



New Mills School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of our first half term, I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on what has been a wonderfully busy, positive and successful start to the school year at New Mills School. It is hard to believe that we are already approaching November, but looking back over the past seven weeks, there is certainly plenty to celebrate.

At the beginning of September, I introduced our mantra for the year: **Be here. Learn well. Belong.** It has been lovely to see these three simple messages coming to life in so many different ways, both inside and outside the classroom.

A school community to be proud of

One of the real highlights of the half term was our Open Evening in September, which attracted a record number of prospective families. The school was absolutely buzzing, and I could not have been prouder of the students who volunteered to help. Our Year 7 and Year 11 speakers were particularly impressive, receiving some wonderful feedback from families, and our student ambassadors demonstrated exactly what makes New Mills School such a special place.

It is always lovely to hear positive comments about our students, particularly from people visiting the school for the first time. At our recent Careers Fair, visitors commented on how polite, calm, interested and engaged our young people were throughout the event. These things matter enormously. Academic achievement is important, of course, but so too are kindness, confidence, good manners and the ability to make a positive impression on others. Our students continue to make us proud in all these areas.

We Will Rock You – what a show!

What an absolutely fantastic production of *We Will Rock You* we enjoyed this half term! With record ticket sales, wonderful feedback from audiences and some truly impressive performances, it was a tremendous success.

What made it particularly special was the sheer number of students involved, both on stage and behind the scenes. Productions like this require an enormous amount of commitment, creativity, teamwork and courage. My thanks go to every student who took part and to the dedicated staff who gave so much of their time to make it happen. It was a brilliant celebration of the talent we have at New Mills School.

Learning beyond the classroom

It has also been a particularly busy half term for enrichment and wider opportunities.

Our whole-school Enrichment Day gave students the chance to experience something different, develop new skills and enjoy learning beyond their usual lessons. Our Duke of Edinburgh participants demonstrated exceptional resilience, determination and teamwork on their expedition, with staff reporting how impressed they were by the attitude and spirit of the students involved.

Year 11 students have benefited from our College Fair, helping them to think carefully about their next steps. We have also enjoyed welcoming local primary school pupils to our Year 6 Science event, giving them a taste of secondary school learning and the exciting opportunities ahead.

And, as I write, our Year 7 students are enjoying their residential visit to Gulliver's World! For many, this is a wonderful opportunity to build friendships, develop independence and make memories with their new classmates. I am sure they will return with plenty of stories to tell and, quite possibly, some very tired teachers!

A spooktacular end to the half term!

I cannot possibly reflect on this half term without mentioning our Year 7 and Year 8 Halloween disco, which was a wonderfully spooky success!

There were some fantastic costumes, plenty of dancing and some rather unexpected entertainment, including an inflatable shark and dinosaur chasing each other around the dance floor! We also witnessed some fiercely contested dance-offs between students and staff.

It was lovely to see so many students enjoying themselves, having fun with their friends and making the most of school life. A huge thank you to everyone who helped organise such a memorable event.

Academic achievement and ambition

Alongside all these wonderful experiences, our core purpose remains ensuring that every student receives an excellent education and achieves the very best outcomes possible.

We began the year celebrating some excellent GCSE results, with particularly encouraging improvements in mathematics and strong performances across a range of subjects. We have also been delighted that a number of successful reviews of marking have resulted in improved grades for students from our summer cohort.

It has been reassuring to receive positive feedback from external colleagues who have visited the school this term, recognising both the work taking place to improve our provision and, importantly, the positive attitudes of our students.

We are ambitious for New Mills School and will continue to focus relentlessly on the quality of teaching, the standards of students' work, attendance and punctuality. Every lesson matters, and every minute of learning counts.

Celebrating our former students

It is always a pleasure to hear about the achievements of former New Mills School students, and we have had two particularly lovely stories to celebrate recently.

Rocco Dockney achieved outstanding A Level results and has gone on to study Chemistry at the University of York, while Frank Raven has appeared on *The Voice*, speaking warmly about how his time at New Mills School helped him to embrace his individuality and develop his love of music.

Although their paths are very different, both are wonderful examples of young people following their passions, thinking big and making the most of their talents. We are incredibly proud of them both. Please keep us informed of any other Alumni successes by emailing alumni@newmillsschool.co.uk

Year 11 – an important few months ahead

It was lovely to see so many families attending our September Year 11 Parent Information Evening. Thank you for taking the time to join us and for the support you are giving your children as they prepare for their GCSE examinations.

Our Year 11 students have a particularly important few months ahead, with their written mock examinations beginning on **Monday 2 November, the very first day back after half term**. I would encourage all Year 11 students to use some of the holiday to revise and prepare, while also making sure they find time to rest and recharge.

A separate letter will accompany this one for Year 11 parents and carers, outlining some of the exciting celebrations and incentives we have planned for their final year, including the much-anticipated Year 11 leavers' hoodies, our mock examination and rewards event, and the expectations that will underpin these privileges.

We want Year 11 to be a memorable and enjoyable final year, but we also want every student to approach their GCSEs with the maturity, commitment and ambition that will help them achieve their very best.

Welcome to our new Chair of Governors

I am delighted that Mrs Emma Fairhurst, who has been a valued member of our governing body as a Parent Governor for some time, has now taken on the role of Chair of Governors. Our governors play an enormously important role in the life of the school, providing both support and challenge as we work to ensure the very best education and opportunities for our young people. I look forward to working closely with Mrs Fairhurst as we continue to build on the school's successes and pursue our ambitions for the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our governors for the time, expertise and commitment they give so generously to New Mills School.

Looking ahead to next half term

There is plenty to look forward to as we head towards Christmas. Alongside the Year 11 mock examinations, we will be marking Anti-Bullying Week and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as well as providing further opportunities for students to develop their understanding of the world around them.

We also have our GCSE Presentation Evening on 26 November, when we will welcome back last year's Year 11 students to celebrate their achievements, and our Year 10 Drop Down Day on 7 December. Flu vaccinations are scheduled for 25 November, with further information provided to families as appropriate.

And, of course, there will be plenty of festive activities as December approaches, including our Christmas dinner and the usual opportunities to enjoy some Christmas cheer!

Finally, thank you

I want to finish by thanking our students, staff and families for everything they have contributed to such a positive start to the year.

Our staff work incredibly hard, often giving up evenings, weekends and their own time to provide the experiences and opportunities that make school life so much more than lessons and examinations. I am enormously grateful for their dedication.

To our students, thank you for the enthusiasm, kindness and energy you bring to school every day. Whether you have represented us at an event, performed on stage, helped a younger student, worked hard in lessons or simply done the right thing when nobody was watching, you have all played a part in making this a successful half term.

And to parents and carers, thank you for your continued support and partnership. It makes such a difference.

I hope everyone enjoys a well-deserved half-term break and that our students return refreshed and ready for another successful seven weeks.

Be here. Learn well. Belong.

Think Big. Do the Right Thing. Team Spirit.

Warm regards,



Heather Watts

Headteacher

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#thinkbig #dotherightthing #teamspirit #thisisnewmills



**New Mills
School**