



# TORQUAY GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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HEADTEACHER: MS S FORSTER | FOUNDED 1915 | ACADEMY TRUST

17<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians

As the end of our first term together draws to a close, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on all the fantastic events that have happened across our school.

HERE ARE MY 12 MEMORIES FOR CHRISTMAS.....



My **FIRST** memory for Christmas is how I have been welcomed so warmly into the TGGS community. This is my first term as your Headteacher, and I have been inspired by the resilience of our students to continue to have a healthy appetite for learning, even through this most challenging of times for education.

The **SECOND** is celebration and the £2812.94 raised during Charity Week. This is a major event in our House Culture calendar. Each House selected a charity to support and then students across all year groups mounted a monumental effort to host an incredible variety of stalls for just 40 minutes of lunchtime on the day given to their House. Each day had a theme and the students worked hard to raise an amazing amount of money.

My **THIRD** taste of Christmas is for enrichment in our subjects.

Our two debating forums, which are tackling issues of importance, meet weekly. There is one in the 6th Form with Mr Endersby and one with Mr Gregory (Years 9-11). This means that most weeks we have more than 100 students choosing to debate topical subjects in their lunchtimes.

Our A-level Politics students have had a busy term with three visiting speakers to enliven their course. Charles Courtenay, the Earl of Devon, travelled from Powderham Castle to visit TGGS in October. He spoke about his role in the House of Lords and answered questions from a large and lively audience of sixth formers – [click here](#) to read more.

In November, Livvy Fox, Parliamentary Assistant to Torbay MP Kevin Foster, visited to speak about her own role in researching policy issues for him, as well as more broadly about the role of a constituency MP and how as a recent graduate she has begun a career working in politics.

Most recently on 3rd December, Dr Brendan Carey from the University of Exeter Politics Department led an interactive session over Teams, using the Menti app to teach and poll students on their views about democracy and the media, giving them a taste of what studying Politics at university would be like. Along with Fintan Yeatman, an Exeter student ambassador, Dr Carey also discussed course options and careers with the students.



Our Religion, Philosophy & Ethics students were able to welcome visitors to their lessons to answer questions on subjects ranging from Christianity to relationships and family. Our A-Level students enjoyed a lecture from Dr Sam Wilkinson from Exeter University on the Philosophy of Mental Health. Philosophy Club is now up and running at lunchtimes and we have discussed topics such as, 'Would a virtual you be a better you?'

The Sixth Form Year 12 and Year 13 MedSocs have had full programmes this term, including ethical debates for Year 12, research with presentations on how different countries have coped with covid, and a virtual meeting with the Volunteer Coordinators from Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust about work experience opportunities. Year 13 have been focusing on interview preparation, culminating in a full multi mini-interview carousel involving six staff and nine task stations to help them practise for this very

common interview format, and then individual mock interviews for all 21 of our healthcare applicants. But the highlight for both groups was undoubtedly a very inspiring talk by Laura Tillotson, Orthopaedic Consultant at RD&E, who came into TGGS on November 26<sup>th</sup> to talk about her role as a surgeon and her own career path. We are very grateful to her, as well as to Year 13 MedSoc speaker coordinator Abbie Tomlinson, who arranged her visit as part of a series of talks held over the past year.

Within the English department, our Book Club and Creative writing club have been running every Monday for Years 7, 8 and 9 to attend at lunchtimes; we have received some exceptional pieces of creative writing, as well as hearing some brilliant ideas on students' favourite books. In the new year, we will hopefully be looking at 'Life of Pi' by Yann Martel: this would make a great stocking filler! The Christmas Poetry competition ran successfully for Years 7-11; our winner from KS3 was Alix Brewer from Year 8, and the winner for KS4 was Ami Halliwell from 11J - with some really beautiful poetry from all of the entries. In 2022, we also hope to start up a Sixth Form Book Club, for years 12 and 13.



The **FOURTH** thrilling event is our first TGGS Christmas Science Lecture (which it is now hoped will become an annual event). Professor Mike Benton (Professor of Vertebrate Palaeontology at the University of Bristol) talked about the Permian-Triassic Mass Extinction and how heat kills to an excited audience of 102 students and parents.

The **FIFTH** fantastic memory was meeting one of our parents, who is a senior leader in the Inclusion and Diversity Department at the global company Accenture, to discuss best practice, ensuring that our school community is as inclusive as possible. We are making great progress in sharing the values of equality and inclusion with all staff and students through the PSHE programme, assemblies, and tutorials. This term we have celebrated Black History month, COP 26, Young Minds and World Mental Health Day and our fortnightly Celebration of Diversity board is shared with all staff and students. Within school we have also worked with pupils to re-establish a Gender and Sexuality Alliance student group which is supported by two members of staff who have attended Stonewall training. The GAP (group for advocacy and pressure) group will also be relaunched in the Spring term and this group will include representatives from all key stages. GAP provides an invaluable forum for student voice to raise the profile of equality, inclusion and diversity and to share their ideas with the senior leadership team.

The **SIXTH** seasonal offering is the Year 12 and 13 Historians, who recently enjoyed a fantastic evening at the Princess Theatre watching 'SIX', the story of the wives of Henry VIII. Their marriages were dangerous, messy, church-reforming, and pored over by gossipy historians – but this time they were telling their stories, their way: with a live performance contest starring the hottest pop ghost-girl group you've ever seen. The evening saw the students singing to the lyrics and learning History in an entirely different way. A great night was had by all.

Our **SEVENTH** significant event involved our Year 13 physics students, who took part in the Physics Challenge competition on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This was organised by Oxford University and involved seven of our students. Two students gained a merit certificate and five a participation certificate.



The **EIGHTH** highlight for our students is their participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which continues to provide a focus for enrichment. From the 60 students in Year 10 who successfully completed their Bronze DofE expedition earlier this term, half have now progressed to the challenge of the Silver Level. More than a hundred from Year 9 are taking part.

Preparation for the annual Dartmoor Ten Tors challenge is now well under way. Our training teams have recently completed three tough but enjoyable treks on the moor, showing a really positive attitude in some wild weather conditions.

The Gardening Club is thriving, and we are currently constructing a wildlife pond to enhance biodiversity. Any donations of unwanted second-hand gardening equipment would be gratefully received - tools, wellies, wheelbarrows etc. - please contact [Dr Coles](#) if you are able to contribute.

The **NINTH** notable event was for our Year 12 media students who had their first ever group cinema outing to watch Dune this half term. It was brilliant to take the theory out the classroom and apply skills in a real-world context - there was also popcorn which added to the joy. They are now planning their next outing for the spring term; the next film choice is in hot debate.

The **TENTH** memory goes to our student leaders across the school. This term has also seen the selection of the new Heads of Houses and The Head Girl Team. In order to apply for these coveted roles, students are required to write a letter of application, take part in a group activity and then have a short formal interview. Shortlisted students then prepare a brief, recorded speech which is broadcast to the entire school, who vote and democratically elect the School's Senior Pupils. It is a rigorous process but is an amazing experience for the pupils who choose to go through it. This year the voting was incredibly close. Candidates shared their visions of environmentalism, social engagement, sports for all and cultural celebration within the school. As newly elected Head Girl and Deputy Head Girl, Alicia Cheung and Fleur Dudman have already represented the school at open evenings and commenced whole school initiatives to bring even more joy into the extracurricular provision at TGGs.

Our current Key Stage 4 Head Girl Team has been excellent. They have worked tirelessly on a whole host of projects over the course of the year and have been a student voice for KS4. They have raised funds for Tree Tops and Surfers Against Sewage, helped re-form the Gender Sexuality Alliance Club, spoken at whole-school events, worked towards being a plastic free school and produced a KS4 magazine among other initiatives. We are so proud of the way they have risen to the challenge, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, and they have always been cheerful and proactive in all they have done. They will hand over to the new team of Year 10s but will, of course, continue to lead on their Year 11 leavers' events. We are so delighted that they have been the first ever KS4 Head Girl Team and are proud of the work they have done - they have certainly set a high standard for those that follow.

In Year 9 we appointed a number of students as Key Stage 3 Leaders, along with a KS3 Head Girl Team. This provides an opportunity for Year 9 students to develop leadership and management skills as they fulfil a range of roles & duties. It also develops further the range of learning opportunities available to and support offered to KS3 students. The students typically become involved in projects designed to improve the KS3 experience in Years 7, 8 and 9, such as assemblies, tours for future students and completion of specific projects such as Bake Off, Christmas House Shout, Book Club, and so on.

In order for students to be appointed, they initially write a 500-word Personal Statement, the selected few are then interviewed and narrowed down to 3/4 students who are voted in by staff and students. They give a 2-minute talk about why they would be perfect for the job, and ideas they have for their role. This year the successful candidates are Head Girl Sophia Sutton, with Liv Baker and Erin Dawkins our Deputy Head Girls, plus a number of students who are part of the KS3 Leader Team. Congratulations to them all!

Our **ELEVENTH** noteworthy event came from our geographers, who were able to get out into the field again. Year 13 spent three days at Slapton Field Centre, collecting and analysing data. While the weather wasn't on their side, it was a fabulous feeling to be experiencing geography in real life again. Our Year 8 students have been able to do some fieldwork around our school site, measuring the school microclimate, using homemade windsocks to measure wind direction.



The **TWELFTH** memory was our extra-curricular clubs. Our Wednesday **Textiles lunchtime club** was very well attended, with students making their own reusable face masks and festive tree decorations.

Entries for our Winter Snowflake competition entries are just in. We are astounded at the quality and effort of entries. A selection of entries has been liberally sprinkled across this newsletter.

Our sports teams have triumphed again! Our **Netball Team** has been extremely successful in winning the majority of their matches. Our U16 team has won all their games in two rounds of the National Schools Netball Competition, earning them the position of the Devon A team and they will represent Devon at the South-West Regional round in January 2022. We wish the following the best of luck with this: Captain- Amber Dennison; Isabel Baker; Faye Kinsella; Issy Mills, Sienna Miller; Evie Lewis; Amy Cornish; Lily Rutland; Anya Manlow.

**House Cross Country** took place this term and we had over 110 students from years 7 to 10 participate, with the following students winning their year group: Year 7 - Iris Leach followed 1 second later by Ava Perkins; Year 8 - Zoe Fraser; Year 9 - Amber Ridgway; Year 10 - Millie White. Jackson house were the overall winners!

It has been a busy term of **Hockey**, with teams competing in friendly fixtures, the South Devon Venue League, and National Schools competitions. We have seen lots of success across Years 7-11 including, Year 7 winning all their games in their first CVL, Year 8 placing highly in Devon and our senior team getting a win against Exeter School in the final game of the year. It has been lovely to be back playing hockey this term; well done to everyone!

TGGS **Choir** performed for Rowcroft's virtual Light Up A Life service of remembrance. It has given the students a wonderful performance opportunity, continuing to build close community links and supporting a cause that is close to many of our hearts. The service is available on their website: <https://rowcrofthospice.org.uk/>

The annual **TGGS Carol Service** has returned this year with plenty of wonderful performances from the Choir, Orchestra, String group, Wind band, Year 7 and Chamber choir. It was great to hear some fabulous performances - even if we did have to resort to a recorded version again! This will be available to see on the school website and is guaranteed to bring festive cheer to all! Many thanks to all students who have been committed to making this concert a truly spectacular!

.... AND A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE.

My very best wishes to you and your family for a restful and pleasant break. We are looking forward to welcoming all students back to school on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022**.

Yours faithfully

S. J. Forster

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