

1st December 2023

Dear Parents / Carers

Last week I took assemblies for all year groups [minus a few Y11s who were in a mock examination]. My message was about inspirational people and what we can learn from them. I shared one of my inspirations - Diana Nyad - who at the age of 64 years swam across the Straits of Florida - recently her story has been turned into a Netflix film. This stretch of water is 100 miles long, infested with sharks and Box jellyfish and has huge tidal challenges too. She was the first person to swim these treacherous waters outside of a protective cage, a dream she had had since a teenager. A lady with huge resilience, courage, perseverance and ambition and I hope your children were inspired by her story and her qualities. My assembly ended with a reminder to us all about why we have our Kingsdown BEATs and how they tie in with your family's values. Thank you for talking about them at home. There are 6 pages in your child's student planner which outline them in detail.

### **Attendance matters**

In this run up period to Christmas we will be sending out letters to parents/carers of any students who have an attendance year to date of below 90%. We understand that this is the time of year when colds are rife and flu is doing the rounds and it is only right that you want to ensure your child is well enough to come to school. Please be reassured that if your child is unwell at school we will do everything possible to look after them and if they are too ill to be here we will contact you and send them home. We are very proud to be able to say that we have an incredibly supportive and qualified medical team who are exceptional at monitoring the health and welfare of all our children.

### **Lockdown**

This week our staff attended training to be able to carry out our Lockdown procedures. More information to follow about the roll out and planned drills.

### **Kingsdown School and the Cubbie**

We are really excited to share with you that we have installed a 'Cubbie' in school this week. Cubbie's are a multi-sensory space that support students with sensory regulation. They help students with anxiety, stress and support neuro-diverse students who find it difficult to regulate. Over the coming weeks we will share further information with our students and parents on how the 'Cubbie' can be used and accessed. For further information please follow the link: <https://cubbie.ie/>

### **Maths home learning on Sparx**

All students complete their maths home learning with Sparx Maths. Sparx is an exciting online platform that provides every student with a personalised home learning experience. We are aiming for all students to have completed their Sparx by Friday at 8am every week.

#### *What is Sparx?*

Sparx provides personalised homework to each child, with questions that are challenging yet achievable, and tailored to their learning needs. The majority of each week's homework will be based on recently learnt topics, but it will also include some questions from previous topics to help reinforce their learning. Students access their homework online and get immediate feedback for each question about whether their answer was correct or they need to have another try. Every question in Sparx has a support video attached so that your child can get help independently.

Please encourage your child to:

- Have a go at the question before seeking help
- Watch the videos when they get stuck
- Only get help when prompted to do so by Sparx
- Encourage them to start their homework early so they can get help from their teacher at lunchtime Sparx club before the deadline if they get stuck

#### Why do students have to achieve 100% completion?

To ensure no gaps form in your child's maths knowledge, homework is not marked as complete until all of the compulsory questions have been answered correctly. Sparx is tailored to each child's level of understanding, and comes with support meaning that every child is capable of achieving 100%. The 100% correct goal is for all schools that use SPARX so students will reap the greatest benefits.

Please check the weekly email you'll get from Sparx and praise your child for starting or completing their homework. If you have any questions then please contact your child's maths teacher and they will be happy to help.

#### **Help with uniform**

We continue to have high expectations with our students and wearing their uniform with Pride. A number of students have tried to wear hoodies into school instead of a coat. Please ensure that during these colder months, students are wearing their uniform (and a coat) in line with the school expectations which can be found on the school website. Hoodies are not a part of the school uniform. If you need support with uniform to ensure it is in line with the uniform expectations, we have a large number of second hand uniform that will be available for you- please contact your Tutor to arrange this.

#### **Rewards and Achievements**

Celebrate with pride as over 37,600 achievement points and more than 7,100 gold cards and full reward cards have been issued, showcasing students' hard work and dedication. These points not only demonstrate academic success but also highlight the positive behaviour, teamwork and leadership qualities that reflect our BEATS values. As parents and carers your support and encouragement play a crucial role in fostering a culture of achievement. Congratulations to all our students on their ongoing success.

#### **Events this week**

- Scouts and Guides across Swindon were involved with the Swindon Gang Show at the wyvern theatre (including some students and staff members). After months of rehearsals on a Sunday since June and lots of hard work and commitment the show came together. We saw children as young as 8 performing, dancing, singing and acting on stage. From under the sea to the country Gang Show made its comeback after 2018 due to covid. All members of the cast worked tirelessly and performed to an audience over 4 shows. What a fantastic opportunity and well done to all the Kingsdown students involved!  
Odin (Yr 7), Liam (Yr 7), Oscar (Yr 8) Maisy (Yr 8), Miss Dunning and Miss Newman.
- An outstanding turn out again for Kingsdown Cross Country team. Out of 14 schools our Year 7 boys team finished 6th, Year 7 girls came 3rd, Year 8/9 boys were 6th and Year 8/9 girls finished 4th. Individual stand out performances were the following students who have now qualified for the next round in January in the Wiltshire County Championships:

Year 7 Oliver (4th) and Laila (9th)

Year 8/9 Izzie (4th)

Year 10/11 Josh (3rd)

Well done to all our runners and good luck to those who made it through.



### **Parent groups**

Following on from a previous newsletter we have some groups of parents who have volunteered to meet with senior leaders in term 3. Thank you. The first group to meet will focus on how, together, we can further improve and strengthen our communication at Kingsdown. From this group we will take the feedback to further improve our KDS communication framework. We will share more later in the year.

### **Events over the next few weeks**

In December we will be running our reverse advent where we will be filling shoe boxes to donate to Young carers and Swindon food collective. Here we will be asking for your support to donate an item of food, clothing, toiletries or old toys that we can use to support local charities.

Now is a great time to start clearing out for Christmas, so keep an eye out for things you would like to donate. We will be taking collections of toiletries, toys, games and non-perishable food items. Please drop these off at reception.

Friday 8th December is Christmas Jumper day. We will be asking students to come into school wearing a Christmas Jumper. Students are permitted to wear non school uniform. We will be holding a Christmas Jumper exchange on Wednesday in the Main Hall where students who want to wear a Christmas Jumper, but do not have one, can come along to the Main Hall from 3:00-3:30 to take one of the Jumpers donated to us by Amazon. Students are asked to bring in a donation of 50p-£1 which will be split towards Save the Children and the Mayor's charity.

### **DT Technician Vacancy**

We have a vacancy for a DT Technician, if you are interested or know of anyone who would be interested please email [recruitment@kingsdownschool.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@kingsdownschool.co.uk) for more information.

### Key dates for the rest of this term

Tues 5th Dec	: Year 7 and 8 Disco (4.30-6.00pm)
Wednesday 6th Dec	: Christmas Jumper Exchange
Fri 8th Dec	: Christmas Jumper Day
Wed 13th Dec & Thurs 14th Dec	: Christmas Lunch
Thurs 14th Dec	: Year 11 Parents' Evening (4.00 - 7.00pm)
w/c 18th Dec	: Christmas Assemblies
Mon 18th Dec	: Christmas Concert @ St Phillips (6.30pm)
Weds 20th Dec	: End of Term - 12.00pm finish [Tutor time period 3 for festive time]
Fri 5th Jan	: TD Day - focus on championing each and every student at KDS
Mon 8th Jan	: All students return to school for 8.30am
Thurs 11th Jan	: Year 9 Curriculum Information Evening

Wishing you and your family a restful and peaceful weekend.

Mrs Leigh-Bennett