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## Principal's Newsletter

22 November 2019

Dear Parents,

Homer's *Odyssey* begins with an invocation to the Muse. "Call me Ishmael", the enigmatic beginning of Melville's *Moby Dick* is said to be the only line of American literature you need to understand to understand America.

But surpassing all is the brilliance of the opening sentence of Roald Dahl's *The Twits* which I was privileged to read to Year 3 and 4 during a night-time reading party in the Prep School Library.

"What a lot of hairy-faced men there are around nowadays."

The pupils clearly enjoyed the various recitations and readings from members of staff and they were comfortably ensconced in their pyjamas listening, laughing, occasionally riveted, and planning some reading of the books they had been introduced to.

Earlier in the week, Grandfathers visited the Prep School. They spoke about their experience of the Second World War. Again, the pupils were riveted.

Another visitor to our shores was Mr Jimmy Mulville who will be our secondary phase Speech Night speaker in March. Mr Mulville, a native of Liverpool, is now a producer of many of the TV shows we all enjoy watching. He attended Alsop and is keen to promote classical studies in our school and in schools in Liverpool. He met with our fantastic classics department and its enthused and inspiring pupils and students, visited the works underway in the future classics library which he has generously funded, and visited a primary and secondary school in the city to see the work of our Classics Hub in action. In that vein, I am very much looking forward to the next public Classics Lecture, given by our very own Dr Llewelyn Morgan, now professor of Classical Languages and Literature at Oxford, who has kindly agreed to come and talk to us about the great heroic figure of Hercules, variously portrayed in ancient literature as a buffoon or saviour, a character so complex that this talk is sure to be interesting and exciting. The lecture takes place on Tuesday 26 November at 6.45pm in the MV Hall and is free to attend but you do need to register for tickets [here](#).

These visits are such wonderful things because we learn not for school but for life, and what happens here on campus is meant to prepare young people for the opportunities and

challenges in the wider world. In this respect it was marvellous to hear reports about the selected Year 10 and 11 pupils who had been given an opportunity for work experience through the Careers and Enterprise company. I read some of the feedback from employers. We are lucky there is a statutory school age otherwise some of these young superstars would have been hired away from us and delivered into the hands of various industries. We are proud of them all for presenting our school so well in their temporary places of employment.

A parent kindly pointed out to me that my own daughter's coat was not regulation, it contained an outline of fur along the collar. Chastised, and spurred into penitential action, I have now obtained a regulation coat for her. What I did when my error was pointed out, you must also do if your child is not wearing a school or regulation coat. Children are not going to buy the right coat for themselves, but you must.

In all years up to and including Year 9, the policy is that we wear the school outdoor waterproof coat.

In Year 10 and 11, we wear plain black coats (no writing or logos, no fur trims, no other colours).

The only part of the College that should ever be in a coat that is not black and not a school coat is the Sixth Form. Sixth Formers are free to choose the coat they wish to wear although egregiously tasteless examples of coats which could not be worn to a job interview in any expectation of being successful will be banned.

Mr Fox will enforce this rule as will Ms Pease and Ms Gannon. I hope that you will make plans to comply.

On my infrequent travels around the city on my trusty bicycle I occasionally pass schools which do not have a coat rule. The appearance of pupils, the cohesion of the uniform, leaves much to be desired at these school gates. I console myself with the thought that our pupils want to look smart and ready for school. Let's get this done.

The boarders lead extraordinary lives. Last weekend they were go karting, now it is time for the great boarding bake off, a competition with strong international patisserie aspirations. All the baking is for charity of course.

I have some very good news. The app appears to be working. The period of app malfunction may be at an end. The developer has informed me that all systems are go. You should be able to access messages, calendar and news items. It is a thrilling shaft of electric light in the days of darkening gloom.

My earlier request for parental help/volunteer support for the establishment of an online magazine to capture the excellent work being produced by staff and pupils throughout the College has gone substantively unanswered. In light of the prolific use of social media by

our parents, and the speed with which they communicate all manner of things to each other, my hope remains that someone with expertise in the digital media area can at least advise us on how to begin this project. Please let me know if you can help.

Since Mr Barnicoat became the coach, our debating teams have improved and become regularly victorious. Now we are to host an entire round of the English-Speaking Union Schools' Mace competition: on the evening of Wednesday 27 November, we will be joined by teams from Birkenhead School, Birkenhead Sixth Form College, St Edwards, Archbishop Beck and Childwall School. The Liverpool College team of Sama I, Jan M and Lehtu M will be in the first debate of the night and will be proposing the motion: *This house would limit each person to one return flight per year*. This debate will begin in the MV Hall at 4pm and the whole evening will continue until around 7:30pm. Spectators are very welcome to attend.

Rugby has had a good week. The 1<sup>st</sup> XV are through to the semi-final of the Lancashire plate after a crisp and convincing win over AKS Lytham. The Year 8s won after a few losses, and one player expressed sympathy for his vanquished opponent by telling me that when he shook hands with the boy after the match he was struck by how indescribably sorry and sad he felt for him. With rugby players like that, I am not sure we can look forward to many more victories on the field, but in the fields of life such an attitude of empathy is inspiring and to be commended.

May I wish you and yours a dry and pleasant weekend.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mr H van Mourik Broekman**  
**Principal**