

THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

07 February 2020

You can imagine just how delighted I was this week to see the Department for Education's Performance Tables and learn just how brilliantly we fared (once again) on both a regional and also national level. Year-on-year we always do well because we are, after all, an academically selective school with not only clever and diligent students who love to learn, but we also have some of the very best and most inspirational teachers that I have ever had the pleasure to work with.

That said, we certainly haven't been resting on our laurels and this has been a fantastic year insofar as these results go and I'm thrilled to say that we have formally been recognised, without a shadow of a doubt, as the undisputed top performing independent school in Devon in practically every measure across both the A-levels and GCSE results!

We thought you would like to celebrate this news so have already sent an email out about it but, for those of you that haven't yet seen this, here is a quick breakdown:

At GCSE level, we are the 4th best independent school in the whole of England for the all-important Attainment 8 score based on how students have performed across eight subjects including English, Maths, the sciences, geography, history and modern foreign languages. It is, if you like, the most comprehensive of the measures to show the all-rounded ability of each person sitting the exams (and that of their teaching also). From a total of 6274 schools being ranked, we sit in a very pleasing 60th place on this score nationally.

On top of this, we are also the country's 12th best independent school for the 'Grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSEs' measure but, most importantly, we are the highest ranked independent school this side of Bristol through to Land's End on absolutely every single measure!





Equally, we came out as the top independent school in the region for the fifth consecutive year for our A-level performances and have again been officially recognised for the Progress Score, showing how we can significantly improve a student's performance from her predicted grades to those that she ultimately achieves.

We were also the top ranked independent school across the whole of Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall (and 73rd from the 4470 schools listed) for the Facilitating Subjects measure that shows the percentage of girls who achieve AAB or higher in at least two of the most rigorous A-levels most commonly required to study at top universities.

This really is the most wonderful news and great cause for celebration! Not only that, but I hope it will act as some reassurance to all those girls who will be sitting their public examinations in the summer that they are in the best of hands, with very bright futures to look forward to if they can just stick at it for a few months more!

On a separate note, this has been another fun-filled and busy week; as I write the Year 2 girls are enjoying Paignton Zoo, the Year 6s loved their trip to the Plymouth Aquarium yesterday, the Upper 3s equally enjoyed the Eden Project on Wednesday and I'm delighted at the great gusto of the Lower 4s who have certainly been embracing their weekly rugby sessions with the Exeter Chiefs.

I must end by publicly commending the Manus Justa team comprising 13 Lower 5 and Lower 6 girls who performed so brilliantly at last Saturday's National Mock Trial competition. Although they weren't selected for the finals, they all played their parts with passion and enthusiasm and must only have missed out on qualification by the tiniest of margins. So my congratulations to them all and I'm delighted to hear that this is just a stepping stone for many who are looking to pursue a future career in law.

On to the week's news!

Incredible Gymnastics performances at the South West Championships

Congratulations to our four teams who competed in the British Schools Gymnastics Association South West Regional Floor and Vault Competition in Bideford last Sunday. This is a high-level competition with over 300 of the region's best gymnasts from schools who traditionally use this competition as an annual stepping stone to the Nationals! There was some incredible skill on show and the girls really enjoyed the experience of such a high level competition.

For our Under 11 girls this was for many of them their first experience of a formal gymnastics competition, understandably nervous they were all incredibly brave and performed their routines and vaults confidently in front of a big audience of gymnasts and spectators. With up to six girls in a team and 13 teams in each category it is far more common to come away without a medal or trophy than to win one, so a good measure of success is whether the gymnasts perform their routines and vaults cleanly (remembering the routine and no mistakes) rather than finishing in the top three. This can be a hard lesson to learn in gymnastics but to that end our girls were superb, we had no wobbles, tears or forgetful moments and they all did themselves and their coaches very proud.

That said we were elated that the Under 19 team won Team Bronze, especially as they were only a team of 4 so all of their scores counted to the team score, raising pressure and leaving no room for error. We were particularly pleased for the Under 19 captain, Martha, as this will be her last opportunity to represent the school in gymnastics as she is in Upper 6. Martha and Flo have been instrumental in the success of our partnership with Exeter Gym Club, helping us to take the junior school gym teams down for their training each week.

Final results were:

U19 Team: 3rd winning Bronze. Top performing Gymnasts was Flo who finished 5th as an individual

U14 Team: A team: finished 6th and B team finished 12th Top performing Gymnast was Connie who finished 6th as an individual

U11 Team: 4th top performing gymnast was Elizabeth who finished 12th as an individual

A brilliant day, and big thanks to all the parents who came to support the girls, and especially to our coaches Amy and Suzanne from Exeter Gym Club for their work in training, preparing and helping the gymnasts through the competition.





A gymnastic assembly

On the back of their memorable day at the gymnastics competition last weekend, the Under 11 team treated the Junior School to a brilliant assembly this morning, telling them all about their wonderful experience. It will, no doubt, have proved very inspirational to many in the audience who dream of being gymnasts one day!

Devon Wildlife Trust trip to the Junior School

Devon Wildlife Trust joined the Junior School again this week for a morning of environmental activities. We are always delighted to welcome the DWT back to school and have been a partner with them for over ten years now, working on many projects here at school and around the city, including in the past planting wildflower meadows and wildlife corridors. On this occasion, Emily from the DWT examined owl pellets and studied the role of bees in pollination, much to everyone's enjoyment. Who doesn't love dissecting an owl pellet on a Tuesday morning!



Harry Potter Book Night

On Thursday, along with schools, libraries and bookshops all over the world, we celebrated Harry Potter Book Night at lunchtime in the library. Activities and decorations were organised by our librarian and a very enthusiastic group from Lower 5; namely Hansini, Ellie, Ellen and Becky, with help from Penny and Mara.

The highlight was the traditional treasure hunt around the school, with fiendish clues devised by Ellie and which was won by Hattie and Millie from Upper 4. Activities included patronus-drawing, headband-making, mini treasure hunts in the library for junior girls, dressing up, pin the sock on Dobby, a who-am-I game (stickers with character names on foreheads), quizzes and a cake sale. Money from the cake sale and nominal charges for the main activities amounted to £43 and will be donated to Lumos, the charity for helping children in orphanages founded by J.K. Rowling. The celebrations continued today with activities in the library for the Junior School Harry Potter club and Year 3.



A bit of a chill in Reception

The girls investigated ice this week as part of their topic on polar regions. They investigated how icebergs might melt, learnt about taking risks and being careful with tools as well as having lots of fun freeing their toys from the ice.



Year 4 – Being Brave!



It's Children's Mental Health Week this week and the theme this year is 'Find your Brave'.

Year 4 have been discussing what it means to be brave. Here are three short pieces of writing about 'Brave' as examples of their whole year group's brilliant work:

'Being brave means standing up for yourself or someone, doing things you're afraid of. It's about overcoming sadness or grief, getting back up and also not giving in. Being brave is never easy, otherwise you wouldn't be being brave.'

Milly W

'Brave means for you to have courage and to be curious. It means standing up for yourself or other people, doing something you are scared to do. Bravery means being energetic and strong. It means to persevere and never give up. Brave means to fight a monster.' Charlotte R

Being brave means standing up to people even when you're feeling scared. It means doing something you don't want to do. It isn't always easy to be brave and it takes a lot of courage to do it.' Ava

Year 6 Visit to Plymouth Aquarium

Year 6 went on their eagerly awaited trip to Plymouth Aquarium yesterday where they had the opportunity to not only take a personalised tour around the site (and get to ask dozens of questions!) but also use the Aquarium's fantastic laboratory facilities to dissect a squid. "We found its beak, the lens of its eye and its pen."

It never ceases to amaze us how fascinating the various adaptations of sea creatures can be. As we gazed up at the four types of shark swimming overhead, a group of stingrays congregated above us, apparently able to detect the electricity from the 37 heartbeats below them!



Upper 3 trip to the Eden Project



Upper 3 went to the Eden Project on Wednesday as part of their Geography course and took part in workshops about 'Rainforest Adaptations' and 'Natural Selection'. They were able to use their existing knowledge of adaptations to apply this to the rainforest and learnt some very clever ways to survive! They explored the biomes in search of specific species that have become adapted to the unique conditions that the rainforest presents. The girls were fantastic at sketching the identified species and asked some brilliant questions. The Eden Staff commented on how much positive energy they had and their wonderfully inquisitive minds. Now that we are back, we will be embarking on an ecosystems unit and focusing more closely on the wonderful world of the rainforest; particularly Amazonia.

Music news

The school has been offered a number of complimentary unreserved tickets for the upcoming ISCA Ensemble 'Special Spring Concert' at St David's Church on Saturday 7 March at 7.30pm. Please see the attached poster for further details and contact Mrs Smith if you would like to reserve some of these tickets.

Also, we thought you might be interested in the following link which takes you to an excellent publication from Music Mark, highlighting the benefits of music education. It is well worth a read!



www.musicmark.org.uk/marketplace/10-things-schools-should-know-about-learning-music

Loving their netball in Year 6



Year 6 enjoyed a lovely sunny afternoon of netball on Wednesday with, once again, all the girls playing in a triangular series of games. This time we were hosting Plymouth College and Stover School. Each of the four courts were busy with lots of games and all the girls are enjoying their netball and learning lots!

There was a real mixture of results with several convincing wins from Maynard, a couple of draws and we think only 1 loss ... well done, everyone!



Super Under 13 matches

The Under 13 Netball teams were on sparkling form on Wednesday when they played against Blundell's. Both the As and Bs came away with victories, making this not only a sunny day of sport but a successful one as well!

Junior School House Cross Country

There has been a lot of muddy legs across the Junior School these past couple of weeks as the girls learned their courses and then competed in their House Cross Country races. Congratulations to them all for persevering in the somewhat slippery conditions! In the final placings, Merchants came out on top followed by Goldsmiths, Haberdashers and then Armourers.

The following girls were the winners of their year groups: Zola (Year 3), Amelia (Year 4), Jasmine (Year 5) and Sarah (Year 6). Well done, girls!



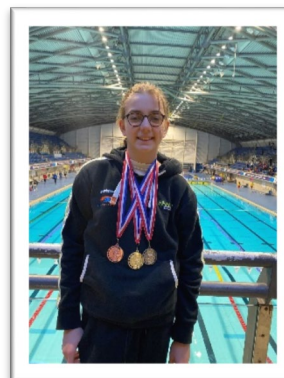
Equestrian News

Good results from this weekend NSEA for the Eventers Challenge at Pontispool on Saturday.

The team of Isobel Davies, Zoe Davies and Kitty Guinness came 2nd in the 90cm and qualified for the Championships at Hickstead. Isobel Davies also won the 1m and also qualified as an individual.

Performance of the Month Sofija Gelev: Swimming

For her performance at the Sheffield Burns Night swim meet, where she swam against selected swimmers from across the UK who had achieved the required regional qualification times. Competing in 9 races, Sofija brought home 3 medals- one gold, one silver and one bronze medal. Sofija has also been selected (along with Jess in L4) to attend the Exeter City Swim Team training camp in Spain over half term.



Fundraising for Australia



Following on from our multi-day last week to help raise money for the Australian Bushfire victims, we are thrilled to say that we have so far raised £628.91 and the figure is still rising. The Lower 6 Geographers have a number of koala bracelets for sale (at £3 each) in School Reception for anyone hoping to contribute and we would be very grateful for your support. All the money will go towards helping the rescue effort, including food drops and donations for medical supplies.

Ten Tors training

We wish our teams the best of luck for their training walk on the moor tomorrow. Having kept a very beady eye on the forecast this past week, it's rather lovely to think that it is now going to be a beautiful sunny day for them although we are equally pleased to have made a relatively early decision to abandon the overnight camp in view of the shocking conditions we can expect through the night and on Sunday!



Cyber Discovery Challenge

And finally, we wish the best of luck to the girls who are competing in tomorrow's second round of the GCHQ Cyber Discovery Challenge. We will update you all with how they fare in next week's newsletter!

Have a great weekend!.



Sarah Dunn
Headmistress