

19 December 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

School Newsletter – December 2024

As the end of term and the Christmas holiday hurtles into view, it is time to pause and reflect on all the things that have happened here at school in a jam-packed seven weeks since I wrote to you last.

On the last day of the first half-term, the school embarked on its annual sponsor day walk around our surrounding area. For me it was my first opportunity to be part of this whole school event and it was a remarkable undertaking! It is quite something for the whole school to take part (that does not happen everywhere) with such gusto and with Year 11 leading the way in their fancy dress it was quite the spectacle. The students conducted themselves with aplomb and with support from staff, the walk was completed in great spirits to match the beautiful Cumbrian weather.

Year 11s also shone during their annual mock interview day just before half-term too. Mrs Modlin, our Careers Lead who masterminded the day as part of our careers programme, writes as follows:

"Students spent many weeks preparing for this day, writing application letters and updating their CV's. On the day they all looked incredibly smart and we had nothing but positive feedback from all of our volunteer interviewers. A huge thank you to every one of our interviewers that took time out of their working day to attend the event; the experience and feedback you offered is a vital part in preparing our Year 11s for life after their GCSE's. After all students had been interviewed, the interviewers selected their top performers and they were invited back to be interviewed by a panel. At the end of the event third place was awarded to Hannah C, second to Grace G and a unanimous decision on first place and most outstanding interview was awarded to Joe A.

Congratulations to all students involved. You yet again represented the school and showed what an asset you will be as the future work force. Since the mock interviews students have worked on their feedback and have made improvements to their CV's, their next steps are looking at college courses, A-levels at AGS and apprenticeships to prepare them for next September and life after their GCSE's. Thank you again to all involved that made it such a successful day."

Staying with Year 11s, they sat formal mock exams in November as a rehearsal for their real exams next summer. Their approach to the mocks was serious and business-like, indicating an encouraging level of maturity. Last Friday they received their mock results, which have also been shared with parents/carers. The work of improving has already started and that improvement from whatever starting point is now the focus for all our Year 11s. It is not too late to really make a difference. Academic support sessions will start in earnest in the new year and the Year 11 face-to-face parents' evening on Thursday 9 January, is an excellent staging post for all involved in supporting our students achieve their potential in the summer. I look forward to meeting Year 11 parents there. And of course, it is over to Year 13 when the new term starts as their mocks begin on Tuesday 7 January. So, a mixture of rest and hard work is required from our oldest students over the holidays.

I met plenty of Year 8 parents at their parents evening last week. The help of parents/carers is a vital ingredient in the success of students and we as staff, are grateful for the parental support we have here.

In the last newsletter there was a link asking for feedback on the frequency and method of parental communication. Thank you to all that responded. I have to say that there was no overwhelming winner, so there will be at least one newsletter like this each half-term with a few specials slotted in too!

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Over recent days there has been communication to parents/carers about our school values and crest. There has been a good response to this and the views of parents/carers will be added to those of governors, staff and students in January to help decide our set of values and the use of a single school crest. More generally, as parents/carers if you are able to complete the Parent View questionnaire then that will help us identify how we can work more effectively with parents going forward and continue to improve our school. The link is here [Appleby Grammar School - Parent View](#) and can be accessed via our website.

On Monday we held a whole school achievement assembly to celebrate the successes of our students this term. There was the presentation of the weekly 'Golden Ticket' awards to students that have gone above and beyond this week and to the highest weekly achievement points scorers. Additionally, there were certificates in all subjects for all year groups for academic achievement and effort. Students displaying the school values were also rewarded with certificates. Lucy C, in Year 11 who is the leading achievement points scorer across the whole school for the term received a voucher. Mr Gordon's Year 8 Form won the prize for the best form attendance this term with 96.06%. The assembly began with a lovely musical piece from Year 7 students who impressively sang a song in French; Key Stage 4 fast-track pass winners were celebrated, as were whole school reading awards. The students' efforts in PE were also praised in a round-up by Mr Hook. There continues to be much more to do to praise positive behaviour and embedding that into the school's behaviour policy in 2025 is very much one of my aims. There is a great deal to celebrate and we are determined to do just that.

One well established showpiece school event which is a celebration is our annual Prize Giving and this year it was held in mid-November. Students, both past and present were rewarded for their endeavours over the last academic year. Our local MP, Tim Farron, was our guest speaker and after presenting the prizes he offered some reflections on his path to parliament and his current work for his constituents, which now of course, includes Appleby. It was an enjoyable evening sharing our students' success.

Last Thursday was cause for more celebration as we held our school Christmas Concert in the evening. It was a lovely event with several students playing and singing a range of Christmas songs. The wider audience joined in too and with great support from the Appleby Grammar School Friends, who provided the refreshments (with help from our GCSE Food group) it was a successful night. We all look forward to 2025 and more exciting musical opportunities for our students and the wider community. Watch this space! Thursday also saw our school Christmas Jumper Day and there were plenty on display! In the canteen, a superhuman effort from Mrs Parkin, her catering team, Mr Moore and the sixth form provided a cracking Christmas lunch for the students and staff alike. The Christmas music in the background topped off a very festive day all round, as we prepared in school for the celebrations. Indeed, those preparations begun back in mid-November with the successful AGS Friends Christmas Fair, which saw local stallholders set up in school and the local community were invited onto site. It was a very pleasant and festive occasion.

In late November we hosted a Scholastic Book Fair in school. This proved a popular event which was well supported by the whole community. The fair helped raise funds for our library, which we have made real progress with this term. Support from governors, staff, students and with leadership from our sixth form, the library itself is much tidier and more organised than in September. We would love to hear from any parent or carer that might be able to spare a little time to help keep on top of things! Please contact the school via admin@appleby.cumbria.sch.uk if this is of interest. In addition to providing reading material in general, our library stock underpins our Key Stage 3, Accelerated Reader programme and there were awards linked to this in Monday's assembly. Other highlights from English this term include the innovative celebration of National Poetry Day and Bookbuzz for Year 7. There is also currently a writing opportunity with the Rotary Young Writer competition. Students have been working on this in some English lessons. The deadline is: Friday 10th January 2025. You can find further information and entry forms on the school website <https://www.appleby.cumbria.sch.uk/curriculum/subjects/english/rotary-young-writers-competition>

Earlier in December the school were involved with another Rotary competition. This time the Young Chef Competition. Mrs Benson, our curriculum leader for Food, Art and DT reports on an enjoyable day:

"All students did themselves proud cooking an array of fantastic dishes for our judges, Mrs Barker from Appleby Primary School and Gary Fothergill, Executive Chef from the Westmorland Group. Congratulations to our winner, Melita in Year 8 and our runners up Libby and Alvia in Year 10. Melita is through to the next round at the Lakes School in the Spring term, watch this space!"

The dishes the students produced looked amazing and the judges' reaction showed they tasted good too! Well done everyone involved."

Physical Education has been a vibrant part of the term with a staggering number of opportunities provided for our students. Mr Hook and Mrs Walton have worked tirelessly to allow over 1500 visits to lunchtime activities and 74 inter-school fixtures to take place in 73 school days this term. A remarkable achievement! There have been some real successes too, as we have punched above our weight in several competitions. Our Year 7 netball team have won every single fixture! Our Year 7 boys' football team are into the County Cup last 16 and beat St John Henry Newman 4-1. Our Year 8 boys' football are in the last 16 of the County Cup beating Chetwynde 7-1 and KSGS on penalties 2-1 on the way. Our Year 11 netballers finished third overall in the County Finals at Sedbergh, which is believed to be the school's best ever placing. In the Eden District Cross Country, we had multiple qualifiers for the County Finals. In Panathlon Ten Pin Competition, we are the Eden District Champions! Our U16 Table Tennis team are County Champions! Really well done to Sam, Jack, Rohan and Matthew. Whilst, our U13 Table Tennis were County Runners UP.

Here at Appleby GS, we are bucking a national trend with high participation from our girls and Mrs Walton notes that:

"It has been wonderful to see so many girls taking part in lunchtime sports clubs and representing AGS in sporting fixtures. Our highlight of the half term must be our Year 11 girls coming third at the County Final Netball Tournament held at Sedbergh; it was an incredible day of top-level netball, well done girls! The Year 7 netballers continue to be undefeated in all of their fixtures and are going from strength to strength. We hope everyone has a great rest over the holidays and come back refreshed for a new term and some new sports!"

Really well done everyone.

Another area where girls' participation is high is in science and STEM activities and Mrs Lightfoot, our curriculum leader for science summarises some of the exciting events that have happened recently in her subject area:

"It has been a busy term in the science department with many students taking part in extra curriculum STEM activities. The Year 10 students have been particularly busy at the start of their GCSE's. A joint trip with the DT department gave several students the opportunity to visit the Science Museum in Manchester; here the students were able to look at how the use of technology has changed over the past hundred years in many different areas such as textile making, computer games and during the pandemic.

Some of the separate science students recently went to Leeds University on a Medicine - not just for medics' day. During a busy day of activities, the students were able to experience university life and get hands on in the biochemistry labs learning about pharmaceuticals and drug development. The students were able to use the latest software to design synthetic compounds of drugs and biomedical engineering to design new surgical equipment. The Key Stage 4 Astronomy Masterclass was a great success again this year, and the students were able to see Jupiter when the clouds cleared. The masterclass draws on a wealth of knowledge from our astronomy experts and is a unique opportunity for the students to learn more about space. There were some brilliant presentations produced by the students all based on what could happen in the future of astronomy.

In school the Key Stage 3 STEM club has been busy building their own robots thanks to Mr Hunter and Mrs Shuttleworth and Fossil Friday with Mrs Gasgarth has proved to be popular with many students.

There will be more to come in the new term, where our focus for extracurricular turns to Year 7 and Year 8 with visits to a local farm to study the reproductive systems of farm animals and the Life Centre at Newcastle to look at the effects of carbon. The lunchtime STEM clubs will also continue with a variety of projects."

Science is just one of a number of subjects that offer a wide range of opportunities outside of the classroom experience and we will continue to ensure that those opportunities grow and remain accessible to all our students.

In January we will welcome Mr Riley, an experienced science teacher into the science department. He will pick up classes across the key stages. I would thank both Mr Somaiya and Mrs Gasgarth for their contributions to the school, as they leave us for new pastures after Christmas.

Personal, health, social and economic education (PSHE) is an increasingly important part of schools and this term, Mr Hook has been appointed to be our Head of PSHE. The subject has appeared on timetables as Life Skills in the past and will be changed to PSHE in 2025. These lessons link closely to our wider Safeguarding programme lead by our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Mr Moore. There will be more information about Safeguarding and PSHE coming out to parents and carers in 2025, but for now Mr Hook gives a great example of the sort of issues covered.

"In recent PSHE lessons and leading on from the Eco-Council's Cut Your Carbon drive in school, Year 11 boys have completed research in to the use of and recycling of plastics, culminating in a debate on the advantages and disadvantages of a plastic tax in our lesson yesterday. The group showed brilliant, in-depth knowledge of the issue

and were able to debate the facts in a very mature manner, defending their chosen viewpoint fairly and confidently. The level of independent research which they had completed really showed and I was hugely proud of them all!

We are also continuing to boost our Mental Health and Well-being provision in school after Christmas with the appointment of a whole school mental health lead, Miss Gilder and we have agreed to work in conjunction with Barnardo's Mental Health Support Team and other local external agencies to provide a service to support both our students and staff. There will be further updates in the new year on this vital area.

I am now conscious that this bumper Christmas edition newsletter does not get so long it becomes unreadable, but I hope you can grasp a flavour of all that has gone on – the place is a hive of activity! I will draw to a conclusion by wishing all our families a restful and peaceful Christmas. I spoke to the school last week about the importance of giving and helping others at this time of year, so I hope our students, at least wash a few dishes at home this holiday!

Thank you again, as parents/carers for your support of the school and to my colleagues on the staff for their sterling work. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

***** Coming Soon – SPARX MATHS! Watch this space for further details during the Spring Term 2025 *****

Fundraising - AGSF	
AGSF have had a busy start to the new academic year: - The 100+ Club is running well and the monthly draw provides much excitement for those lucky cash prize winners! - The Christmas Fair held on 9 November was well attended and a good event for our school and local community to enjoy. Thanks to all our families, staff, governors and local businesses for providing raffle prizes for the event.	Christmas Hampers Raffle – this is always one of our best fundraisers. Our sincere thanks go to all families, staff and governors who donated items, which enabled us to make up 17 lovely hampers and to everyone who purchased raffle tickets and supported us.  The draw was held yesterday and all winners have been notified. It's time for a short break for our hard-working committee and we have lots of Fundraising ideas planned for 2025!

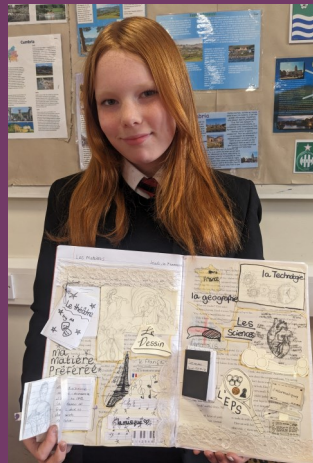
Calendar of Events (7 January to 4 April 2025)	Reminders
07-17 January – Year 13 Mock Exams 09 January – Year 11 Parents' Evening (face to face) 09 January – Year 12 Florence Nightingale Maths Event 29 January – Intermediate Maths Challenge – Years 9, 10 and 11 01-08 February – Ski Course visit to Serre Chevalier, France 12 February – Year 13 Parents' Evening (face to face) 17-21 February – Half-Term Break 24 Feb-07 March – Year 10 Mock Exams 24 February – Year 7 Science Visit 25 February – Year 9 Parents' Evening (virtual) 05 March – Year 9 Options Evening 06 March – Science Visit (Year 11) 10-14 March – Year 10 Work Experience Week 11 March – Year 8 and 9 UKMT Maths Challenge Event 02 April – Year 8 Life Centre Visit 03 April – Full School Photo 04 April – End of Spring Term (3.30pm)	Notifying school of your child's absence / medical appointments Please remember to use the new email address: attendance@appleby.cumbria.sch.uk to notify us if your child is absent through illness or has a medical appointment during the school day. This email address goes directly to the Student Reception Team who will update your child's record accordingly.



SPONSOR DAY 2024



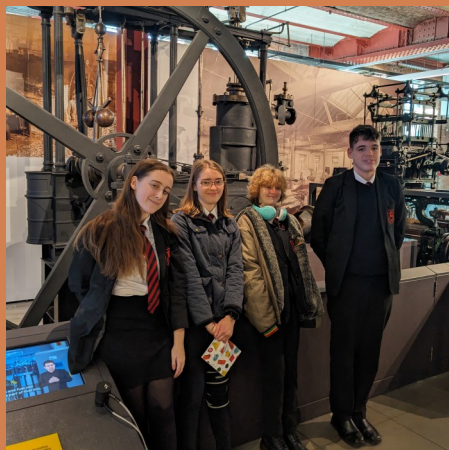
Mock Interviews
November 2024



French meets Art with this astoundingly beautiful homework created by Anna in Year 7. Her interpretations of simple vocabulary brought this topic to life, with incredible detail.



Well done to Year 7 and Year 9 students who attended the Enrichment Cluster Maths event at Morland.



Year 10 students had a fantastic day at the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester



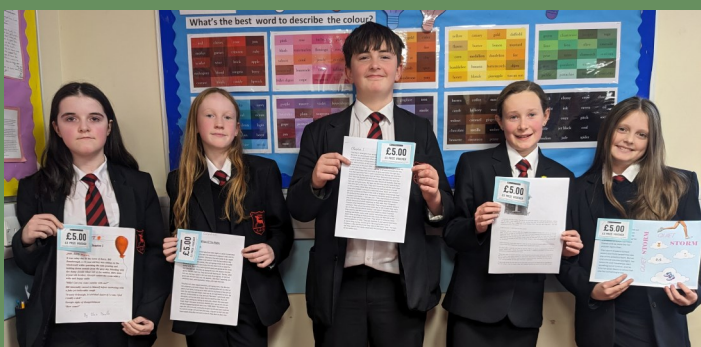
AGS Rewards Evening



Scholastic Book Fair



Year 8 taking part in a Christmas translation competition. They used their collaborative and academic skills very well and came out with some impressive and stylish translations.



Winners of the Scholastic Book Fair competitions who each won a £5 voucher to spend at the Book Fair.





This years astronomy masterclass was held at Borrowdale. Students got the opportunity to see the stars, Jupiter and Mars. Dennis, our astronomy expert, had kindly brought along his telescope so we could see the moons around Jupiter.



Congratulations to our winner Melita in Year 8 and our runners up Libby and Alvia in Year 10 in the Rotary Young Chef Competition held recently.



Year 10 students enjoyed a visit to Leeds University for the 'Medicine-Not Just Medics'

PE Department Success



Year 7 and Year 8 Netball



Year 8 Football



Mixed 5-side Football



Year 9 Football



Eden District Cross Country



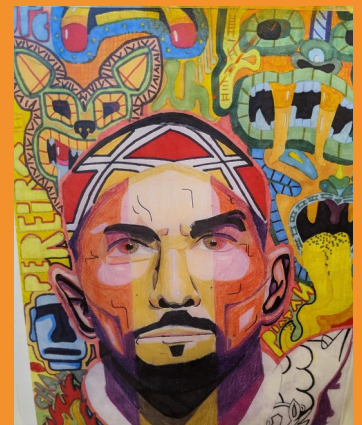
Year 11 Netball



County Table Tennis



Years 8 & 9 Football



Congratulations to all our 'stars' of the week this half term. Here's a small selection



Rotary **YOUNG** **WRITER** COMPETITION

Task: To produce a handwritten or typed story in prose or poem entitled:

“Celebration of 200 Years since the Birth of Railways in Britain” or “Railways”.

The written entry **could be fiction or non-fiction**, as long as the piece relates to the theme and all entries must be legible. Prose entries should be up to a **maximum 550 words**. Poetry entries should be up to a **maximum of 40 lines**. Entries that exceed these maximum numbers will be disqualified. No pictures and/or drawings are to be part of the entry.

The ‘Railways’ theme can be interpreted as broadly as the Young Writer wishes and does not need to conform to the dictionary definition of the word.

Age categories: Intermediate 11 to 13 years old; Senior 14 to 17 years old

Deadline: Friday 10th January 2025

Entry forms are on the school website or from your English teacher.

