A blue and yellow shield with birds and keys

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Head Monitor’s Speech

Exhibition 2024

Josephine Blake James

As this weekend begins, the year at Ampleforth is brought to a close. Over my time at Ampleforth, I have seen a great positive change, enhanced and strengthened considerably since September by our amazing team of monitors. Seamus and I wouldn’t have been able to make it even halfway through this year without so much help and support. We are so grateful to have worked alongside such dedicated people, working in groups to target different areas within school life in which we can make improvements. Having students work alongside teachers has been incredibly important to encouraging excellence within the school, ensuring every student is able to express needs and every member of staff is able to support them.

Seven years in the valley has meant bearing witness to a lot of turbulence. Although at times the school has struggled, our success in passing seven inspections marks the beginning of a new era. The school continues to change positively, growing into an environment outstandingly better than any other I have been a part of in my time here. A huge constant in this period of growth has been our diligent parents. As a school, we are so grateful to you for standing by us and putting your trust in the intrinsic values and integrity of our Benedictine community; without you, the valley would not possess the strong and unshakable spirit it is loved for.

As we break away from old traditions, we allow ourselves room to build our own. The Benedictine values remain at the heart of the school, but as we look towards the future these manifest themselves more and more in the ways St. Benedict intended them to, respect not only for seniors, but between each and every person, driven by integrity and a passion to love thy neighbour as thyself.

Our strength as a school is founded in our relationships with one another, building an environment which strives for academic excellence, confidence and success. The best persuasion I can offer to those who doubt our school is to ask them to come and visit the valley, to see students not only pursuing and building from their gifts but sharing them too.

Initially, when I was told that the theme of this year’s exhibition was “music”, I began brainstorming high-brow classical pieces I could attempt to name drop in this speech. However, when reflecting on what I know about the school, what came to mind was the half-sung, half-shouted cheers at rugby matches, dorm room karaoke, and the “thanks be to god” response at the end of mass. What reaches me the most is the version of the word “musical” created by students, and how this music brings Ampleforth to life.