



February newsletter

Well, the muddy month (*February*) has passed with more of a white ending than a muddy brown one. A local, Bede, wrote about the Anglo-Saxon calendar naming the second month of the year as Sōlmōnath, presumably from the weather that we have at this time of year. As I look out of the window of my study at the snow marked with footprint trails and the marks of snowman building and snow-angels I'm fairly sure there's more mud to come!

February started well with a wonderful Westfield Association quiz night. It was great to see so many people there, up by 30 on last year I am told. A huge thanks to our quiz-mistresses for putting together so many enjoyable rounds and keeping everybody guessing right up to the last minute, and to our bar staff and everyone who helped with the food. I think there was a set of questions for everybody to do well on but the food and drink meant we all had fun however tough or easy the questions. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and congratulations to team ALS who took home the cup this year.

Junior House had a wonderful evening of entertainment when they snuggled down to watch a choice of films after school with the obligatory popcorn. When I dropped by, all the girls seemed to be having a lovely time and were completely absorbed in the films. The following week we had a disco at school and the girls were dressed up in all their dancing finery, showing off their best moves. It was great to see a good number of boys from NSB joining us to hit the dancefloor too. A fun time was had by all and I would like to thank all the members of staff who supported these events for the girls.

It was lovely to welcome girls from Glendale School in Wooler and girls and boys from NPS to join our U2 at our second annual Arts day. The creative arts faculty had devised a really fun day around witches and wizards, echoing the enduring popularity of Harry Potter, which involved musical theatre, dance, art and cooking. All our visitors had an amazing time and I hope we will see some of them back again soon.

It was a pleasure, just before half term, to talk to all the candidates, from nine different schools, for entry into U3 in September. Letters for scholarships for U3 and for the Sixth form have now gone out to the successful girls and these should have landed on doorsteps at the end of last week.

It was wonderful seeing so many girls enthusiastically swimming and supporting their Houses in the swimming galas before half term. The sense of rivalry and competition was palpable but also the camaraderie and the support for each other no matter which House the girls are in. I feel this is the very essence of positive competition and striving to beat your own personal best which is so important.

Shanghai Maths week in Junior House was a really amazing event this month. I loved joining in the morning exercises and it was great to see so many of you with us on the Friday morning. The girls really responded well to the different style of learning maths and their teachers say they have seen a big difference in their confidence in the topics covered.

Junior House also enjoyed their STEM week last week with all the classes getting involved with learning more about science, technology and engineering. It was wonderful to see the rocket fuel being tested out and the designs to allow our eggstronauts to return safely to Earth were amazing. At the same time all U5 parents had individual appointments to talk about Sixth form options and Mrs Quinn has been working hard to put together the GCSE option blocks for next year.

To round off the month U1 to L3 enjoyed a visit from Théâtre Sans Frontières who performed a highly interactive and amusing play about a teenager who got trapped inside her computer game. It was lovely to be able to welcome boys from NSB Juniors to join us for the afternoon further cementing our relationship with the boys' school.

As I sign off I am very grateful to all the parents who supported our Open Day on Saturday. Although visitor numbers were low, the ones who did look round were very keen and reported how delightful and friendly all the girls were. A good number of parents were also in school as parent ambassadors my thanks go to you as you are real assets, promoting the school in so many ways. Also on Open Day was a full day rehearsal for Buggy Malone and I urge all of you to get your ticket orders in for it soon as it is going to be a wonderful show (21-23 March are the dates for your diaries).

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neil Walker', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Neil Walker