
Principal's Newsletter

8 February 2019

Dear Parents,

Happy Chinese New Year. Our catering staff have developed a special menu to celebrate the occasion.

Congratulations to Mr and Mrs Hammersley on the birth of Rory, another healthy boy in the family.

Despite the weather, the bikeability bicycles were lining the Prep School walls. There has been a healthy increase in the number of pupils bicycling to school generally. Some older pupils ride without a helmet, which is like getting into a car without a seatbelt, but bikeability teaches the correct approach to bicycling safely in a city. It is great to see that so many Prep School pupils avail themselves of the possibility of learning to ride their bicycle safely in traffic.

ReviseTII5 is a programme of support and help for our pupils preparing for GCSE examinations. Pupils stay at school to revise on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, supported by their teachers. In addition, Ms Styles runs a homework club in our library for pupils who need that support. Sometimes one wonders how it is even possible not to make some good progress in light of the teaching and support pupils receive. Disaffection however is a disease that is difficult to cure. It is usually contracted over a period of time, and I fear, not diagnosed frequently enough or early enough by schools and parents. Early treatment is essential. Once habits are established they of course are more difficult to break. The beauty of an all through school like ours is that we have an opportunity to seamlessly develop the love of learning and habits of learning which allow us to enjoy school and life. These sessions after school are in fact a priceless gift which support pupils in creating these habits.

The Prep School Sports award evening was brilliantly organized by Mr Cook and Mr Bishop and featured an incredibly well produced quiz from Mr Stamper. Parents and pupils enjoyed an evening of good company and celebration of the spirit of sport in the Prep School.



Look at this photograph of the Prep School Times Tables Rockstars launch day. Our staff are clearly ready to quit their day jobs and begin careers as rock stars. It is a sign of their swagger and style that they can carry this off.

Despite our ridiculously wet and windy weather, this has been a week of amazing sport. The Year 7 girls made themselves champions of the city in both hockey and netball! In the Netherlands they used to say that the second best team in the country was the Ajax youth team, a preposterous boast which nevertheless had some truth to it. The same is true of our Year 7 B team which is actually the city champion in hockey.

Purists and all boy hockey players ever to grace the College hockey field will be delighted at the return, however modest, of boys hockey to the College in a Year 7 fixture against Scarisbrick Hall. The boys really enjoyed it, and our aim is to get everybody into competitive house and school games.

A feature of this half term has been the number of visitors holding us to account for the quality of the education we provide. There was of course the Ofsted inspection, but parents may be surprised to learn how frequently different people are looking at, evaluating, commenting upon every part of the school. Governors visited Pre Prep and Prep School lunch, sat down with school leaders, and visited Prep and Pre Prep classrooms. Some of our governors bring exceptional professional expertise to this task, as for example professors and lecturers in teacher education. In addition, the school has a school improvement officer who visits regularly looking at areas of teaching and curriculum that we think we need to improve or understand better. In addition to these, we sometimes invite former Ofsted inspectors and exam board examiners to visit.

A decade ago teachers were never disturbed and teaching was a solo activity. Now we have made it a team sport, with learning walks and a programme called Talk for Teaching which

means small groups of teachers watch other teachers teach, reflecting constantly on their own practice and increasing the dialogue about teaching. It is gratifying that the staff themselves see these moments now as exciting opportunities rather than nerve-wracked intrusions into their personal lives.

The Year 9 preferences evening was well attended. It is exciting to hear pupils express their intellectual interests and passion and begin to ideate their future studies. Fortunately EVERY pupil in the College is engaged in a rigorous curriculum which keeps their options open, but there is nothing to motivate like the expression of preference, that dawning feeling of really loving a subject. I am thrilled that so many pupils tell me that they love classics and Latin. We are unusual in offering classical subjects to pupils and whilst not every pupil is immediately smitten, for some classics has become a field of true intellectual love. To hear a Year 9 express a wish to study Homer is surely to be a happy Principal.

We had a good week of attendance across the College this week. Attendance matters so much. People can argue about whether attendance causes great progress or is merely correlated to it, in the sense that those making great progress happen to attend well. Every day missed is a day lost, which is why my tears at having to close the school for one day during the snow and ice event are still drying on my cheeks. We need everyone here every day to make it all work.

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

Yours sincerely,

Hans van Mourik Broekman
Principal