

7 April 2011

To all Parents

Dear Parents

As I write, glorious spring weather beckons and I am sure everyone will be looking forward to the Easter holiday.

Horizons

There have been some tremendous highlights in the life of the school this term, many of them celebrated within the pages of the spring edition of *Horizons* which you will find in your end of term mailing. I hope that you will also enjoy the latest edition of the school's award-winning magazine for alumni, *Opus*, which is being circulated for the first time to all families so that we can share with current parents and pupils all that is happening in the wider PGS community.

PGS Association Family Events

As the nation prepares for the royal wedding, I hope that you will savour our own bunting-bedecked programme of events for PGS families, organised by the PGS Association, an overarching group which includes the Senior Prefect Team, the Junior School Association, Parents' Forums and the OP Club and Charity. There are some wonderful family events to which everyone is invited, including cricket, golf, tennis, croquet, wine tasting, outdoor Shakespeare and, later in the year, Bonfire Night at Hilsea Playing Fields and the return of the ice rink to the Main Quad. With your support, we look forward to growing the PGS Association's programme of activities in future; do let us know, therefore, if you have any further ideas or suggestions for family events.

PGS and Beyond

We like to think about where our pupils are going to be when they are 25 and not simply how well they have performed as pupils when their time at the school comes to an end. It was brilliant, therefore, to welcome eight parents this week to spend a **Year 8 Careers Day** with pupils talking about a wide range of future careers. Pupils learned about law, interpreting, finance, medicine, electronic engineering, marketing, sculpting and veterinary medicine, and from initial feedback it is clear they found the day a stimulating one.

So that we know where our pupils are at 25 and how their careers have developed since leaving the school, we are surveying all our OPs electronically to find out what they feel they gained from their time at PGS as well as any advice they would give for how we can support future generations entering a global market. I look forward to reporting on the results of the **OP Survey: Where are you at 25?** later this year.

There are significant developments underway in higher education at the moment, not least the issue of tuition fees, and we have therefore organised a **Higher Education Information Evening** on Thursday 5 May particularly for parents thinking ahead about their children's university aspirations. Our speakers include Professor John Craven, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Portsmouth, on higher education and the economy; Professor William Richardson, General Secretary-elect for the Headmasters' and Headmistress' Conference (HMC) on his research into independent school applications to universities; Mr Paul Teulon, Head of Student Recruitment at the University of Oxford, on the relative merits of A Level and IB; and Ms Lisa Montgomery from Edvice, on how to apply to study abroad, especially in the US. It promises to be a very interesting and timely event and I do hope that you will be able to join us.

There could be no better illustration of the roundedness and confidence that we nurture in our pupils to prepare them for life beyond the school, than **PGS Extend** and this week it was excellent to hear presentations by Sixth Form pupils on the independent research they have conducted into subjects of their own choosing as part of the PGS Extend programme. The High Sheriff of Hampshire, Mr Alan Lovell, described what he heard and saw as "seriously impressive" and enthused about the pupils' creativity and scholarship. This year's Ithaca Award was presented to Isabel Wilkinson for her investigation into salt efflorescences at Fishbourne Roman Palace, a study produced for her IB Extended Essay and already being referred to regularly, I am informed, by the curator and his team.

Parents will be able to see some of the most recent work in next term's edition of *Portsmouth Point*, which we hope will provide further inspiration to pupils in Year 12 as they begin developing ideas for their own PGS Extend research projects this summer. Pupils of all ages in the Senior School are welcome to take part and can find out further details from their form tutor in the first instance.

New Ground

What I have particularly enjoyed this spring term has been the experience of a number of activities and events happening for the first time. We have enjoyed a heart-warming concert performed by pupils from Summers and Whitcombe as a musical celebration of the Houses' centenary; a superb first exhibition of work created by IB students in Higher Level Visual Arts; our first Theory of Knowledge and Philosophy Conference led by world-renowned philosopher Dr Peter Vardy; an innovative Year 7 day exploring ideas and issues relating to religious studies and, of course, the Careers Day specially devised for pupils in Year 8. Even the main quad looks and feels excitingly different as a space with the Celestial Microscope outside the Bristow-Clavell Science Centre!

On the theme of breaking new ground, I was delighted, therefore, to receive news that the school's Combined Cadet Force will be affiliated to the Royal Navy's new Ice Patrol Vessel, HMS *Protector*, when she is commissioned into the Fleet in June. We wish PGS parent Captain Peter Sparkes all the best as he flies out to collect his ship and look forward to the many opportunities this affiliation will provide for our pupils.

May I wish you all a relaxing Easter break, and look forward to welcoming pupils back to school on Tuesday 26 April.

Yours sincerely

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