

# Take a Leap of Faith

**AN elite athlete urged students to throw themselves into life to avoid regrets in future years.**

**O**LYMPIC long-jumper Chris Tomlinson told student at Longfield Academy of Sport, Darlington, to 'give their all' while they were young.

"Always commit 100 percent effort to whatever you do, leaving nothing out," said the former Team GB athlete, now 35 and an ambassador for sport.

"You have your entire life ahead of you and it is really important that you learn to cope with the adversity that will undoubtedly happen.

"What is important is how you handle this adversity, how you come back. The worst thing you could have is regrets ten years down the line."

Chris competed in the 2004, 2008 and 2012 Olympics and held the British record for long jump.

He told staff, students and families attending the school's annual sports presentation evening how he had become involved in sport at the age of seven, joined Middlesbrough Athletics Club at 11, but had been a late developer physically and almost given up.



Above: Former Team GB long-jumper Chris Tomlinson



But at 14 he had competed in his first English Schools' Games and been selected for Team GB for the World Championships.

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*Headteacher Susan Johnson*

The 2012 Olympics should have been his chance to shine but, plagued by a knee injury, he could only manage sixth. "I could have got a medal but I lost my focus," he said. "So I urge you all to stay focussed, listen to advice and don't drift as, if you do, you could end up in the wilderness."

Chris presented a host of team and individual prizes to boys and girls who had enjoyed success in range of sports at a local, regional and national level.

Headteacher Susan Johnson said: "We are blessed with some incredibly talented students at our school and it is so important to recognise their efforts, commitment and dedication to their chosen sports. This passion will set them up for success in years to come no matter which direction they choose to travel."

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