6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom. (350 words)

My interest in physical sciences was born from a TV series called “The Big Bang Theory”. It’s about a group of Caltech scientists who are passionate about pursuing their goals as researchers. As a 6th grader, religiously watching this dedication on screen made me more interested in science as a subject.

I saw science as relying almost entirely on theory, which I enjoyed because theoretical knowledge is evidence of the creativity of human mind. I wanted to understand and theorize such knowledge to aid in resolving global issues such as climate change and sustainable energy use. To achieve this, I chose to take IGCSE Extended Chemistry and Physics in 9th and 10th grade. I realized that I excelled in these fields within the classroom, but felt that I needed to gain experience in applying such knowledge. Thus, I proceeded to write several independent scientific papers.

The first paper was my IB Extended Essay, a 4000-word self-directed research paper on a topic of my choosing. I decided to model fluid flow using Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and investigated the correlation between the geometry of a pipe and the flow produced from said pipe. I enjoyed expressing my creativity to use CAD and my knowledge of waste treatment to help design my product.

These experiences taught me that the theory I learned in the classroom could be applied to solve real-life problems. Designing processes and applying what I learned in the classroom was more fulfilling than simply understanding theory because I felt like I was contributing to change. This was what I found very inspiring about the subject of physical sciences. It is something that is ever-evolving and flexible, adapting to the needs of the people.

Notes:

It would be great if you can tie in your whole essay with references to your initial interest in science through the TV series. Was there a specific episode or aspect from the show that made you more curious about science? What did you learn during your pursuit of scientific knowledge that made you remember this show? Was there an ‘aha’ moment during your research projects? In your conclusion, I suggest also including your plan for the future. What field do you see yourself contributing in, maybe from your experiences in your projects?

All the best!

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place? (350 words)

Authoritarianism ran deep in my previous school. Students who expressed opinions that deviated from the teachers’ were condemned and shamed. The only place where I felt that I could be open about my stances on global issues was the WSC (academic debate and decathlon) club, but even then, I felt as if the club lacked a sense of collaboration since my previous school emphasized the need for competition among club members. With such talented members, I believed that the structure of the club needed to be reformed for the betterment of everyone.

I highly emphasized collaboration as captain, and encouraged them to see fellow club members not as competition, but people that you can learn from to improve. To do this, I would often assign case studies on topics ranging from LGBTQ+ rights to reproductive rights and have class-wide discussions on each of the student’s stances. This activity was done in order to build skills in defending one’s argument and improve confidence and presentation skills. I encouraged people who have similar stances to work together in groups to present their arguments together to build interpersonal skills. This later proved to be successful.

I vividly remember the time two of my mentees, Faldo and Valery, asked persistently for advice on how to become more confident. I told them to let go of what others thought of them during their speech, and to come sufficiently prepared with counterarguments and research. After following these pieces of advice, they slowly but surely progressed as debaters. They went from stuttering and looking down at the floor to holding their heads up high, sounding assured when delivering their arguments. I rarely see them since they moved to Singapore, but they currently serve as members of the debate team in their respective schools. They have truly blossomed.

Other than Valery and Faldo, several other members within the WSC club have started to become more outspoken regarding global issues and researched further into the substance that they want to discuss. If it weren’t for this open environment in the debate club, this would not have happened. I am grateful that my contributions for this club made the school community more globally aware and open-minded compared to previous years.

Notes:

My suggestion would be to establish what your goal was at the beginning. I think that your initial statement is still vague: With such talented members, I believed that the structure of the club needed to be reformed for the betterment of everyone.

What do you want to see changed for the better? Did you want the members to be more outspoken? Or confident? Or did you want them to become, as you put in your conclusion, ‘more globally aware and open-minded’?

As the reader currently I’m not sure I can see what the goal was at the beginning, and whether it was achieved at the end. Whatever your goal is, I suggest sticking to one point, make it succinct and clear.

All the best!