



Dear Parent/Carer

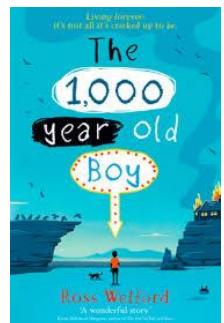
Welcome to the February Principal's newsletter for parents and carers. This month has been busy with mock results, parents' evenings and a number of other events that have taken place throughout the school day.

### PSHE Events

Year 8 and 9 students watched an incredible piece of theatre in education called "Luv u2" by Pintsize Theatre Company that highlights the dangers of online grooming. The piece teaches young people what might constitute an unhealthy relationship, the right to say 'no' to unwanted attention and how best to avoid the risk of emotional or physical harm in relation to these issues. In addition to highlighting pathways to support agencies, the workshop after the performance encouraged young people to look out for their friends and to access support services outside the home environment if they were worried about them. Our students were taught what to do if a young person is approached in an inappropriate way – who to tell and how to safely seek help. The day was a great success with students gaining valuable understanding of such an important issue.

### Year 7 Author Visit

On 9<sup>th</sup> February, Year 7 enjoyed a visit by award winning author Ross Welford. Ross is the author of three books, *Time Travelling with a Hamster*, *What Not to Do if You Turn Invisible* and *The 1,000 Year Old Boy*, which came out last month. During his session, Ross talked about his inspirations, his writing heroes and about the importance of stories and storytelling as an essential human process. He declared that all stories start with a problem and that most plots centre around the investigation and solution of that problem. Taking prompts from the assembled students, Ross Welford and Year 7 collaborated on a story about Taz the mud wallowing pig and his quest to find his purloined wings, stolen by the villainous Jeremy Kyle. Many thanks to the Education Library Service for offering the visit as part of their Brilliant Book Award events and to Ross for giving Year 7 an enjoyable and memorable experience.



### Safety outside of the academy

Recent weeks have seen a number of sometimes violent incidents in the local area and particularly in the town centre and in parks, some of which have impacted on our students. We would like to urge all students to stay safe, stay together and keep in regular contact with home. We have been addressing these issues in school and in conjunction with the local authority and police and further plans are afoot for next term to support students and the community to keep safe and well.

### Snow days and closures

Thank you for your patience and understanding during the closures last week due to poor weather. This decision is never easy and as an academy we try really hard to stay open so that we can continue to serve our families and students. Ideally we would wish to delay this decision until the morning of each day due to the unpredictable nature of weather forecasts for snow. However, last week, as many local schools across the town, Nottinghamshire and the surrounding counties took the decision to close very early on, we found ourselves in the position of not being able to staff the academy at safe levels and so on Thursday afternoon took the decision to close on the Friday. For future winters we will be looking at ways to avoid being in this situation. May I also take this opportunity to thank our site staff who always have the site safe and ready for our staff and students and did so last week too.

### Attendance

As we near the Summer Term it is crucial to focus on the link between absence and attainment. Government data suggests a steady decrease in achievement as overall absence rates increase. As a parent you will, of course, want the best for your children, having a good education is an important factor in opening up more opportunities in adult life. Some key facts are that:



- A child who is absent for one day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life.
- Young people with absence rates below 90% typically fail to achieve 5 or more good grades at GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all.
- Poor attendance suggests to colleges and employers that these students are unreliable.
- Absence in any key stage can impact on GCSE performance, however far off GCSEs may seem for you and your child. This in turn can:
  - Affect their motivation
  - Affect their enjoyment of learning
  - Lead to poor behaviour
  - Affect their desire to attend school regularly
  - Affect their ability to have or keep friendships

If you would like support getting your child motivated to come in to school or have any other worries about attendance please contact Mrs Bassett via main reception who would love you to join with other parents to find real solutions that work.

#### **Key dates this half term**

Tuesday 6th March	Year 8 Parents' Evening
Week commencing 19 <sup>th</sup> March	Sports Relief Week
Thursday 29th March	Reports Available via ParentPortal
30th March – 13th April	Easter Break

**And finally...**

#### **Thought for the month – from Alex our Chaplain**

You will be more than aware by now that we are intensely focusing on our values. We believe that as we model these values we will see the development and growth of our amazing young people to be the best they can be. Our focus this half term is **vocation**, not just another word for a career or job but the opportunity for our students to seriously explore what it means to find that "Thing" that they will succeed at or that difference they can make. Whether that's inside or outside of the classroom and eventual workplace, we know that many of our students will go on to make a difference both locally and globally. As somebody who relatively recently changed his navigational course I would like to invite you to ponder the following questions.

1. What gets you angry or frustrated? (I am not talking about those pet hates, but about those injustices you see and the differences that should be being made).
2. What could you do about it?
3. What one thing can I do today to start making a difference?

And, just in case you can't, 1 Corinthians 6:13 tells us, "Remain alert. Keep standing firm in your faith. Keep on being courageous and strong."

Yours faithfully

Lisa McVeigh  
Principal