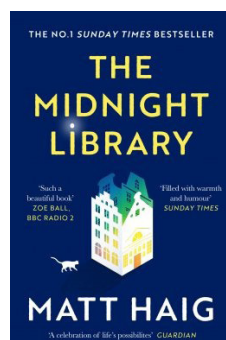




Well, the longest term is over and soon the days will start to get longer again too! This year, the winter solstice will fall on a Tuesday, December 21 (the shortest day). By January 18 an extra hour of daylight will come, and every four weeks thereafter, an hour or so of sunshine should lighten the day up. After this, the days will continue to get brighter until the summer solstice on June 21, 2021.

Before I begin to re-cap the term just past, I want to invite you all to share with me your favourite book. I was never much of a reader when I was at school but I have since found a love of books and I want to share with you my latest read that I finished last night, (having found a little more time after all the boys had left the house!). The Midnight Library by Matt Haig is a clever reflection on life and its twists and turns, but ultimately gave the reader an optimism that there are no such things as regrets – to live in the moment and learn to appreciate all that we have, not what we could have had. I have copied two of my favourite quotes. I hope that I can also make a collection of quotes to inspire us all along the corridors of the boarding house. Again, if you would be able to share with me your favourite quotes, I will endeavour to add these to the walls for the Spring term return.



A friend of mine, Sophy Layzell, whom is now a published author of young people's fiction, will be our first external speaker on the 11th of January. I am sure she will inspire us all with her talk about 'Overcoming Adversity' and enable us all to consider the term ahead with optimism in our pursuits, exams, activities, friendships and more. Here is a little more about Sophy and her story - <https://www.sophylayzell.com/about>. If there are any parents or guardians who would like to attend Sophy's talk, which will take place in the Queen's Hall on the 11th January at 7pm, you would be most welcome. Please email me and I will arrange to reserve you a seat.



We have enjoyed many more off-site activities this term. My favourite was Paintballing – an activity that I have never had the opportunity to try before. I'd underestimated just how much adrenaline I would need but equally I enjoyed the excitement of making a hit!

I was not as brave as most though, and I realise that I am not cut out for this team game (plus it does hurt!). Other team games have taken place frequently throughout the weekends and the return of muddy boots and games kits and the chat in the evening recovering from the matches has been lovely to hear. I've also managed to watch a couple of Basketball matches, having had a match almost every Wednesday. I was so pleased that the final match secured a close win for our team against a tough opponent. Well done to all the boys (all boarders in School House!) who have been committed to these matches. Another sporting highlight had to be the very recent School House football match that was so close it had to be decided on penalties, with the Juniors slotting the winner. The Senior team are very keen for a re-match so this will be arranged during the Spring term and if won by the Seniors, a Final will take place in the Summer term! Following the match we had a Christmas party and it was lovely to invite the girls over from Hutton House to share in the fun and festivities.

We have also managed to attend the local Longrun Meadow ParkRun with our keen runners on four of this half terms' Saturday mornings. Everyone who has worked hard over the 5km has been rewarded with much improved times and a confidence to run well in the House Cross-Country event. Well done Franky Gediking (Y11) for clearly winning the senior race.



As Christmas has approached the Shrek production got us all into the Pantomime Season. I was astounded by the professionalism of the cast and scenery. How lucky we are to have such entertainers amongst us and the facility to host such a professional show.



Although our formal Christmas meal was postponed due to illness, it was great to see the 6th Formers dressed up so smartly ready for their Christmas Ball. Watching (and hearing!) the boys return back up the stairs singing and smiling was one of my highlights of the term.

We have held a few House 'Clothes Auctions' this term and the proceeds have been used to fund Christmas decorations for the House. The boys then did a wonderful job of decorating the communal spaces. The lights up the banisters and the luggage labels hung on them with their messages which detail what the boys feel grateful for, have added to the warmth of Christmas and reminded us about the meaning of this special holiday. The house 'Secret Santa' was also well received by most. Lots of very funny gifts were shared! We have also had 11 birthdays this month – by far the busiest birthday month of the year! Birthday cakes are very welcome to be ordered and received but I must please remind you that we are a 'Nut Free' school and we cannot share cakes that contain nuts.

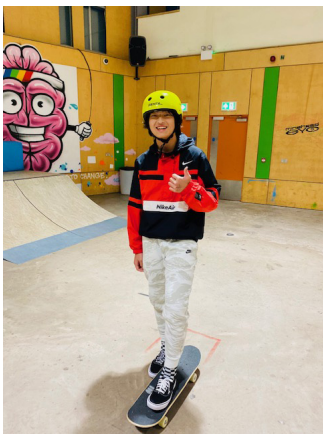
Sadly we have had to say goodbye to two exchange students who have contributed so much to our community. Adam Ducros Bourdens (Y10) and Alex Imaz Vinas (Y12) – you have both made such tremendous progress during your time with us and although we were sad to see you leave, we wish you all the best with your future studies and hope that you will keep in contact with your new friends here.

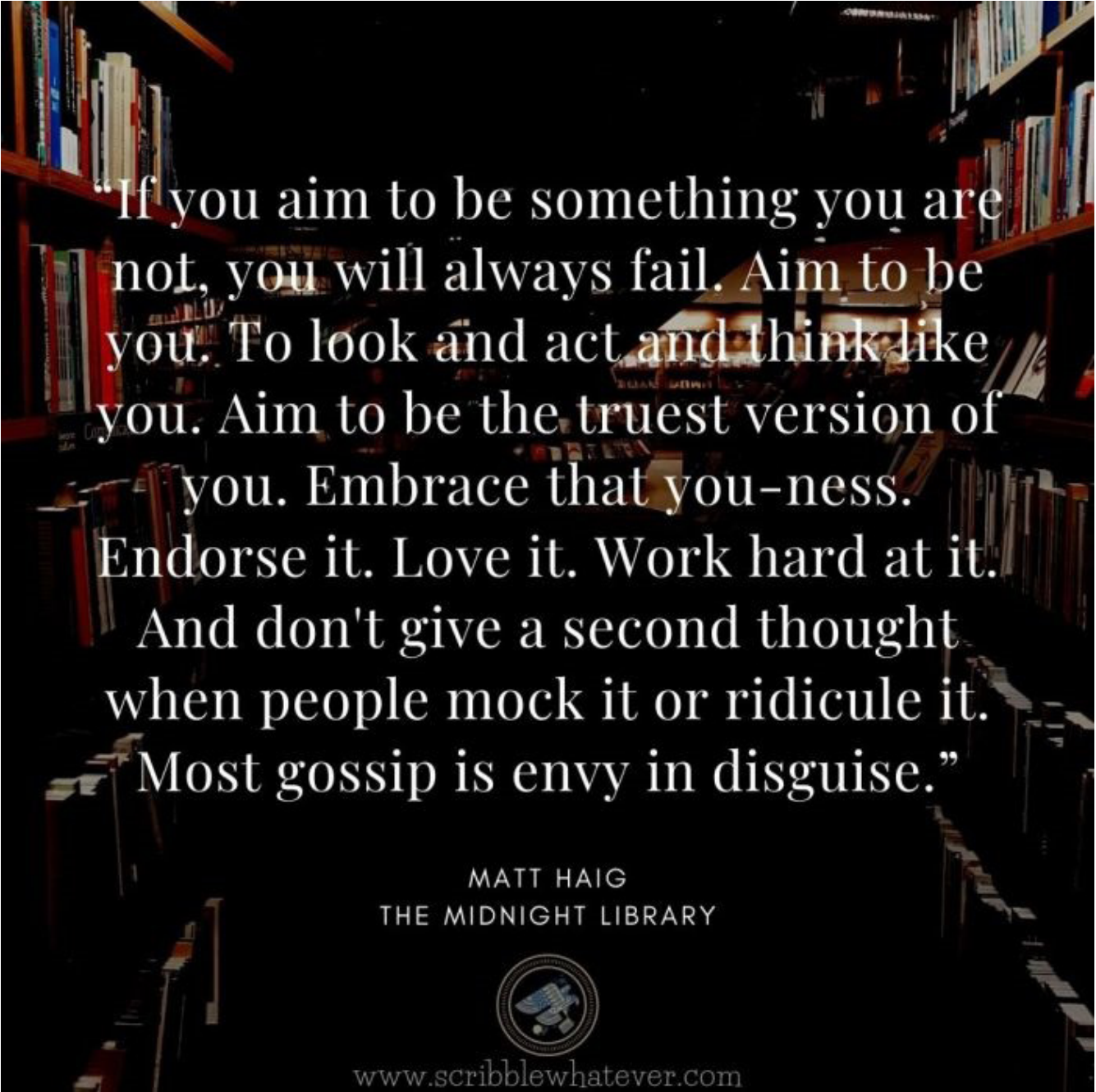
It only remains for me to say, I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and New Year holiday wherever you will be and I very much look forward to welcoming you back in 2022!

Mrs Cooling









“If you aim to be something you are not, you will always fail. Aim to be you. To look and act and think like you. Aim to be the truest version of you. Embrace that you-ness. Endorse it. Love it. Work hard at it. And don't give a second thought when people mock it or ridicule it. Most gossip is envy in disguise.”

MATT HAIG
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MERRY CHRISTMAS!