
Principal's Newsletter

17 January 2020

Dear Parents,

This week has been dominated by the end of term examination results in the secondary phase of the College. These are now published. The Year 11s and Year 13s had a mock results day experiencing the terrifying thrill of opening the envelope. Suffice to say much work remains to be done by all of us, but experience teaches that these "wake up calls" do indeed accelerate the efforts of pupils and students and provide a glimpse of much needed reality.

It is very gratifying to report a 20 year record breaking number of Oxbridge offers this year. These students, fresh from the intensity of tests and interviews, now face the daunting task of meeting the conditions of their offers. They have, like all our Year 13 students who have received offers, a very clear and ambitious target to aim for.

Last Friday, a governor and I were briefly in Denmark to look at a small boarding school there. We learned a lot about the Danish approach to curriculum and to building relationships in schools. In these circumstances it is always both inspiring and dispiriting to speak English with 14 year old pupils who are essentially able to correct the grammar of their foreign visitor. Most pupils also spoke passable German as well as their own language which, so I learned, is littered with strange spellings and long words. I felt I did some good in Denmark as I tried to persuade many misguided Spurs fans to direct their support to one of the Liverpool teams instead.

The app is working again. Please download this tool if you have not already done so. It is absolutely essential in communicating with you about all the things going on at school. Also working is the activities programme, described as "staggering" in number in our Ofsted report. Cooking, CCF, rugby, football, drama, Harry Potter and everything in between. In the gathering gloom, our staff are delivering amazing opportunities to pupils.

On Wednesday, Mr Griffith organised the excellent Year 9 GCSE curriculum parents' evening. This marks the exciting moment when choice is introduced into the curriculum and pupils begin to discuss with parents and teachers their enthusiasms, plans, and hopes. The evening was very well attended and we are very grateful for all the parental cooperation and support which makes this process so much more powerful in raising the aspirations of pupils. Some

parents were not able to make it and I hope they will look over the materials Mr Griffith provided to them by email and contact him with any questions or concerns.

Last week an ambulance had to enter through the school gates to attend to a young man who had injured himself playing sport. The gates of the school were thus briefly open. It seems several parents drove quickly onto school grounds and drove recklessly around the ambulance, expressing frustration with the way the ambulance blocked their selfish path, parking ultimately behind the sports hall. The staff attending to the pupil did not have opportunity to confront these drivers but I write about this in the newsletter to give you some idea of the callous and dangerous behaviour of a small minority parents in vehicles around and on our campus, behaviour which we would never tolerate in your children.

Whoopi Goldberg is on standby as Sister Act is ready for its week of production. It seems hundreds of pupils are involved and we can look forward to this cheerful story propelling us towards half term. Tickets are still available from main reception so please do support the play by attending either Thursday or Friday night.

Congratulations to Year 10 pupils Emily T (Selwyn's) and Liam D (Butler's) who were awarded Third place in the prestigious [NW Science and Technology national competition](#) this week. Well done also to our [Prep School Year 6 Maths Team](#) who represented the school in the National NYMA Maths championships this week. We will find out in two weeks if they were successful in reaching the regional finals.

Mrs Doran has had a busy week with Wilton Trust events. The Prep School enjoyed a [visit from a palaeontologist](#) who came prepared with boxes of fossils for the pupils to study while the [Y9 Wilton Scholars](#) were at Liverpool University participating in a variety of STEM workshops at an undergraduate level. The pupils enjoyed lessons in archaeology, chemistry, computing and engineering.

At our parent information evening on Thursday 30 January (6pm in the MV Hall) we will be discussing our phone policy. As you know, pupils must not use phones during the school day except with explicit permission. There is quite a bit of evidence to suggest that this policy is honoured almost as much in the breach as it is in the observance by some pupils. The effect is disruptive and unhelpful. In Denmark I came across some ingenious solutions to this phone problem and we will be keen to get your views on this and several other matters.

A reminder also that we are currently consulting on changes to our admissions policy from September 2021. You can read all the details on the College website [here](#).

What book are you reading? I try to ask this question of a pupil or job candidate but often forget to do so. May I ask you to ask your child this question. It would be even better if they are in turn able to ask what book you are reading. Research from my beloved United States which is led by a man who appears to have been very effectively vaccinated against bibliophilia posits that parental reading habits are the most important factor in the reading

habits of a child. For example, even in families where children were read to regularly, the effect of this kind of encouragement of reading was not so great as in those families where children saw their own parents reading for pleasure. As a parent myself, I know that parents rightly worry that children rarely do what adults say but it seems that when it comes to reading and so much besides they do watch what we do and do it.

We now know we are in a rugby final for the U18 Lancashire plate against St Edwards at Preston Grasshoppers on Wednesday 29 January at 3.00pm. We had a successful day in sport yesterday as Mr Cook explains on our website [here](#) and we are also about to play fixtures against QEGS in football and Birkenhead School in hockey tomorrow.

May I wish you and yours a restful weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Mr H van Mourik Broekman
Principal