



Framwellgate School Durham
Newton Dr, Durham, DH1 5BQ

0191 386 6628
enquiries@framdurham.com

www.framdurham.com

Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

Happy New Year to all of you! I hope that as families you were able to enjoy the holiday season and that 2025 brings all of you good fortune. Many of us will have made new year resolutions, often focused on changing habits, be that to eat a little less, exercise a little more or perhaps something a little more radical. The Greek philosopher Aristotle maintained that people's habits, how they actually behaved, not just what they thought, determined their morality and that excellence and good moral character were both children of habit, that what was important about a person was what they did, not just what they thought. Thinking that to be good means you always need to be doing good can be slightly daunting; I know of few people, including myself, who are purely creatures of good habit. However, Aristotle was also clear that this wasn't something people could achieve on their own, that they needed to be nurtured by an environment that supported both a positive sense of self and also positive relationships with others. In essence, this is our aim as a school, for our students to leave us with a sense of self-respect and also the ability to get on with others as with these two qualities they'll ultimately be able to excel in whatever area they choose to.

In assemblies this week (and next), we have spoken about the qualities or character we look for in the people we consider to be heroes, or good people. Some examples were shared such as Edith Cavell, the nurse executed during World War One for helping both soldiers and civilians escape from occupied Belgium who never denied what she was doing, seeing it as right, and made it clear just before her death that she had, "...no hatred or bitterness towards anyone." We also talked about Cicely Saunders and her work establishing the modern palliative care movement, not something that might make headlines but vital in affording so many people and their families some measure of dignity in their final moments. We also talked about Jeff Porter, a London tube driver on 7/7/05 who, when a bomb exploded on his train led different groups of passengers to safety, going back to rescue more. We also spoke about all the key workers during the pandemic who found themselves completing vital work in the most intense of conditions. The core message was that everyone has the potential to be a hero, to both do and be good; circumstances might create the environment in which we identify such people, but that people who turn up and do what needs to be done even when there are easier options available to them are true heroes, true people of good character.

Our belief as a school that every child deserves the opportunity to develop the habits that allow them to do good, be good and develop excellence comes from our mission of ensuring that all of them have the greatest say in their futures possible, using their education to make the right choice for them, whatever that might be. We know that some of our students will face more challenges than others in achieving that excellence, which is why we're committed to giving the most to those that need the most. Here in 2025, it must remain our single purpose as a school to ensure that every one of our students gets the education they deserve which is how we demonstrate that each one of our students is known and valued. I look forward to sharing with you all over the course

of the year as many examples as possible of this in action and I'm delighted to be able to share one such example with you all in this week's update, the award winning poem from the Year 11 student featured below.

Many thanks for your continued support of the school; I hope you all have a good weekend.



Michael Wright

Please find this week's key messages below.

Training Update

As a whole staff body this week we have been exploring three ways in which, on a classroom level, we can impact on student learning:

- How to provide targeted feedback for those most at risk of underachieving
- How to use targeted questioning to check for understanding
- How to use seating plans to maximise learning.

These are all areas that the school has explored before but it's important that, like all organisations, we revisit key principles frequently. It's also important that we focus on those strategies that the evidence shows impact most on learning and achievement. Departments will next week be thinking about what these strategies look like specifically in their subject areas.

Safeguarding Notices

- Cold weather

As the weather is becoming a lot colder, can we please ask that you make sure that your child brings a warm coat to school and is prepared for the colder temperatures. We know that on occasion there may be financial implications and additional strain on parents/carers to buy winter coats, so if you need any help or assistance in purchasing a winter coat for your child, please get in touch with your child's Year Team and we will do what we can to support.

- Lanyard reminder for Sixth Form students

Can we please remind all sixth form students to wear their lanyards in school. This is essential for safeguarding purposes, especially when students are returning to the school site.

- Staying Cool Teens Programme

Brandon Family Hub is running a programme called 'Staying Cool Teens' on Tuesday 21st January and Tuesday 4th February from 12.00-3.00pm. The programme provides knowledge, skills and ideas to help teenagers understand and address their emotions. The sessions help them to understand their anger or frustration and how to deal with it,

to prevent it turning into aggression. If you would like your child to attend, please call Brandon Family Hub on 03000 261 111.

- **Car Park Passes - a reminder**

We understand that whilst a lot of students travel independently to and from school, some students are collected by parents and carers for a variety of reasons. To reduce the number of cars on site at the start and at the end of the school day, we are happy to issue a car park pass for those students who need to be collected. This may include students who are particularly vulnerable or have mobility issues. Please contact your child's Year Team so we can issue you with a car park pass.

- **School nurse appointments**

Our school nurses will continue to be in school on a fortnightly basis. The school nurses offer a variety of help and support to young people on a variety of issues, including healthy relationships, anxiety, body image, sleep, smoking or vaping and general health queries. If you would like your child to make an appointment to see the nurses, please let the relevant Year Teams know and they can organise this for you.

- **Online Safety Hub**

A lot of students may have been fortunate enough to receive new electronic devices for Christmas. Our Online Safety Hub can offer a lot of help and support to parents and carers with regard to setting parental controls and navigating their way through the online world. Please visit [Online Safety Hub - Framwellgate School Durham](#) for further information.

Mrs Osborne, Director of Safeguarding

Year 11 Poetry Winner

After a long period of drafting and a torturous wait, we are delighted to share that AJ has been selected to have his poem published in an anthology! AJ's poem 'The Weight of Wings' was entered into a national poetry competition run by Young Writers entitled 'The Beautiful Truth'. His creative and thoughtful work impressed the judges, truly showcasing his passion for writing and his ability to express himself with flair and originality. Congratulations AJ on such an incredible achievement!

Miss Darling, English Teacher

- **The Weight of Wings**

*In the thick quiet of shadow,
a bird sat, not perched, but huddled,
its wings clutched tightly,
as though they'd never known air.*

*Through the cage's iron threads,
its eyes grazed the world outside,
not vast or bright, but fractured,
like a dream forgotten upon waking.*

*It yearned, not for clouds, but for something
it couldn't name, something beyond.*

*Day after day, the bars pressed closer,
not steel but doubt,
roots curling around its mind,
binding more than its body.
The outside world moved without pause,
while the bird, trapped in its small circle,
felt the ache of unused wings.*

*Dreams settled in the corners,
like dust on an abandoned windowsill,
a heaviness that built slowly,
pressing deeper into its chest.
It wanted the sky, but the weight of "what if"
anchored it to the ground.*

*Until one day, in the silence,
a forgotten spark flickered,
not of freedom, but of remembering:
the sky had always been waiting,
its wings had always known the path.
The cage was never made of iron.*

*With trembling breaths,
it pushed not against bars,
but against the fear that had made them real.
It didn't shatter them,
but loosened their grip,
as if peeling back layers of an old, familiar lie.*

*And when the walls crumbled to dust,
the bird didn't soar,
it simply lifted,
rising slow, tracing the edges of the wind,
its feathers brushing the bruised horizon,
not in triumph but in quiet certainty.*

*For in that first taste of open air,
it found not just freedom,
but the truth of flight:
the sky was never something to chase.
It was always here, waiting.*

AJ Gumabay

Year 11

– Progress meetings

Year 11 parents and carers will receive information next week about the next round of Progress Meetings. The meeting is a further opportunity for you and your child to meet with a senior member of staff to discuss current progress in Year 11, in particular the November mock results, and will also focus upon your child's future and their options for next year. These meetings start the week beginning 20th January 2025.

Please note - due to the volume of appointments being conducted, we are unable to change appointments or reschedule. Your child will attend their appointment on their own should you be unable to attend.

– Year 11 Raising Achievement Sessions (RAS)

RAS block 2 will be starting on Monday 13th January and will run until the start of the February mock series. These are targeted sessions designed as a supportive measure to intervene where students struggle with key concepts and/or have knowledge gaps. If students have been selected by their teachers to attend a session it will appear on their Class Charts timetable, and you will be able to see if they have attended or not. Students may be selected to attend up to 4 sessions a week and the majority of the sessions take place at lunchtime, after your child has had a break and time to eat. Some sessions occur after school. Your support in getting your child to these sessions is crucial and much appreciated; last year there was a correlation between attendance at RAS and GCSE success.

Miss Lutynski, Assistant Headteacher

Celebrating Geography Success

Just before Christmas, over 50 geographers from both KS3 and KS4 were nominated by their class teachers to attend a lovely lunchtime tea party celebration in the department. These nominees had worked really well over the term in geography and had been nominated for their dedication, progression and enthusiasm. Mr Wright and Mrs Mersh-Roberts came along to join in the celebrations and congratulate the students on their outstanding achievements.

Mrs Laidlaw, Curriculum Lead for Geography

Department Spotlight – RE

Prior to Christmas we visited RE lessons to see how our students are managing with what is a very ambitious and challenging curriculum. In Year 7 students begin with an introduction to philosophy and we saw students dissecting and discussing the 'Puzzle of God'. There was an impressive show of knowledge on display here with students confidently referring to empiricism verses rationalism.

Debate and discussion is at the heart of RE, and we saw Year 8 discussing whether the Irenean or Augustinian theodicy best explains the problem of evil and God's existence and Year 10 students were exploring issues of crime and punishment.

Students spoke positively about their experiences in RE and the Year 8 students were able to tell us in great detail about the imam they met when they visited the mosque at the end of Year 7. Our school promotes respect, compassion and tolerance and visiting RE lessons in that week has allowed us to see the necessary learning that takes place to underpin these values.

Mrs Machin, Deputy Headteacher