



12th December 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian

“One Christmas was so much like another, in those years that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.....”

I always read Dylan Thomas at Christmas and often feel that the mythical town at Llareggub has similarities with the real school that is Abbotsholme.

Abbotsholme is about people, and about people who live, work, laugh and cry, succeed and fail. Abbotsholme is an education for life where every moment does, indeed, matter. At Abbotsholme however, each year and each Christmas is not “much like another”. Every year is different, this year being no exception.

I write on the occasion of my eleventh Christmas at Abbotsholme, knowing that the death of Nelson Mandela will mark this particular Christmas in the memory of many all over the world. There is an interesting account by his biographer, John Carlin, in the Sunday Times this week, posing the question, “What is it that made Nelson Mandela so irresistible?” Carlin said that there were three things. Firstly, his integrity: what you saw was what you got. Secondly, his huge personal generosity, as he treated everyone with respect and with humility. Thirdly, and most importantly, he had the courage to kill apartheid with kindness.

The qualities of honesty, courage, humility, respect and integrity underpin our Abbotsholme Behavioural Charter, and I do believe that this great world leader - with whom we feel a direct, personal link as he was a Patron of Round Square - would have approved of our small Derbyshire school.

This year, we have tried a new timetable which, in the main, suits both pupils and teachers. The early morning academic start certainly makes for a focussed beginning to the day. Good shepherds start early. We have also reintroduced academic scholarships as, at Abbotsholme, we are very proud of individual academic achievement. This has also been the season of updating our policies, and I am very grateful to the policy elves for their diligence in this vital area. I would invite you to look at all of the policies on the website, particularly the Safeguarding Policy.

The Prep School has flourished under Margaret Shermer, and it was with real sadness that I received the news that she has decided to retire at the end of Summer Term 2014. There will be more to say about Margaret’s achievements in due course, but I am delighted to inform you that we have appointed Swithun Sewill to replace her as Head of the Prep School, with effect from 1st September 2014. Four worthy applicants were selected for interview from a field of twenty five, and of the four interviewed, Swithun stood out as an Abbotsholmian. He has had a great deal of experience in a similar role, having been Head of Juniors at Castle Court Prep School in Dorset for eleven years, and he is now in his fifth year of leading the Prep at St. Bees School in Cumbria, where he also teaches a class of Year 5 and Year 6 children. His wife, Clare, and their two teenage daughters will be joining him in this new chapter of their lives, and I am sure that you will join me and the Prep School staff in congratulating Swithun on his appointment, and welcoming him as the new Head of the Prep School.

There are two further pieces of good news that I would like to share with you, firstly that the Pre-School will soon officially become part of the Abbotsholme family, and secondly that I am very pleased with the relationship that we are building with SvenskaHandelsbanken, our new bank. We are, I am proud to say, in a very healthy financial position.

On 1st October, we started our 125th Anniversary celebrations, and many exciting events have been planned for 2014. Details of these will be published in due course, and for more information, visit: <http://www.abbotsholme.co.uk/125-Events>. As always, you are most welcome to attend these events.

The Turf Appeal that runs parallel to the celebrations has made a steady start, particularly the sale of the Anniversary Trees. Only a few of these remain, so if you would like to make sure of yours, do contact Hannah Akers on hannah.akers@abbotsholme.co.uk.

Christmas is a family time, and I wish you and yours a splendid festive season. I hope, too, that it snows in Derbyshire as it did in Thomas's Wales where "..... it was always snowing at Christmas in my memory...." If you have time this holiday, I would encourage you to read "A Child's Christmas in Wales". It is better than The X Factor, I guarantee!

In the meantime, Heather, Meg and I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

<http://www.eco2greetings.com/E-card/5733c3637e1b4ebb9b3af5af4ff1f254.html>

Glad Day, Love and Duty.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Fairclough
Headmaster

