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July 2025

Dear Belper Families,

Belper School – End of Year Newsletter

As we come to the end of another academic year, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the past year - and what a year it has been!

While our classrooms have been full of learning, progress and challenge, so much of what makes Belper special happens outside the classroom. Our students have thrown themselves into an incredible range of extracurricular activities – clubs, trips, performances, sports fixtures, competitions, fundraising, leadership roles, and more. We are proud to be a school where learning doesn't stop at the classroom door and where students are encouraged to discover new passions, grow in confidence and build character every step of the way.

This year we've also been recognised externally for the inclusive, vibrant community we're building together. We were proud to receive the SEND Inclusion Award and to become a Designated Music Hub, reflecting the opportunities we work hard to offer all our students.

But undoubtedly, one of the biggest moments of the year was our Ofsted inspection. While I may be a little biased, it was genuinely one of the most positive and uplifting reports I've read. Inspectors spoke of the "positive buzz of learning" across school and commented that students are "extremely proud and pleased to Be Belper" – a line that really captures what we're about. Staff were described as "fierce advocates for pupils with SEND", and students told inspectors they feel "extremely well supported and cared for". These words reflect the daily reality of school life here – the warmth, ambition, and commitment shared by everyone in our community.

To all our Belper families – thank you. Your support this year, especially in my first year as Headteacher, has been hugely valued. From attending events and parents' evenings to filling in the Ofsted survey and sending kind messages or emails – your encouragement has made a real difference. In a busy school, those moments of support never go unnoticed and mean more than you might realise.

I would also like to take a moment to thank our brilliant staff team, who never fail to give their best. Whether they're staying late to run clubs, supporting students one-to-one, or giving up evenings, weekends or their well-earned holiday time for trips and events, their energy and care shine through in everything they do. Their belief in our students is unwavering, and they genuinely make a lasting difference to our students.

This year has been packed with enrichment and opportunity – more than I could ever list – but here are just a few highlights:

- Our largest-ever Duke of Edinburgh intake, with over 100 students starting the Bronze award, alongside those continuing at Silver and Gold.
- Reaching the national finals in Young Enterprise – an amazing achievement.
- A packed PE calendar, including a thriving Sports Leader programme and the return of Belper Sports Day – only partly interrupted by the rain!
- A wide range of trips – from local visits to Cromford Mill to international residentials, including our exchange with Toyota City in Japan.
- Numerous theatre trips, reward visits, and our memory-making end-of-year celebration trips.

Anyone who's ever organised a school trip knows it takes hours of planning, careful coordination and usually a few sleepless nights – so my sincere thanks to all the staff who have made these moments possible. As Ofsted said, "these important opportunities significantly enrich pupils' learning" – and they absolutely do.

As we wrap up the year, we also say goodbye to some valued members of staff:

- Becky Lenihan, Midday Supervisor and a member of our cleaning team.
- Andy Stewart, Teaching Assistant.
- Rachael Brown, who has led our safeguarding team with heart and professionalism for nine years, offering vital support to students and families alike.
- Jason Middleton, English teacher who now moves on to new opportunities.
- Emily Bathie, Criminology teacher now heading off to pursue a PhD – a huge congratulations!
- Freya Fowles, English and Criminology teacher and Aspirations Lead, who moves on to train the next generation of teachers at York University.
- Alan Hadwin, History teacher, who also leaves us this summer.
- Emma Brumby, Geography teacher of 20 years and a part of the furniture here at Belper School.

We're also saying farewell to three long-standing staff members who are retiring after an incredible 79 years of combined service:

- Mark Kazmierczak-Williams, Assistant Head and teacher of Business and Computing, retires after 21 years of teaching and leadership here at Belper School.
- Sandra Jackson, our Catering Manager, who has kept students and staff well-fed and smiling for 27 years.
- Linda Thomas, Head of Languages and currently our longest-serving teacher, retires after 31 years of shaping language learning at Belper.

Between them, they have supported tens of thousands of young people, and each will leave behind a legacy that will be remembered with real gratitude. We will miss them tremendously and wish them all the very best for their next chapters.

And finally – to our wonderful students: thank you. You make us laugh, challenge us to think differently, surprise us, and make us proud every single day. As Ofsted said, you are “extremely proud and pleased to Be Belper” – and we are every bit as proud of you. You’ve lived out our Be Belper values this year with maturity, positivity and determination.

We’re already looking forward to another fantastic year in September. But for now, I hope you all enjoy a very well-earned, safe and happy summer break.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "M Warden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

Matilde Warden
Headteacher

