

# THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils | HSD's Newsletter: Issue 140

Photo - Ruby McNair

Happy new year! We're back again. Hopefully everyone had an enjoyable time over the holidays. Welcome back to another year at Dundee High School™. And goodbye to all those in form 5 and 6 absent over the next fortnight for study and prelims. Good luck to you all, though remember not to work yourselves too hard. Pressure may make diamonds but it cracks just about everything else. And cracking would not be a good way to start the year. Ah well, it can't all be bad. Let's see what's in the news.

...crap

CRAP!

while the world's still here, enjoy the edition

– Editor Charlie

## Your New Year's Resolutions

Compiled by Haoqi Liu & Rosie O'Ready

It's the new year, which makes this time perfect to make one good change for yourself.

We asked you what your new year's resolutions are, and here they are!

Good luck to everyone with achieving them!

Cut out fizzy drinks as much as possible; and if I can, stop drinking them at all.

My New Year's resolution is to get a New Year's resolution

Study harder for exams

Be more focused when studying

Bench 140kg by the end of the year

Read more, and not in class

Go to the gym more

Go on my phone less and read more

Be more grateful, so to do this I am going to write down in a notebook one thing I am grateful for every day

Do creative activities such as pottery every Monday night

Study more; talk more to friends outside of school

Be kinder to my brother

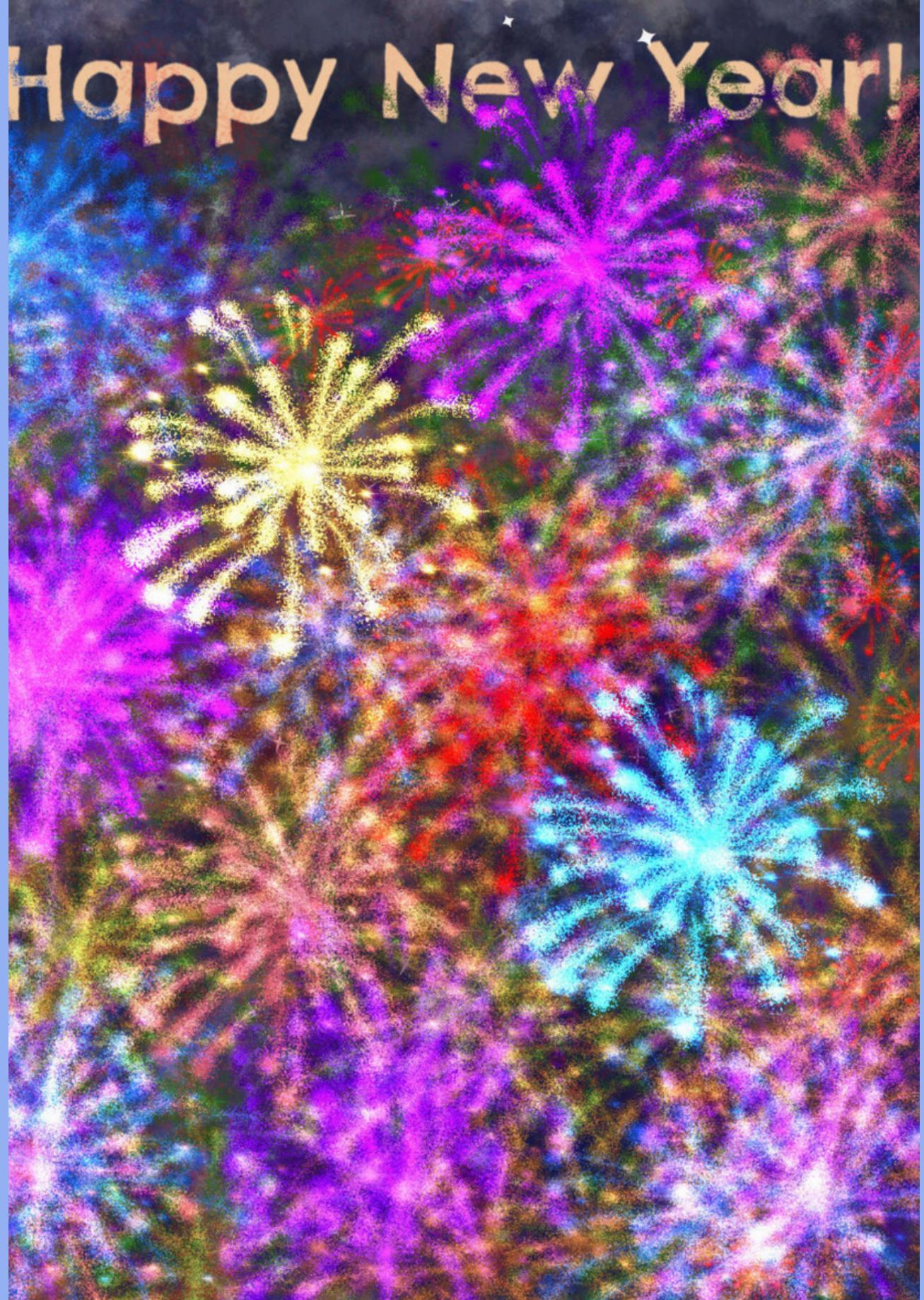
To be nicer/less defensive to people

Avoid overspending at the school catering facilities

Do better in school

# Art for the new year!

Ilinca Pasare



# Those in the street

Al Forbes

I don't feel like an intro, so let's get into it.

During the holidays, I spent most of my time alone. I only spoke more than two sentences to three people over the festive period. I went out, looked around, nothing much. But I notice things I feel others don't. Maybe people don't want to see them, or maybe they don't know how to deal with them. What is "them"? It's a lot.

Picture me walking around town, dressed in all black, hood up, hands in pockets, probably not the happiest face. I hate talking to strangers. I avoid interacting with people I don't know whenever I can. Yet when I saw a disabled person in a wheelchair stuck outside Starbucks, unable to get in, I knew I had to help.

Not for a reward. Not for praise. Not to be filmed and labelled a 'good person' online. I helped because out of the forty people who had already passed them, many of whom looked directly at them, nobody had stopped. I realised I had to be that person. I walked over and held the door open. I smiled at the woman in the wheelchair as she used the lever to push herself inside. Once she was through the door, I walked away without looking back, ignoring the confused stares of customers wondering why a teenager had bothered.

I've opened doors for people who can't a fair few times. I've tried, in small ways, to make someone's day easier. I didn't wait for a thank you or ask for anything in return. I didn't leave them helpless or take advantage of them. My reward was already there, the look on someone's face when kindness is felt and hope is given.

But I'm not always able to help.

Towards the end of the holidays, I was sitting on a bus, looking out the window into the bus station as we waited to leave. At the front sat our driver and another driver getting a lift to a different station. From the back of the bus, I saw a driver bend down to check on a woman slumped unconscious against a wall.

My driver joked that it looked like they were kissing. But I knew better. From books, documentaries, and medical dramas, I knew it might not just be an overdose. She could have been having a stroke, a heart attack, or suffering from extreme hypothermia.

I ran to the front as the bus began reversing, but the driver told me to sit down and wait for the next stop. I was losing my footing and couldn't win. I sat back down, telling myself she would be okay.

Two hours later, I returned to the bus station. The woman was still there.

I wanted to help, but I couldn't. I was alone, and the vulnerability of that situation became clear. There was a real chance I could be hurt or overpowered. I knew I could help, but I also knew I was vulnerable.

The point of these stories isn't that I blame you. I don't. I know you've walked past someone who needed help. I know you've noticed someone struggling and chosen not to stop, for your own safety or simply because you didn't know what to do. I know we are young, and I know that being alone can make you vulnerable in a city that can be dangerous.

But if you can help, please do.

That help doesn't have to be dramatic. It can be opening a door for someone who can't. Checking in on someone who looks unwell. Calling 999 and then leaving so help can arrive.

We are all privileged to have what we have, even if we don't have everything we want or need. And if you can give one person a moment of hope, a reminder that they are seen, you can make more of a difference than you realise. If you are safe in the situation, then make that difference.

### Before You Help: A Quick Check

Follow these rough guidelines if you want to help a stranger. Remember – your wellbeing matters too.

S – Self-preservation. Are you protected from immediate harm from either the person you want to help or by others?

A – Awareness. Is the surrounding environment calm, public, and visible?

F – Feasibility. Could this person hurt you, intentionally or unintentionally?

E – Exit plan. If the situation turns hostile, walk away and get help instead.

Helping others matters, but so does coming home unharmed; safe

## Grantastic Tunes

Mr Murray

Last month, my nan taught me a song that her own grandmother sung to her in the Anderson shelter of WWII.

My nan is 88 and is almost definitely struggling with early stage dementia – she'll frequently come out with some ditty that could be a song lyric from any decade of the past two centuries, OR could simply be something she saw on telly earlier in the day. During our most recent post-dinner game of Scrabble, (she loves Scrabble) of which I was in the lead (she's bad at Scrabble), I made the mistake of hogging the biscuit tray, and she told me off by saying "Don't Have Any More, Mrs Moore".

Now, I do not know anyone by the name of Mrs Moore, I'm neither a woman nor am I married, and I thus had to seek some clarification. Nanny pulled out a wry smile (which makes her looks like a halfway between Yoda and Michael Caine – Sorry, Nan), "Oh it's quite an old song" she said "Yes, my gran used to sing it to us when we spent nights in the Anderson shelter during the War".

Despite myself having grown up on both sides of the Atlantic during the 90s and 00's, my Nan is a Londoner through and through, with the mixed blessing of being born the eldest of five in the working class of 1930's Ealing. In hindsight, my own childhood anxieties about the Y2K bug being a world-ending possibility are dramatically overshadowed by her experience of the very real Blitz at a similar age. And yet...

If you were to ask Nanny (everybody calls her Nanny) about WWII, she describes it much like you might talk about a camping trip that didn't go according to plan – songs and rhymes being sung in the bunker rather than round a campfire, and having bombed-out relatives move in with them instead of rained-out-campers sharing the one good tent.

During my trip down to see her, I found that by googling whatever ditty she'd come out with, followed by the word 'lyrics', we could tap into the dustier parts of her memory; from old music hall numbers I'd never heard before, to covers of jazz standards I'd never heard before, with her recital only solidifying the time honoured tradition of the wrinklieshaving a sing-song.

We're now surrounded by music so constantly; with access to songs from across human history; but rarely does one singular antique song have such an inconsequentially fascinating connotation. This one novelty song, "...Mrs Moore", about a neighbour with too many children, was written exactly 100 years ago. It was sung by Lily Morris, a woman born in the 1880s, and it was already an old song when Nanny first heard it as a little girl during a 1941 bombing raid. 84 and a bit years later, here we are, sitting around an ornate (and decidedly not bomb-proof) dining room table, getting songs rattled off to me that belong in a museum, simply because I nicked too many bourbons.

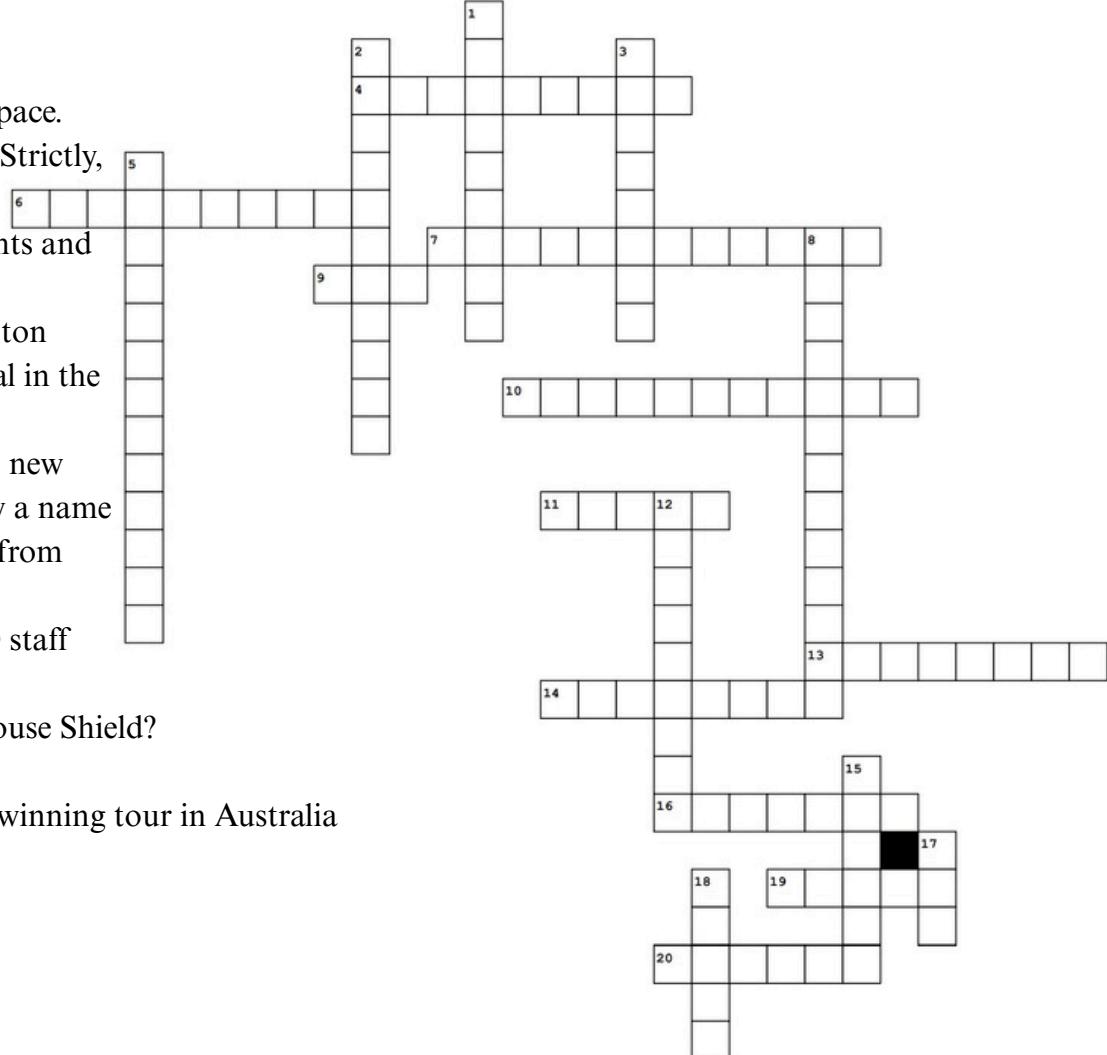
If you search 'Grantastic Tunes' on Spotify or Tidal, you'll find a selection of songs that Nanny needs only prompted with the first line, to recall in full. The playlist certainly kept her entertained on the last long drive from her bungalow in Dover to seeing relatives in Margate – and, hey, it'd maybe sate/energise some of your own elderly relatives too. All this encyclopaedic knowledge and yet she struggles to calculate the difference between double letter and a double word score - Nanny 137, Mom 168, Me 221

# CROSSWORD

Maisey Lafollette

## Down

1. Famous pop star who went to space.
2. Carlos Gu and his partner won Strictly, and her name is?
3. Viral numbers which drive parents and teachers insane.
5. Former HSD pupil Nathan Ogston performed a song from this musical in the Royal Variety.
8. President Trump announced his new worldwide tariffs and gave this day a name saying it freed American industry from unfair trade.
12. Which member of senior HSD staff announced her retirement?
15. Which HSD house won the House Shield?
17. The name of the new Pope is?
18. British rugby team who had a winning tour in Australia



Across

4. Which country has banned social media for under-sixteens?
6. This English novelist celebrated her 250th anniversary.
7. Which English teacher runs The Columns?
9. In 2025, an extra 20% of this was added to private school fees.
10. BBC Sports Personality of the Year.
11. On January 20th he was inaugurated as President of the United States.
13. First winner of The Celebrity Traitors UK.
14. During their concert the infamous kiss-cam couple became an internet sensation.
16. K-pop Demon Hunters was released on which streaming service?
19. Name the Christmas number one pop star.
20. The famous French museum which thieves easily broke into and stole 19th century jewelry was?

# The Venezuela Problem

Jack Mitchell

Last Saturday, the United States launched Operation Absolute Resolve, attacking Venezuela and capturing its President. Nicolás Maduro had led the country since 2013, becoming increasingly dictatorial over the course of his premiership. Both Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores – who was also captured and flown to New York – have been indicted on charges related to ‘narcoterrorism’, and were seen arriving at a New York court to be arraigned on their drug charges days after their arrest.

Maduro has widely been seen as a dictator, mainly due to his dubious election victories and undermining democratic institutions by filling Venezuela’s judiciary and electoral authorities with his allies. His most recent election win was highly contentious and the authenticity of the results heavily questioned by opposition leaders and the international community. Pro-democracy groups in Venezuela have suggested Maduro received less than half of his official vote count, meaning his opponent Edmundo Gonazalez was in fact the real winner. His 2018 victory was also largely seen as illegitimate by many countries, principally the United States.

Maduro and his administration have also been accused of several human rights abuses over many years. Brutal crackdowns on protests using excessive force, mistreatment of detainees and the alleged extrajudicial killings and torture of a number of political opponents by government security forces have all been condemned by organisations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations, and numerous countries – to little avail.

In addition to his democratic destruction and human rights offences, widespread corruption and economic mismanagement in the country have led to a humanitarian crisis in which many Venezuelans have lost access to healthcare, water and electricity.

As a result, many Venezuelans were seen on the streets celebrating Maduro’s removal from power in the days after his capture. In summary, Maduro did a lot of damage to his country and it is in many ways a good thing that he is no longer in charge. However, the way he was removed can’t be described in the same way. This breach of basic international laws by the United States sets a very dangerous precedent, which now makes Trump’s wishes to take control of Greenland even more threatening to the global order. Should he take the territory by force as he has implied, it would surely be the end of NATO as we know it which would create a new divided West, with the Europeans on one side and the United States on the other.

Unlikely though this may be, the fact the President and his allies feel able to willingly discuss this kind of matter in public certainly weakens the United States' credibility after condemning Russia and China for doing similar things in relation to Taiwan and Ukraine. If Trump decided to go ahead and take Greenland, there would be no high ground from which to denounce and attack.

How the Maduro situation in the United States and the increased instability caused in his home country end up remains to be seen, but with fresh attacks on Greenland's sovereignty and comments about other South American countries, the global order may be shaken up yet again

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## Chapter 3

A Serial by Hal Arita

09:58 | 07.02.2100 | UST-4 | Recife, Ultimate Trump States

Thiago yawned as he got up from another sleepless night. The air felt heavier than usual — not just dusty, but uneasy, as if the world itself had stopped to listen. He'd spent the night poring over ancient archives, fragments from 2011 to 2031: the era of the first viruses, early science, and broken governments. It fascinated him — the time before everything had fallen apart.

A voice crackled through his headpiece:

“All units, reminder: global emergency meetings on the 7th and 8th. Full operational lockdown until further notice.”

That meant two things — he could research anything he wanted, but he wouldn't eat for two days.

He took the earliest train to the coastal city of Recife. The carriages were nearly empty, and by the time he arrived, he was the only passenger left. A strange chill hung in the air. Recife was supposed to be warm, but frost glittered faintly on the metal rails.

A man with a clipboard stood waiting at the station platform, his uniform heavy with medals.

“Sent from Venezuela, are you?” the man said, glancing at Thiago's tag. “Good place, warm place. Not like this ghost town. We needed reinforcements. You'll be under Captain João Silveira.”

Thiago nodded, startled but silent. As they rode through the silent streets, the man — General Rafael Silveira — spoke of storms, border evacuations, and the disappearance of the coastal patrols. He didn't seem to care whether Thiago understood, but there was something kind, almost weary, in his tone.

When they reached the stronghold, the General stopped in the courtyard.

“My son will see that you reach your duty post,” he said, and walked off without another word.

Captain João Silveira was waiting inside. He looked older than his father — smaller, slower, his white beard catching the dim light like frost. His smile, though, was warm.

“If you're from the west, you'll find our air strange,” the captain said softly. “But you'll get used to it.”

He showed Thiago to a small dorm room. On the wall hung a schedule — not just patrols and drills, but education sessions. That made Thiago pause. Education? Here? He didn't ask.

The took the fastest shower of his life, dressed, and headed to the dining hall. The place was nearly empty, save for the quiet hum of machines — and somewhere deep down, that same strange unease that refused to fade.

TO BE CONTINUED...

And finally...

# Seven Questions for Staff

Lucy Smith

Welcome back to a brand new year of this wonderful series! To kick 2026 off, I bring you someone from far far away in the languages department...Mrs Wedderburn!

1. Cats or dogs, and why? - **Dogs. Every time. The kindest most loyal friend you will ever have. They want to hang out with you (unlike cats) My dog Bonnie, a Labrador, passed away just over a year ago and I'm not over it yet.**
2. What did you want to be when you were younger? – **An air hostess - I read a book in primary school called Air Hostess Ann, I still love flying and airports and think I might still become an air hostess one day.**
3. Comfort TV show/movie? – **Downton Abbey or The Crown. I may have cried in the cinema recently at the end of an era final Downton instalment...**
4. What department do you wish you were in? – **Classics or Art History. The best school trips I have been on were with Classics to Greece. I would also love to study Art History – it's important to never stop learning**
5. Favourite musical artist? – **Coldplay - they always put on such an incredible show.**
6. What was your first job? – **A tour guide of Blair Castle – I used to give tours in French and German to coach parties of tourists**
7. Go to karaoke song? – **‘Valerie’ by Amy Winehouse – great to sing this with my sisters**

The cat slander is still going strong (I'm not happy), but the rest of the answers seem perfectly acceptable. That's now 3 votes for classics/art history, Mr Kent had better watch out...

*Editors' note*

*That's All Folks!*

Your Editors - Charlie, Emma, and Shan