



Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

A co-operative Academy

NEWSLETTER

www.ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk

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**Eden Valley
Sports Partnership**

Dear Parents, carers and students,

Welcome to the first of two newsletters that I am sending at the end of term. This is very unusual but then this has not been a usual term.

Also unusual is that we have a number of long-serving members of staff who are leaving KSGS at the end of this year. Generally their reasons for leaving are not directly related to the Covid-19 crisis that we have all been living through, although it may have been an influence in some cases. However, because their departure represents a significant change to the staff of the school and because our students will not have had an opportunity to say goodbye to them, I decided to devote a whole newsletter to allowing them to say goodbye in their own words.

I would like to offer my thanks to all of the staff who are leaving and say a few words about them too. All of them, except one, have served the school and its community for far longer than I have and so my words only reflect their recent contribution to the school and do not represent the full extent of it.

Firstly, I would like to thank Mrs Ritson for the excellent work she has done in her almost two years at the school. In a short time she has transformed the students interest and engagement in practical cookery so that it is currently one of the most popular subjects in the curriculum. She achieved this by deciding to use the majority of her lesson time to focus on practical skills rather than theoretical ones. Unfortunately, she will not have the same opportunity in her new school and neither will Mrs Adams, her successor, here at KSGS, due to the health and safety guidelines that will be in place in September. However, I will be providing more information on that in the second Newsletter. Mrs Ritson will be taking up a full-time position in a school in Carlisle, where she lives, from September. In her own words she wanted to say the following to you:

"I have loved my time at KSGS. The pupils are the best I've ever taught and I will miss you all. Thanks to all the supportive parents for supplying ingredients and I will really miss all the friendly staff who made teaching here such a pleasure. Goodbye and good luck everyone!" (Mrs Ritson).

Another well-liked and respected member of staff who has left KSGS already is Barry Westgarth. He finished working at KSGS at Easter but did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to the students who he worked with in the DT department at school and who he drove on the school bus. The school have been lucky to have Barry for a number of years as he is a calming influence upon students and an authority figure that young people look up to. Barry could have retired some time ago but continued working for the school and the bus company because he enjoyed interacting with young people so much. However, he decided this year that it was time for him to embrace retirement properly. I somehow doubt that he will be idly relaxing and am sure that he will keep himself busy. I would like to thank Barry for everything he has done for KSGS, its students and the community throughout his time at the school. I know that Mr Bromfield will miss him, not least for his calm support as a member of staff on the ski trips.

The next longest serving member of staff leaving this summer is Mr Jefferson, our IT Network Manager. The staff and the students will miss him enormously because he has been such a calm, reassuring support for all of us when IT equipment isn't working the way we need it to. There is nothing more frustrating for teachers and students when technology fails but more often than not Mr Jefferson swooped in like a trouble-shooting super hero and fixed the problem. After 11 years he has decided to move on to a new challenge solving IT problems in a wider range of workplaces than just schools. Mr Jefferson was due to leave at Easter but he agreed to stay on until the end of the year after talking to his new employers in order to help us through the period of lockdown when remote technology has been so important. This is typical of Mr Jefferson's loyalty and consideration for others. I would like to thank him for all of the support he has given me over the last three years and wish him the very best for the future.

Mrs Bennett has been a loyal and dependable member of staff for the last 12 years and has fulfilled a number of roles during this time. She has been an IT teacher, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) for several years and, most recently, the sole teacher of Business Studies in the school. She has supported and helped so many students during her time at the school, particularly students requiring additional support. Mrs Bennett has decided that it is finally time for her to retire and I wish her a happy and fulfilling retirement. I would like to thank her for her excellent contribution to the school in the three years that I have worked with

her; she was an excellent, compassionate SENCo and has been a thoroughly professional teacher of Business Studies, English and History since stepping down from her SENCo role. It is testament to her professionalism that she agreed to teach outside of her subject specialism when we needed her to without complaint. It is equally testament to her ability that she did this so effectively and that English and history students in Year 7 and Year 8 did not experience any reduction in quality of lessons as a result of being taught by her.

The most recent loss to the school is the long-serving Mrs Roberts, who leaves us after two spells as a teacher at KSGS totalling a period of 22 years. She has explained this so eloquently with her trademark honesty in her farewell message so I won't steal any of her thunder. For my part I would like to say that she is one of those rare teachers that truly sacrifices her own needs and her time for the benefit of her students, sometimes to the detriment of herself. Although officially working part-time, she usually works well over the hours of a full working week to mark students work and offer them detailed feedback to help them improve. She also organised school trips in the last two years to Stratford-upon-Avon, even though part-time, such is her dedication and commitment to her students. I have had the pleasure of observing just how good she is as a teacher in action and could see how comfortable and safe her students felt in her classroom, knowing that they would be well taught by a teacher with excellent subject knowledge and equally firm control of the behaviour within her domain – nobody dared to push their luck with the fearsome Mrs Roberts. However, they knew she was also kind and caring. For all of these reasons, she will be a huge loss to the school and its students, and someone I had hoped not to have to replace for a little while longer. However, for the reasons she explains in her message, she has decided that now is the time for her to retire. She only reached this decision recently and out of respect for her and compassion towards her situation, I have decided to allow her to leave at the end of this year as this is the very least that she deserves. We will be holding interviews to appoint a new English teacher next week. Finally, I would like to say on my behalf that Mrs Roberts is one of those members of staff who remind Head teachers like me to think very carefully about any plans for change that I may have. I can recall a number of occasions when she made appointments to come and see me to tell me when she thought I was about to make a grave mistake or when she thought I had already made one. I listened and took note of her advice more than she probably realises. Long-serving, passionate members of staff like Laura Roberts and Michelle Thwaites act as part of the checks and balances that all leadership teams need in running a school, as we don't have a monopoly on good ideas and good sense. I thank Laura personally for the role she has played in making me see good sense over the last three years.

Finally, having just mentioned her, I move on to the longest-serving member of staff in school – Mrs Thwaites. Like Laura Roberts, Michelle Thwaites has often reminded me of the great traditions of KSGS, many of which she describes so fondly in her farewell message. She has maintained her undaunted dedication and commitment to the students, the staff and the school right up to the end of her 31 years as a teacher and leader here. Even during her recent battles with health, she continued to organise and run trips to CERN and to London, along with Mrs Wealleans. Her ability and record as a Chemistry teacher is unquestionable. Her contribution to the school as Head of Science, teacher of Chemistry and senior member of staff is impossible to calculate. She will be remembered by generations of families in the Kirkby Stephen area – many parents reading this newsletter will remember being taught by the younger version of Mrs Thwaites. She has left an indelible mark on the history of the school and I cannot thank her enough on your behalf.

Michelle has decided that now is the time for her to enjoy more time with her husband and indulge her passion for travelling. However, I suspect that it is not the last we will see of her and that she will continue to be an advocate and a supporter of the school even in retirement. She announced her plan to retire many months ago, before Christmas in fact, when she wrote her letter of resignation. She did this so early to give the school plenty of time to appoint a successor as Head of Science, which meant that we were able to do so back in February when we offered the position to Mrs Conway, who will be joining us in September. This is typical of Michelle's loyalty to the school and its students. However, the pandemic has robbed her of the chance to leave the school in the way that she would have wanted; by saying a proper face-to-face farewell to her students and to her many friends on the school staff. This newsletter is scant compensation for that loss. However, we have agreed that we will have a proper celebratory knees-up when the rules regarding social distancing allow us to and I am sure that we will be able to create an opportunity for students to say their farewells too.

So, to conclude, not only have our students had to deal with the strange and disorientating impact of the lockdown and working from home but they will return to school in September without seeing some of the trusted teachers that I have become used to. There will be several new faces that they do not know and will have to get used to, although I am very confident about the calibre and ability of the new staff that we have appointed. The process of re-acclimatisation to school life will be a challenge in itself and the loss of well-known teachers and non-teaching staff will be part of that adjustment that will need to be made. I do not take this lightly but I do believe that if we all approach this challenge as a cohesive community of staff, students and parents/carers then we can overcome it and move forward as a school in ways that may even improve upon previous ways of working.

I will explain how things will work for the autumn term next year (at least) in the second newsletter that I will send you later in the week.

Now it is over to the staff for their personal farewell messages...

Gary Hartly, Headteacher



Michelle Thwaites is retiring after 31 years teaching at KSGS

When I was appointed as a Science teacher at KSGS back in 1989, I told my parents it would be here for 'just a couple of years'. Thirty-one years later, I am finally about to leave. I had previously taught for 2 years in Berkshire and still didn't know if it was the right job for me, or if I was any good at it. When I arrived in Kirkby Stephen, I quickly made friends with the staff, the students were wonderful, I loved the area, my confidence grew and it felt like home. I have had some amazing opportunities whilst here, far too numerous to mention and have made lifelong friends, also too many to mention and many happy memories. In the early days, whilst still Miss Barnes, these included the many year 9 and cycling residentials, kayaking trips, whole school activities, such as sponsored walks (with my whole form dressed as a giant caterpillar on one occasion), swimming galas, sports days and charity weeks, as they were back then. I even discovered some musical talent (thanks to my husband-to-be) and played bass guitar in our AC/DC tribute band performing for the whole school one very memorable afternoon and later in our staff band, Cliff Rescue and the Helicopters. We even organised a whole school charity festival, Skive Aid! One of the highlights was playing on stage with our

then headmaster, the late Peter Hawksworth, on lead guitar. I am a keen amateur photographer and took many of the images of school productions and sports days that can be seen around the school.

In 1992, I married my soulmate and former lab technician, Peter Thwaites who had recently left and trained as a D&T teacher, so that was that! Our twins Rachel and William were born in 1994, the two-year window had passed and I had 'settled down'. My parents moved up to Winton from my home town Bolton, and I could no longer escape.

The science department continued to evolve and I went on to be second in department, followed by head of department for the last 17 years. My science department colleagues are excellent teachers, loyal friends and great fun to be around. I was a governor on two separate occasions, have worked for 6 different headteachers and taught over 2000 different children! Highlights have included the many yr10 London Trips organised with my good friend Suzie Wealleans, three Geneva trips to CERN to visit the Large Hadron Collider with our 6th form and playing the saxophone in the band for many Bloody Bones productions, including The Threepenny Opera, West Side Story, Our House and Footloose. The opportunities for our students then were amazing and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to teach my own children and that they could be involved in school life, at such a vibrant and special time.

Although I had been involved in many residential activities and trips, they were always in the UK and were invariably cold and wet. So, when a unique opportunity to travel to Europe arose, to support the wonderful Kevin Gough on an Erasmus+ project developing 3D printing in STEM subjects, I jumped at the chance and had the plane tickets booked to Spain that same day, before he could change his mind! What followed was an amazing and life changing experience, involving travel to Italy, Crete, Poland and Spain to work with fellow teachers of STEM subjects, developing teaching materials. I made good friends across Europe and discovered a wanderlust that I never knew existed. This has kept me going these last few years through some difficult times, both personally and professionally and I plan on travelling more widely once retired, along with spending more time with my friends and family.

When my good friend Janette McWhirter finally retired, leaving me as the 'longest serving member of staff' and my wonderful lab technician June Codd left 2 years ago, I began to think about retiring too, so I decided to go part-time in 2019, sharing the subject leader role with the equally wonderful Claire Slack. Despite still loving the teaching aspect of my job, I realised that I was more exhausted and disillusioned with the way the profession had changed and it was time to go.

The decision to leave has been a difficult one, especially as I have the most wonderful department, form and teaching groups, but the past few months of closure have only confirmed that it is the right decision for the good of my health. The staff at the school are tremendously committed and hard-working and the staffroom atmosphere is warm and friendly; this is a unique school and I have always felt proud to work here. The students, however, are something else! They are the reason I have continued to work here for 29 years too long and they are what makes this school so special.

So, it is with a heavy heart, but an optimistic outlook that I hang up my lab coat and say goodbye. I hope that KSGS continues to thrive and provide such wonderful education in the Upper Eden Valley and I look forward to meeting up with my friends and colleagues to celebrate when things finally return to normal and hearing about the future successes of our students.



Sue Bennett is retiring after teaching at KSGS for 11 years

Upon joining Kirkby Stephen Grammar School, January 2009, I was instantly made welcome by students and colleagues, amongst whom I have made many lifelong friends.

The experience of working with many of the students at KSGS, as a teacher, form tutor and SENCO, has been a privilege and a pleasure. I was proud to take an active part in extra-curricular activities, including, Mike's after school cycle group, Keswick Residential, Y10 London Trip, Y11 and Y13 Proms, Chez Republic and South African student and teacher exchange trips, the KS Rotary Challenge, visits to Stobart's, Out of Eden and Lyon Equipment, house trips to Light Water Valley, theatre and cinema performances and a fantastic student cycle trip to the Hebrides... to name but a few! All of these experiences

presented the opportunity to know students as individuals in their own right and we built many fond and fun memories, far too many to possibly list individually. One of the many benefits of working in a local rural school is that you get to meet past and present students around and about the local area and have the opportunity to laugh about shared experiences and chat about their many achievements. Without sounding too clichéd I must express how honoured I am to have been able to spend time in the lives of so many fabulous young people and supportive colleagues at KSGS. However, it's time for me to move on to the next phase of my life and wish KSGS staff and students, past and present, much continued success. Sue Bennett.



Laura Roberts is retiring after 26 years teaching at KSGS

I came to Kirkby Stephen Grammar School as Head of English in September 1994, having worked as an English teacher, second in department and Head of Year in Hull for five years.

I spent my time at K.S.G.S. until Christmas 2001-2 trying to instill a love of literature and increase English take-up at A Level. Although I always enjoyed my subject during this time and loved being in Kirkby Stephen, I realized I had made a hideous mistake trying to run a department – I just wasn't interested in the box-ticking and OFSTED-pleasing that accompanies a Head of Department role and, because everyone else in my department had other roles of responsibility elsewhere in the school, there was no option to step down to a classroom teacher role and remain at K.S.G.S. I had to leave.

I got a job as teacher of English at Bowland School near Clitheroe in Lancashire starting in January 2002.

After only three years I realized I had made a second hideous mistake by leaving Kirkby Stephen. I missed it too much; the scenery and the people, though very nice in Lancashire, just weren't the same.

I was lucky enough to get a second chance at K.S.G.S. A part-time vacancy needed filling not long after I 'came home' to Kirkby, in 2005. In September 2006, after covering for staff on supply intermittently for a year, I was successful in being appointed to the part-time post. Since then, I have spent another 14 years working in the school I love; working with colleagues I love, teaching students I love.

Highlights? The years working as 'The Dream Team' with Mrs Bargh (I think some of you will still remember her) and Ms Newstead. What laughs!!!

My great friendships with SO MANY wonderful staff – I daren't list them for fear I miss someone and upset them, but they know who they are!

Mostly, and most genuinely: the students – you lot. You have made my time (often stressful and fraught with external pressures) a joy.

I still hate box-ticking and OFSTED-pleasing and, as I've got older, I've just quietly and resolutely refused to do it – and Mr Cottrell and various Head teachers have aged considerably trying (and failing) to persuade me I must!

My passion for poetry and Shakespeare – especially 'Macbeth' – are still as strong as ever and I will miss teaching them and I will miss you and my laughs with friends on the staff, but the recent death of my lovely Dad has helped me re-evaluate my life. I have decided I need to do other things. I can only hope this is not hideous mistake number 3! I am scared but fingers crossed! If I bump into you in town please remind me of your name and say hello. 22 years of students between 1994 and the present day means I can't always immediately recall names, but I do love to hear how past students are getting on.

Finally, as I say farewell and thank you all, I remind myself of a line from the children's author, Dr Seuss, and I commend it to you for your future adventures:

"You're off to great places, today is your day.

Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way."

Laura Roberts.



Ian Jefferson moves onto a new role in the IT world

In April 2009 I started at KSGS, which was a big thing for me. For the previous two and a half years I had worked as a technician in a much larger school and had really enjoyed it, but I was ready for a new challenge and was lucky enough to get the chance to do that here at KSGS.

It has been an interesting challenge and many of you probably won't realise the number of things that my job involves. It includes helping the many people who have forgotten their passwords, both staff and students (either after a weekend, a holiday or 5 minutes since I last changed it, time doesn't seem to matter), replacing the "lost" mouse that just ran away, replacing a printer cartridge or answering a question on a program I may or may not have used before moving through to deploying updates, ensuring backups are done, replacing or repairing servers, replacing all the PC's in an IT room (or 2),

or switching broadband providers and making sure everything that school depends on continues to work. There's many other things that I am involved in such as cashless catering, secure doors, CCTV, various admin programs, photocopiers and phones to name a few along with the many projects and ideas other people come up with as a good thing to do.

It wasn't the easiest of starts, which has obviously stuck in my memory, as on my first day at KSGS I arrived and was talking in reception when a member of staff came up to me and asked, "Are you the new IT man?" When I replied to say I was, the next question was "Do you know the internet isn't working?" and so my first day began with several phone calls and a two hour wait for the internet connection to be restored! We have moved on from that and thankfully the internet not working is rarely the case anymore. Thankfully the whole IT system and I came to an understanding relatively quickly and it (normally) does what I tell it to. If you believe some people, problems magically disappear if I just turn up and look at them!

I've also had some fantastic opportunities while I've been here, such as being able to go to South Africa with Ms Knight, Mrs Bennett and John Cooper. In 2016 we also did an international skype lesson with one of the schools in South Africa we went to as part of "The World's Largest Lesson", sadly this didn't require me to return to South Africa though. What might be a surprise to some (or most) of you is that one of the things I enjoy each year is sports day – while I manage the database that produces the recording sheets and logs the results, it's the only day of the year that I get to legitimately work outside (with laptop and printer of course) and enjoy the day with the rest of the school.

I'm hoping, as I write this, that my last day won't finish in quite the same way as my first began. It's been great working at KSGS with both the staff and students, especially those staff who I work closely with (and you know who you are) however, things change and time passes and after 11 years it's now the time for me to take on a new challenge. So with that I wish you all the best for the future in whatever you decide to do and as a final parting gift, always remember the first question you should ask yourself for any problem to do with IT (because it is the first thing you will be asked) – have you tried turning it off and on again? Ian Jefferson

Welcome to our new staff



Hello.. I am Mrs Conway and I will be joining Kirkby Stephen Grammar School in September as the subject leader for Science. I have been a teacher for 6 years at Dallam School. Having previously worked in other professions I can honestly say that teaching is the best job I have ever done. I enjoy the interaction and variation; no two days are ever the same. I am enthusiastic when it comes to science and I can't wait to get you excited about science too. I am originally from Blackburn but have spent most of my adult life living in and around Carnforth. In my free time I can often be found carrying out some DIY task as I am currently renovating my home. I also love spending time with my family going on long walks.

Hello, my name is Mr. Robert Palin, and I am excited to be joining KSGS from September, 2020 as your new Business Studies Teacher. Aside from having a passion for teaching, I also enjoy coaching football, running and playing tennis. Some of you may already know me as I live locally in Kirkby Stephen. See you in September! Enjoy your summer!



Hello, my name is Oli Luke I was welcomed into a fantastic PE department working with Mrs Paul and Mr Bromfield. They have both helped me find my feet as much as possible and know how difficult it can be entering a school half way through the year. The pupils have been a fantastic help and slowly adapting to the way I teach, as well as answering my many questions. My second term in school has been teaching in the school hubs and providing remote learning. All staff have been welcoming and I am extremely happy in my new post.

Hello. My name is Mrs Adams and it gives me great pleasure to introduce myself as your new food technology teacher. I have many years teaching experience, working across all areas of technology, but with a particular passion for food. I'm looking forward to meeting you all in September as we create and cook our way through the new school year.

Fun facts: I'm married to an identical twin, I have an eleven year old daughter and a cavapoo called Agnes.



"Hi everyone! I'm Marti - I'm a big technology and environmental geek. I love exploring the outdoors with my wife and daughter, and like nothing more than canoeing and camping in my spare time. I'm here for all your ICT needs and I'm happy to help however I can. Enjoy the summer and I look forward to seeing you all in September!" Marti Barker

A few lines about me and my years.

I grew up and went to school in Warwickshire which set me on the first steps of a long held dream of flying with the RAF which led to a Forestry degree which somehow led to a career in engineering and commercial vehicles which then gave way to a period as a picture framer, printer and jigsaw maker. If I ever had chance to draw breath, sport, the great outdoors and two children have filled my time. Martin Richter DT



Mr Gough wearing one of the many face masks he has made using the 3D printer for the NHS

Snap shots from the Summer Term



Students sent Mrs Park photos of their mouth watering cakes and were sent electronic reward postcards



Students were set the challenge to grow flowers and vegetables



Rowen Day helping to deliver food for the Oaklea Trust in Appleby



Border TV visit Border TV visited school on Monday the 15th June. Some of our students along with the Head teacher were interviewed and asked about the challenges of getting the school ready to accommodate staff and students. Students explained a little about life during lockdown. All expressed how happy and safe they felt to be back in the classroom.

Year 11 enjoyed their last afternoon together at a hurriedly arranged shirt signing and fun afternoon. We wish them all well in their chosen future and look forward to seeing many of them in September



Acts of Kindness The wonderful Mrs Park of KSGS recently organised a Fantasy Horse racing event which was screened on Facebook over a series of nights. Individuals and organisations sponsored races at £50.00 each and along with an auction an amazing amount of £3500.00 was raised. This is to be split between NHS Charities Together and to provide face masks for staff working at the Nightingale Hospital in London.



South Africa Sports Exchange Programme

Since 2002 The Eden Valley Sports Partnership, Upper Eden RUFC and Kirkby Stephen Grammar School have been partners within the South Africa Sports Exchange Programme, sponsored by the South African Rugby Union and The British Council.

The programme sponsors young South Africans from the traditionally disadvantaged areas (townships, both urban and rural) to visit the UK. Since 2002 Eden has hosted some 60 young South Africans, predominately around Kirkby Stephen and Tebay. When here they have been involved with visiting and coaching sport within schools affiliated to EVSP. To date some 30 primary and 3 secondary schools have received regular visits and coaching sessions, its estimated some 2000 Eden youngsters have been involved. In addition coaching at both Junior and Senior level within Upper Eden rugby club has spread their impact further.

The vision and long term support of both Mrs Becky Wolstenholme, Manager EVSP and Upper Eden RUFC has been instrumental in maintaining the programme.

Thanks to all those who have hosted these youngsters within the Eden community, which has allowed interaction at all ages. Leaving a lasting legacy and the power of social media has meant long lasting friendships have both remained and flourished.

Please contact Becky Wolstenholme EVSP manager 017683 74 076 if anyone would like more details about the programme and future plans or if you are interested in supporting any future programmes please do contact us.



**Eden Valley
Sports Partnership**



Local Business support for GCSE Business Studies students

Local business Lyon Equipment recently invited GCSE Business Studies students from year's 10 and 11 to visit their premises. Jonathan Capper (MD) and Debra Robinson (HR) provided a guided tour of the premises during which they explained each area of the business and how it operates. For example: Research and Development, Production, Procurement, Marketing, Sales, Distribution and Customer Services. This visit enabled the students to link their theoretical studies with actual working practices. Students participated fully in the tour and took every opportunity to ask questions and extend their knowledge. I would like to thank Jonathan and Debra for giving up their

time to organise and deliver a fantastic visit and for providing the students with such an invaluable opportunity, Mrs Dargue (HLTA) for supporting me on the trip and the students for their exemplary behaviour, I was very proud to accompany them and they were a credit to themselves and the school. Lyon have also hosted similar visits for A Level Business Studies Students.

I would also like to thank Out of Eden who have always been willing to provide support to Business Studies and ICT students. For example, site visits, examples of marketing campaigns, completion of student questionnaires and most recently a visit to KSGS by procurement manager, Charlotte Bell. Charlotte was willing to time her visit so it coincided with the student's study of procurement, stock management and distribution. She presented an overview of Out of Eden, the business, and her role as procurement manager. Students were able to ask Charlotte questions which offered them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and apply real life context to their studies.

In a small rural area these types of extra-curricular opportunities for the students of KSGS rely heavily on the continued support of local businesses who thank fully always come up with the goods!

Sue Bennett

