

Ref: ALI

Date: 20th December 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Here is my usual end of term letter and this one signals the fact that I have almost completed my first year as Headteacher at Marsden Heights Community College. It seems to have been a whirlwind of a year and we have taken many steps already towards our ultimate goal of becoming an outstanding school. As published previously by PVC, our GCSE position in Pendle has changed with Marsden Heights now sitting third in the district with Park, FisherMore and West Craven below us. Whilst we do not feel the need to compare ourselves with other schools, it does allow you, as parents, to see our progress last year. This position will change over the coming years and we may move up or down depending on the volatility of the exam results and the cohorts that we have each year but our goal remains the same: to be the best school we can be ... where our children are happy, safe and well.

This term sees Mrs Birch, Head of History, retire after 20 years at MHCC. The sight of all Year 7 students re-enacting the Battle of Hastings last term was a real credit to not only Mrs Birch's organisation and creativity but also her keenness to make History real for our students. We wish her well in her retirement. Mr Wall also leaves us to become Head of Media at Hathershaw College in Oldham. Although only here for a term, Mr Wall has had a great impact on our students and the English Department. We wish him well for his future post. We will also be saying farewell to Mrs Davies, our Food Technology teacher, who has shown us what our Year 11 students are truly capable of when they created such beautiful canapes for our Presentation Evening. Now there is no stopping our Food Tech students as Year 10 prepared food for an Afternoon Tea Reward for Year 8. We wish Mrs Davies well and thank her for all her hard work. Miss Floyd is also leaving us at the end of the term as she moves to a post in Blackburn working with young children. We wish her well in her new venture and thank her for all her work with our students in Restoration.

Academy news is rather brief as much is going on behind the scenes with Lancashire and United Learning in terms of legal and DfE matters. We continue to work with United Learning even though we have not officially joined the trust yet. So November saw 28 of our students on their way to the Royal Northern College of Music to take part in a celebration of Wassail!, an old Christmas tradition. They joined 500 voices to create a magnificent choir and our students were absolutely superb, in terms of voice, passion and behaviour. As an invited guest there, I was so proud of them - the other headteachers were amazed by our students.

As a school we see the importance of the Arts in terms of Art, Dance, Drama and Music. This is a developing area which will go from strength to strength. We recognise how important it is to nurture our students so that they are well-rounded with a vast array of skills. The Arts offer our students a chance to work as teams, to show strong leadership and to cultivate those essential skills of confidence and self-belief. All the research shows that those children who participate in concerts, school shows and plays significantly achieve higher grades than those who do not. This could not have been clearer with our school show Hairspray which played to packed audiences every night. It was a privilege to see our students grow through the rehearsal times. The confidence, the new friends made, the experience of being together and working as a finely-tuned machine will mean that they will transfer these skills throughout school and throughout life.

There were many people to thank: the hard work and dedication of three people really stood out: Mrs Barnes, Mrs Thain and Mrs Butler who worked tirelessly with the students at lunch, after school and on Saturdays. Then the support team who played such key roles: Mr Pilkington, Mrs Burnett, Mrs Whittaker, Mrs Butler-Hartley, Mrs Lees, Mr Dunne and Mrs Catterall. Our students both on stage and behind the scenes were superb and I cannot thank them enough. They made me a very proud headteacher.

Our rewards' system is beginning to fly with the school developing in-school rewards as well as trips and excursions out. The end of this term has seen those students with 100% attendance watching a film with popcorn and drinks. Those in Year 8 with 100% green on their reports have been treated to afternoon tea yesterday which the Year 10 Food Technology group made for them. We also ran a trip to the Trafford Centre to go Christmas shopping for over 75 students last Saturday and over 40 students also benefited by being given free silver tickets to Hairspray by their Heads of Year for being fantastic students. This will grow from strength to strength as we continue to listen to our students about the rewards they would like to experience.

In terms of safety I would like to remind parents that the Hard Platts is not a route home for our students. We have sent information home and reinforced it through form-time with students. Hard Platts is outside of our area as a school and so we feel it is not a safe place for students to be.

My final point on safety is connected to the snow that we experienced last week. Currently, Edge End Lane is not on the council's list for gritting and Engie, who own our building, do not have any jurisdiction outside the school gates. Whilst I try to work with LCC to ensure that the school is on the gritting list, I would suggest that in snowy weather children are not dropped off unless they have medical needs. Our school will always be open unless I have made the decision to close it for health and safety reasons. When the decision has been made then I will immediately inform the radio stations and add a message to our website so that they can advertise the news that we are closed. We will also be able to use our Twitter account to inform you too.

As a school we send out many things on Twitter @MarsdenHeights giving you a sense of what we are doing during the day. We have also started advertising vacancies on our account and we will be publishing all our letters too. So if you are interested in knowing what is going on at Marsden Heights, then search for #mhccparents #mhccstudents #mhccvacancies.

So, all that remains is for me to wish you the best of health and happiness in 2018 and we look forward to working with you and our students next year.

Best wishes

Alyson Littlewood
Headteacher