



THE PORTSMOUTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Headmaster: James Priory MA

jep/dck

10 September 2010

To all Senior School parents

Dear Parents

Welcome to the start of the new school year and, indeed, a new decade in the school's history. There is much to celebrate from the summer and, as usual, an enormous amount to look forward to in the weeks ahead.

New Breadth as well as Heights

We were delighted with the breadth of achievement by our Year 13 pupils in the new A Levels this summer. Many schools focus solely on three subjects at the end of the Sixth Form, and by this measure we achieved 88% A*-B, matching last year's record results. What was significant, however, was that for the first time, the majority of pupils studied four subjects through to A Level, achieving on average a record 433 UCAS points per candidate, the equivalent of more than three A*s.

The strength of pupils' performance was evident in their achievement of university places, despite the sharp rise in UCAS applications. Eighty two per cent of places this year are at the Russell Group and 1994 Group, leading research universities; it was also our strongest Oxbridge year in two decades. In the ISI report, you will recall that the Inspectors commented, "In line with the aims of the school the pupils are constructive, confident young people, mature for their age, who are ready for the challenges of life." We wish all our leavers well at this exciting stage in their lives.

It was also a record year at GCSE with our largest ever cohort. Year 11 pupils achieved over 40% A* – our best ever performance – and 76% A*/A. Sixty five pupils achieved straight A*/As. We were very pleased to see the strength of performance in IGCSE subjects, this year including Mathematics and Physics. One of those celebrating on GCSE Results Day was Amy Crellin who also received news that she had been awarded an Arkwright Scholarship in Design and Engineering.

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International School Award

Universities and employers – and students themselves – are becoming increasingly interested in opportunities to continue breadth and depth to ensure greater roundedness of interest and achievement. Writing in *The Independent* last week, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Southampton, Professor Don Nutbeam, questioned whether the current A Level reforms went far enough:

"We need a system that is not only suitably rigorous and testing, but which provides the educational breadth and flexibility that will produce a well-educated and adaptable workforce, and well-rounded entrants to the university system ... This is not hard to imagine ... The more broadly based IB diploma provides a respected framework for education, which can give us confidence that change is feasible."

We now have pupils in both Years 12 and 13 studying the IB Diploma and look forward to seeing the programme grow still further as an alternative to our A Level programme in the Sixth Form. It is also very encouraging to see the school as a whole embracing internationalism. The Junior School has this week received an International School Award from the British Council for developing an international approach to all pupils' learning. The school was congratulated on its collaborative work with Collège Jean Monnet in Ouistreham and Gesamtschule Ruhrort in Duisburg and received the following praise:

"Your activities are both varied and interesting which is exactly what we are looking for. Engaging children through imaginative learning is what the International School Award is all about. Empowering children in your school to examine and address worldwide issues is fantastic."

This summer Sixth Form pupils and some of our youngest Old Portmuthians travelled to Cambodia to help build the new village school we have sponsored and which we will be continuing to support in educational projects, fundraising and Gap Year placements in the years ahead. A party of pupils from Year 11 and above travelled to Uganda on an expedition which included visits to a local primary school and Kikaaya College our link school in Kampala, where they carried out various construction and painting projects. It was poignant that, following the tragic death from malaria of Kikaaya College's Head Boy last year, our pupils and staff were able to provide mosquito nets to protect all 300 beds in the college's dormitories. Further news about both these trips will be available in due course.

Bristow-Clavell Science Centre

Our work with schools in the developing world has made us appreciate all the more the tremendous facilities we enjoy at PGS. It has been exciting to see the transformation of the far corner of the Main Quad as the Bristow-Clavell Science Centre prepared to open its doors for the new school year. The facilities, completed on time and within budget, are stunning and I hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity on Open Morning on 25 September to see them for yourself.

There will be many opportunities to see the Science Centre in action thanks to the programme we are creating to celebrate a Year of Science, culminating in the Portsmouth Festivities' Space City theme in June 2011. Further details will be available soon, including the unveiling next term of an outdoor sculpture newly commissioned for the Science Centre.

The annual Brunel Lecture also takes place in the Bristow-Clavell Science Centre on Thursday 16 September when Dr Philip Ball will be speaking to us about *Beautiful Experiments in Chemistry*. A few tickets, which are free for this event, are available from Mrs King in my office. I do hope you will be able to join us.

Roger Harris Climbing Wall and Hilsea Pavilion

We also now have a superb indoor climbing facility in the Sports Hall, thanks to the support of Old Portmuthians in memory of Roger Harris (OP) who was both pupil and teacher at PGS and passionate about the outdoors. Roger's son, Steve, himself an OP joins us from Exeter School in January as our new Surmaster. The climbing wall is already in use by pupils of all ages and will be formally opened before the Old Portmuthian Annual Dinner on Saturday 11 December.

Visitors to Hilsea Playing Fields will have already seen the significant improvements being made to the entrance to the site. We will also be extending the covered area in the Fawcett Pavilion in October, to enhance the accommodation for parents, pupils and visitors and the experience of our famous post-match Hilsea teas! I look forward to seeing you with a cup and plate in hand, and perhaps even on the touch-line too.

Staff News

This term we welcome a number of new faces to the Common Room. Mrs Wilson, as the new Deputy Head (Academic); Ms Copin, as Head of Mathematics; and Dr Stagno as the new Head of Hockey. We also welcome the following: Miss Bennett (Philosophy and Religious Studies), Miss Bree (Art), Mrs Colbey (French), Mrs Pye (Psychology and the Special Subject Adviser for Medicine), Miss Rickard (History), Mr Stevens and Mr Williamson (both Chemistry) and Mr Sperring (Director in Residence for Drama).

We also welcome back Mrs Burkinshaw and Ms Brunner to provide maternity cover in the English department; Mrs Mitchell will be Acting Head of English until January 2011. Mrs Charlesworth will be providing maternity cover in the Spanish Department, which will be overseen by the Assistant Head of Modern Languages, Miss Coward.

A number of colleagues have new roles within the school. Miss Dyer becomes Head of Art and Design, Ms Cross becomes the Creativity Action Service Co-ordinator (CAS) for the IB Diploma, whilst Mr Smith co-ordinates the General Studies programme in Year 12. Miss Heath becomes Head of Summers House, and Mrs Jackson the new Deputy Head of Middle School; Mrs Nash becomes Deputy Head of Years 9-11, and Miss Linnett Deputy Head of Sixth Form. Miss Linnett will take particular charge of Year 12 and Mr Dean, also

Deputy Head of Sixth Form, will oversee Year 13. We have a new Head of Sixth Form, Mr Gallop, joining us from Wellington College in January.

I am sure you will wish to join me in congratulating Mr Nick Cooper (Deputy Head of Whitcombe House) on his marriage to Miss Drury (Junior School Art Co-ordinator KS1) over the summer; Miss Watson (Geography) is also to be congratulated as she becomes Mrs Howlett.

Mobile Phones

We recognise the value of mobile technology for our pupils, especially in ensuring safe travel arrangements to and from school. Mobile phones can be a distraction, however, and sometimes misused. We are keen to encourage all our pupils to focus effectively on their learning and to be confident in interacting socially during the school day, tuning in to each other rather than always via an electronic screen. As part of a pilot project this term, Year 7 pupils are giving their phones into safe keeping during the school day. We are also encouraging pupils in older years to leave mobile phones secure in their lockers until the end of the day, although phones can be used if necessary outside of lesson time. Anyone needing to make a phone call during the school day will be given assistance at the Main Reception or by the Medical Centre. We also recommend that phones and other mobile devices brought into school should not have a value greater than £60. Your support in this matter would be much appreciated.

PGS Ambassadors

At the beginning of term, I reminded pupils of our shared role as guardians of the school's reputation both within and beyond the Main Archway. We expect standards of behaviour and dress to be high and are committed to ensuring that PGS remains a happy and safe community. We believe that each of our boys and girls has a right to come to school every day knowing that they will be able to enjoy their learning without someone else making their life unpleasant or distracting their teacher from what he or she is trying to do. In this way, each pupil can contribute to another happy and successful school year.

PGS Website

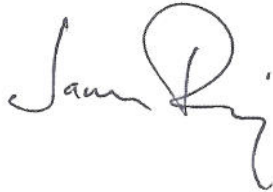
The Yellow Book and website provide further details of the many events and activities taking place this term. May I also remind parents that the website is a useful reference point for all of the main school policies, as well as for details about the Parents' Forum and the PGS Association, which organises a range of events of interest to parents.

We are looking forward to welcoming the Right Reverend Christopher Foster as the new Bishop of Portsmouth at his installation on 18 September, and Lord Wakeham as our Guest of Honour at Prizegiving on 20 September.

We also send good wishes to former PGS parent the Venerable Peter Hancock and his family, following his appointment as the new Bishop of Basingstoke.

Preparations are underway for Open Morning on 25 September, when the whole school will be open from 0930 to 1230 for families and visitors to tour. I hope to see you there!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end.