace and accents to create a dramatic reading of this Christmas favourite.

There are even some sound effects to create a special Christmas Eve atmosphere. Watch out for the link to it on our social media accounts!



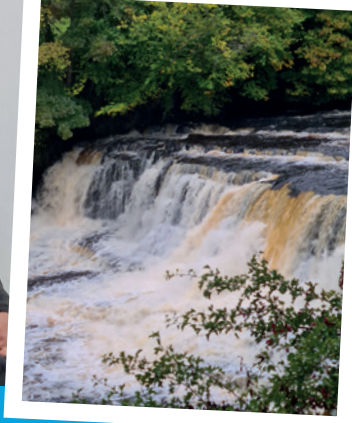


Year 9 success!

Year 9 have had a successful start to their GCSE journey since restarting school in September and they're loving studying their subjects of choice!

During Year 8, students decide which subjects they would like to continue studying in Year 9 through to Year 11. Studying subjects they have enjoyed has allowed them to begin to shape their futures. Year 9 have been particularly impressive with their behaviour and attitude to learning in the first term and their teachers have been delighted!

There has also been some individual success since returning to school in September. Finn, who is a keen sailor, has been selected for the regional training group, Topper (North) Winter 2020/21. Finn who is a member of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has been selected as a result of his performance and commitment to a programme of training and competition over several years. Commitment and determination are two qualities we see on a daily basis from Finn in school. Congratulations - we look forward to hearing all about what you get up to!



DofE awards

Over lockdown, and the summer, a group of Year 10 and 11 students managed to keep motivated with their Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

As their usual sporting activities were inaccessible, they decided to use lockdown to their advantage. Many students decided to keep their physical section going by walking, running, doing online exercise classes and some even set up a home gym. The students were able to adapt the volunteering section too as many helped vulnerable neighbours and relatives by shopping and cooking for them as well as collecting their prescriptions. The skills section proved to be a difficult one, however some students cooked for their families and learned new skills along the way.

In October, the Year 11 students took part in a two day-walk in Wensleydale. This was supposed to be a practice expedition, but unfortunately restrictions meant camping could not go ahead. Even so, students showed great commitment

by turning up on both days - the first in very wet weather!

Sophie commented: "During DofE, Jeni and I learnt how to plan our routes and walk them at an efficient pace during the time that we had, even when Storm Alex flooded our routes! We were able to re-plan our route and enjoyed the expedition and the skills we learnt." The Year 11 students are now having navigation training and general expedition sessions over Zoom.

A group of Year 12 and 13 students also recently completed their gold expedition at the Lake District in very tough conditions this summer. It rained solidly for four days however, they persevered with wet gear and made it to the end, exhausted but very proud of themselves.

Congratulations to all students involved!



Christmas joke

Who tells the best Christmas jokes?

Reindeer. They sleigh every time!





Fantastic Sixth Form!

Sixth Form students have worked admirably to adapt to the difficult challenges that the current pandemic has thrown in their direction.

Whilst working hard during their time in school they have also engaged with online lessons via video conferencing and completed assessments and assignments using the latest virtual learning technology. They have coped with virtual learning as well as the reduction of the usual social committee activities with both fortitude and ingenuity.

Furthermore, the barriers to a more normal autumn term have not stopped us from continuing to follow our core aims to work hard, promote academic excellence and serve the local community. For many years the sixth form have had a partnership with the Beaconsfield Care Home in Barnard Castle, with student volunteers spending time with the residents, talking, reading, playing chess and offering a moment in the week where the enthusiasm of youth can brighten the lives of others. Since the beginning of the pandemic face to face visits could not go ahead however students plan to bring some virtual Christmas cheer to the residents. Students have helped produce a Christmas entertainment video complete with lip syncs, musical performances and individual messages to the residents.

In the last week of term students dressed up for the decades, with a different era each day, in order to raise money for the DePaul homelessness charity.

Throughout the lockdown period many students took part in virtual summer schools, work experiences, study conferences and attended lectures and seminar groups online. This term students have engaged in virtual programmes with Newcastle University, Sunderland medical school, OxNet North East and The Elephant Group. Perhaps, nobody has done quite as much as Year 13 student Nikki Brown. Nikki spent a lot of the summer engaged in various online aerospace engineering projects, including piloting a plane to a successful landing in a flight simulator. She is now down to the final ten students hoping to gain a place on a prestigious Aerospace Engineering Apprenticeship - good luck Nikki!

Dress to impress

In the lead up to Christmas, Teesdale School delved into their Christmas wardrobe!



Shotton Hall



School Centred Initial Teacher Training

Teacher training opportunities

Did you know that Teesdale School and Sixth Form helps to train the next generation of new teachers and we're looking for new recruits to start in September 2021?

Through our sponsor, The North East Learning Trust, we are a partner of Shotton Hall SCITT, the Trust's very own outstanding teacher training provider.

Trainees start their training at The Academy at Shotton Hall in Peterlee, then undertake placements in schools right across the North East, including here at Teesdale School and Sixth Form.

Applications are open for primary and secondary courses starting in September 2021 with bursaries of up to £26k for certain subjects and student finance grants available for eligible trainees.

To find out about entry requirements and the opportunities available, as well as hearing from people who have taken the leap and changed career visit: www.shottonhallscitt.co.uk