

Collegium Sancti Laurentii

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From the Headmaster's Study

Date

Dear Ampleforth families

Headmaster's letter home for Christmas at the end of Michaelmas Term

We started this term after some very positive A Level results over the Summer, with our A Level exam results hitting an eight-year high. 77% of our students achieved an A*, A or B, with two thirds going on to Russell Group universities. This is great credit to our hard-working students and their teachers.

We have also enjoyed considerable academic success across a range of subjects and in prestigious competitions.

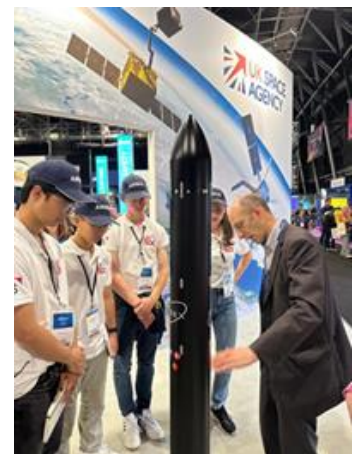


The image below shows me with our A level Year 12 Chemistry students proudly displaying their certificates after sitting the Cambridge University Chemistry Challenge earlier in the year. This



national competition aims to stretch students beyond the confines of the syllabus, and our students excelled, receiving gold, silver and bronze awards.

Ampleforth's da Vinci Decathlon team were rewarded with an outstanding third place in the UK Senior final this year, held at Trinity College in Oxford. This innovative academic competition, which started in Australia over twenty years ago, continues to grow in popularity. Students compete in teams of eight across 10 disciplines. Ampleforth secured first place in Science and English, and a commendable second place in Mathematics. Our Rocket Club were also celebrating success, entering a whole new orbit by winning the International Youth Rocketry Championship title, having already won the National Championship Challenge earlier in the year.



In a memorable Assembly, Y13 student Anastasia reminded all our students that success does not just come from talent, but also hard work. She spoke about the importance of a strong work ethic and managing time, drawing on our Benedictine values and the importance of supporting others.



On the student recruitment front we continued to build relationships with local prep schools, including the new Head at Terrington Hall who visited us this term. Our recruitment events started in spectacular fashion in September with a well-attended Open Day, where visitors received a rousing welcome from our Pipe

Band. We also held an online event in October where our current students were the stars, talking about their learning and extra-curricular interests. In November we held scholarship events and a busy Sixth Form Morning for current and new families considering us for Year 12 and 13. I have enjoyed attending other recruitment events, including at Grantley Hall in Ripon, while some colleagues have travelled a little further afield to develop our overseas markets, with trips to China, Mexico and the Cayman Islands this term.

This has been a particularly musical term, with multiple concerts by our Houses, and showcase events from the College Orchestra and Schola Cantorum. These started with Faure's Requiem, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Faure's death. We also had the College Orchestra, Chamber Choir, Jazz Ensemble, and Concert and Pipe band for St Cecilia. We have Handel's Messiah to come at the Abbey later in December. We also have carol concerts at the end of term, and at our popular London event at Our Lady of Victories, Kensington.



We are always keen to welcome friends and visitors to the school and had a notable visit from William Cash, the Editor of the Catholic Herald, who delivered the first Headmaster's lecture of the year. We also welcomed back 150 of our former players and coaches from our Rugby 1st XV spanning five decades from 1963-2003. After attending Mass, many went on to meet our current sportswomen and men to inspire the next generation.

Students enjoyed a range of trips this term, including biology and geography fieldwork to Blencathra, where they worked under the last of the summer sun. There were also trips to the Airbus Factory to learn about satellite materials and robotics, and a trip to Nissan. Without leaving the ground, our Drama Scholars spent an intriguing workshop learning techniques on how to fly across the stage.



Our overseas excursions were particularly exciting this term, with politics students visiting New York and Washington DC to learn about US democracy and political institutions on



the eve of the US Election. They visited the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the Ground Zero Memorial, and Empire State Building in New York. They then headed to the capital to see the White House, had a guided tour of the US Capitol building, before viewing The Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, The Bill of Rights and the Magna Carta at the National Archives.



The Nepal Expedition at half-term was just as eventful and even more colourful. Our students were welcomed by the Head of the Ghilung School.



Ampleforth fundraising helped furnish their new nursery, train two teachers and contributed towards a more stable and sustainable power supply. As well as making new friends, our students experienced

the different spiritual approaches of Buddhism and Hinduism. They were all struck by the contrast of a much simpler life. Despite the busy itinerary they still found time to soak up the culture, as well as enjoying Nepalese food and spectacular views.



This term I am delighted that we have raised £7,000 for Oakfield School as part of Friendship Project. This will support their pupils, many of whom have profound and multiple difficulties. Another highlight of this term has been the House retreats, allowing our pupils to take time to reflect away from the normal hustle and bustle of school life. St Bede's

visited Whitby to learn more about St Hilda and St Bede, while other Houses enjoyed walks, gardening and Mass. We were also treated to another spectacular display of the Northern Lights over the Abbey in October.



The annual raft build and race is always exciting and hugely popular. Teams were awarded points across multiple categories, favouring those who were able to play a smart game to accrue points, not just the fastest paddlers. The annual tug of war was also hugely enjoyable, with some of the costumes even louder than the cheering.



Whilst House competition and sports bring us together, I could not have been more proud of the togetherness and respect shown at the recent Remembrance Day service. The day was a poignant reminder of service.

This year we have been really focussing on sport and already have a plethora of successes to celebrate. We have had some amazing individual performances in areas as diverse as kickboxing and equestrian. Our team sports continue to show strength in depth. Particular highlights include the 1st XV Rugby team securing their place in the 5th Round of the National Schools Vase, as well as dominating most of their other matches. Our Girls U14 Hockey team have been unstoppable this term, becoming the county champions. They have now progressed to the North Finals. Not to be outdone, our Equestrian team have picked up multiple awards and also qualified for the NSEA National Championships



After Exeat the Abbey and College came together to celebrate the life of Fr Edward. Father Abbot's beautiful homily emphasised the wonderful way that Fr Edward's ministry and kindness touched so many lives, particularly so in the context of his distinguished time as Housemaster.

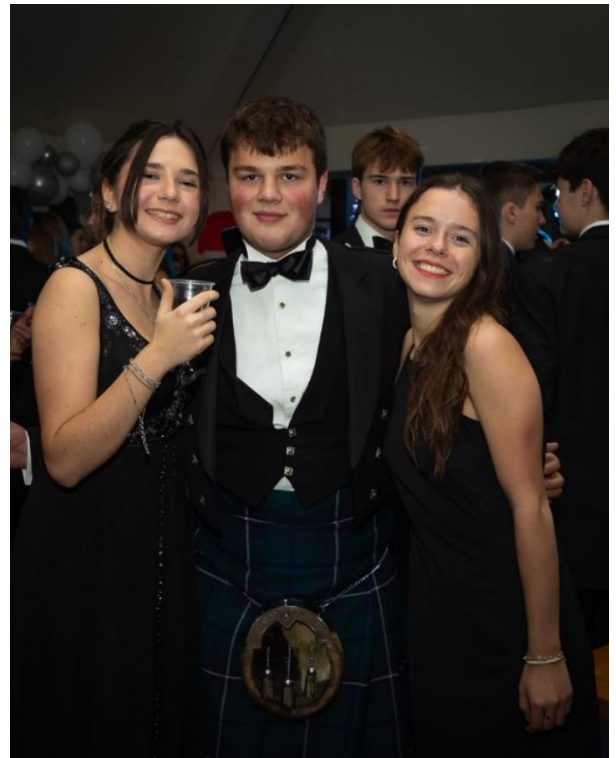


Our students have continued working hard, with groups visiting both the North and South of England in these final few weeks. Our Year 9,10 and 11 students took part in the Royal Society of Chemistry Top of the Bench regional heat at Teesside University, while some of our rocket team visited Westminster and met the local MP for Thirsk and Malton, Kevin Hollinrake, as part of a delegation with Airbus to showcase the importance of STEM and the space industry.



We have recently held various award dinners for our sporting teams, where our boys and girls got dressed up and polished off copious amounts of festive food. We also had the Charity Christmas event at the Windmill organised by our Year 13 BTEC hospitality students, which supported the Friendship Project.

The tree is now up and the sense of excitement for Christmas is building rapidly. Our student performance of JM Barrie's Peter Pan has gone down a storm, particularly with the 165 local primary and prep school students who were invited to its matinee premier in our wonderful theatre. We hope some may return as future students, but they leave with a hugely positive impression of what this wonderful school can offer.



I have enjoyed every minute of my time in the valley. The sense of being part of the shared life – ora et labora – of the College and the Abbey has been a privilege and joy. It will always be part of me and of my prayer life. Thanks to each and every Ampleforth family for all their support, guidance and encouragement as we have turned round the College following Robin Dyer's excellent contribution in guiding her through the storm.

Best wishes and a very happy blessed Feast of the Nativity of the Lord to you and all your lovely children,

Peter and Marie

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