

9 September 2011

Dear Parents

Welcome Back

Welcome to the start of the new academic year. I hope that you have enjoyed the summer break and are able to look forward to all that the new term offers. We have some excellent events planned for the autumn which I hope you will be able to join us for, including the PGS Fireworks and Bonfire Party at Hilsea Playing Fields on Sunday 6 November and the musical *Wizard of Oz* at the Kings Theatre from Thursday 24-Saturday 26 November. Further details for both of these events will be available on our weekly electronic mailing.

We are looking forward to a host of lectures, exhibitions, concerts and plays, as well as a full sporting fixture list at Hilsea. On the immediate horizon is the Brunel Science Lecture on Thursday 15 September at 7.30pm in the Bristow Clavell Science Centre when we are welcoming Professor Tony Stanford-Clark to talk about *Inventing a Smarter Planet*. Our Guest of Honour at Prizegiving this year is Liz Earle MBE, the celebrated expert in health and well being and highly successful businesswoman whose Isle of Wight company operates in over 90 countries worldwide.

I look forward to seeing you at one or more of our events in the weeks ahead and in particular at our Open Morning on Saturday 24 September, which is an ideal opportunity for both existing and prospective PGS families to come and tour the school, to see some of our outstanding facilities and to meet pupils and staff. You will be very welcome.

Fine Beginnings

It was excellent to see pupils in such good spirits after the summer holiday when we gathered in the Cathedral for our beginning of term services and reflected on Nicholas Nickleby's "fine beginnings" in the novel Charles Dickens set in the city of his birth, Portsmouth, and the thought that "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure". It was also wonderful to see so many people in attendance at the Year 7 Welcome Service that evening, and to be joined by the Dean in shaking hands with each new pupil as they came through the West Door at the end of their first day in the Senior School. A fine beginning, indeed!

If you do have any concerns at all, however, in the coming weeks please do not hesitate to contact your daughter or son's tutor in the first instance. Tutors in all year groups will be telephoning home to check how each of their tutees have found the start of term. I am also available to see pupils without appointment between 0820 and 0830 each morning in my Study, except for tutor time on Thursdays.

Public Examinations

This summer saw the historic achievement of our first cohort of International Baccalaureate students who had chosen the IB diploma as an alternative to A Level in the Sixth Form.

The average points score for the cohort, compared with a world average of 29, was an impressive 35 out of a maximum of 45. Six pupils scored more than 40 points, including Isabel Wilkinson achieving an outstanding 44 points and a place to read Natural Sciences at Christ's College, Cambridge, and Senior Prefect Daniel Frampton exceeding his points offer for a place to read History at University College, Oxford. IB pupils have gone on to study Architecture, Banking and Finance, Dentistry, Economics, Engineering, English, Geography, History, Medicine, Modern Languages, Physics, Philosophy and Theatre, and the vast majority at their first choice university. We are delighted by their success.

At A Level, too, there has been much to celebrate this year, with well over 80% of subject entries awarded A*/A/B grades and, again, well over 80% of pupils winning places at research-intensive Russell Group and 1994 Group universities in what was expected to be an exceptionally competitive year for university admissions. Over 65% of pupils completed four A Levels, a measure of the roundedness of the year group's achievement given that many studied a complementary science, humanity or language. With all 12 Oxbridge candidates securing their places this year, we were also confirmed as one of the country's most consistent schools for Oxbridge entry.

Year 11 pupils were not to be outdone, however, in completing their GCSE – and increasingly International GCSE – studies in style. Over 37% of all grades awarded were A* and 73% of all grades A*/A, with the average grade above an A for the sixth year running. Amidst all the celebrations of GCSE results in the Quad, we were also pleased to welcome the highest ever number of new entrants into the Sixth Form.

Owzat!

Congratulations again to our cricketers for a magnificent 2010-11 season, which extended to two further National Finals this week at Arundel, following the U15 XI's achievement in becoming our first ever national champions last term in the Lord's Taverners competition. The U15s were in action against Whitgift School but unfortunately unable to repeat the heroics of the summer term despite a determined effort in the field. The U19s also returned in determined mood and bowled Sedbergh out for 63 in their Twenty20 semi-final but were, in the end, unable to prevent Shrewsbury chasing down a winning total in the last over of the Final. Mr Curwood, Head of Cricket, and the boys can look back on a highly rewarding season and now put on their rugby and hockey kit for the autumn.

Staff News

As reported at the end of last term, we are delighted to welcome a number of new faces to the teaching and support staff this year. Mr Gladstone joins us in January 2012 as the new Director of Music. He has first class honours from Jesus College, Cambridge, and is currently Assistant Director of Music at Sevenoaks School. Mrs Hall will be Acting Director of Music this term and Mrs Landon joins us as Teacher of Music between September and Christmas.

Also joining us in the New Year will be the new Head of Spanish Mr Stone, who has a BA in Spanish and Latin American Studies from the University of Bristol and is currently Head of Modern Languages at D'Overbroeck's College, Oxford. We welcome back Mrs Pounds, who returns part-time from maternity leave, and are delighted that Mrs Langtry remains with us to teach Spanish until Christmas; Miss Coward will continue in her role as Acting Head of Spanish until then.

Other new staff joining us this week, include Mr Jordan, previously Head of Proposition Marketing at Skandia with a BA in Industrial Economics from the University of Nottingham, and a BSc in Sport and Exercise Science from the University of Chichester, as Teacher of Economics and Business Studies. In Games we welcome Miss Cox, who has a BSc in Sport and Exercise Science with Physical Education from the University of Brighton, and Miss Farmer, who has a BA in Physical Education from University College Chichester and 11 caps for the England women's hockey senior team.

Miss Crockford, who has a BA in Illustration from the University of Portsmouth, joins us as Teacher of Art; Mr Gray, who has a BSc in Zoology from the University of Southampton, as Teacher of Biology; and Miss Murray-Bruce, who has an MA in Classics from the University of Durham and was previously Head of Classics at Camden School for Girls, as Teacher of Classics.

Other new faces include Ms Haslam as our Senior School Admissions Secretary, and Mr Reed as Photographer-in-Residence.


May I also take this opportunity to congratulate the following colleagues who take on additional responsibilities this year: Mr Rutherford as Head of Hockey; Ms Cross as Deputy Head of Smith House; Miss Kirby, Deputy Head of Grant House; Mr Leach as House Sports Co-ordinator; and Ms Kirby as Head of Pastoral Curriculum. Finally, I am delighted that Miss Bush, Mr Lemieux and Miss Linnett have accepted my invitation to become Senior Teachers.

Portsmouth Point

Parents and pupils will have received a copy of the school's magazine *Portsmouth Point*, which aims to capture what we think as a school community rather than what we do. The latest edition is a brilliant mix of pupil and staff writing which I hope will stimulate and entertain its readers. My thanks to the pupil team who produce it, the so-called Early Club, named after the eighteenth century coffee house which the school's founder, William Smith, regularly used to attend in Old Portsmouth, and to Mr Elphick-Smith. This year, Mr Burkinshaw takes up the editorial reins and would be pleased to hear from any parents interested in contributing to the discussion and debate that takes place within future editions of the magazine.

May I wish you all a very happy and successful start to the new school year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', with a large, stylized loop at the end of the name.