

28<sup>h</sup> September 2009

Dear Parents,

### **Headmaster's Newsletter September 2009**

I hope you all had an excellent summer holiday and enjoyed some relaxing family time despite the weather. As is often the case with the return to school we have had glorious sunshine and been playing rugby and hockey in conditions more suited to cricket and tennis. It was a great pleasure to welcome 585 pupils back to school which is almost exactly the same number as last year, with 118 new to Senior School. I hope they have all settled in well and made new friends and that the induction programme was successful and I very much enjoyed meeting some many of you at the meeting on Friday.

In addition to the new pupils we also welcomed several new members of staff. Mr Wager – Head of Modern Languages, Miss Laycock who is teaching Religious Studies and tutoring in Jack Tigg, Miss Burgoyne who is teaching Art, Mr Candler – Economics and Business Studies, Mr Taylor – Economics and Politics and Miss Barbu who joins us for a year from Romania and will be teaching EFL. She is also a resident tutor in Southcombe. Other staff have taken on new roles this term – Miss Pawley becomes Head of Maths, Mr Bisson – Development Manager, Mr Evans extends his brief to become Director of Performing Arts and Mr Wheatley will be co-ordinating our Visual Arts Programme. Mrs Bloxham will be teaching Learning Support and Drama in addition to Dance and Mr Haley will become a resident tutor in School House. Mrs Carter is now my Personal Assistant and Mrs Chapman joins us as the new School Secretary. I hope that they all enjoy their new roles.

### **School trips over the summer holidays:**

I was delighted to receive very positive reports from all the staff who led the trips. The girls hockey and netball tour to Singapore and

Australia was a tremendous success. They won 6 out of 9 hockey matches and 2 out of 7 netball fixtures. They came up against some very strong opposition in the country of the world champions and had a number of memorable excursions as well. Thanks go to Miss Manley who organised the tour and the other staff who accompanied her. Mr Ross reported that the Geography trip to the Alps was excellent in every respect – it was an inspirational geographical experience and great fun too. My thanks to Mr Ross and his staff. Mr Neenan led the canoeing trip to France. The party enjoyed excellent weather and our inexperienced paddlers coped admirably with the fast flowing white water. Thanks to Mr Neenan and his team of staff . Mr De Jaegar reported a very successful diving trip to Gozo where they saw wonderful marine life. Thanks go to Mr De Jaegar and his other staff.

### **Public Exams:**

This has been another very good year for our public exam candidates both at A Level and GCSE. At A Level we achieved 65% at A/B which is very creditable. Although not a record year in terms of raw statistics the value added scores are impressive indicating that the vast majority of our students achieved or even exceeded their potential. Nearly all our candidates got their first or second choice of university. Congratulations to Christabel Lines, Petrina Cox and Alice Quayle who achieved the top grades they needed for Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Alice has also had her Choral Scholarship to St Edmunds College in Oxford

confirmed. In addition to the Oxbridge entrants 12 students achieved straight A grades which is highly impressive. Our congratulations to Simon Alcock, Eleena Andrevia, Flo Broderick, Dougie Drake, Lewis Heaynes, Vicky Innis-Palmer, Greta Junker, Jo Steele, Jo Tong, Stephen Weston, Toby Williams and Arthur Woo. Of course the results are not just about the high fliers and I know that a number of other students worked extremely hard to gain praiseworthy grades.

At AS level we achieved 58% at A/B including 36% A grades. The challenge for them is now to convert the C grades into As and Bs for next year. The top performers with 4 or more A grades were Sarah Grenfell, Hakimah Aziz, Mengting He, Jack Kesterton, Jacqueline Kwan, Bryony Lane, James Sandow, Kazuma Yagi and Mia Yeung – many congratulations to them.

At GCSE I was extremely pleased with the 55% A\*/A which placed us comfortably ahead of our local competitors. Our top performers were Carol-Ann Cheah who achieved a full set of 11 A\*s, Megan Lewis, Sophia Vahdati and Jerry Yeung who achieved 8 A\*s. Hannah Chidgey, Jack Turner and Jonathan Dale who achieved 7 A\* - many congratulations to them. It was great pleasure to present them with Honorary 6<sup>th</sup> Form Scholarships and £500 each to be spent on anything that will enhance their CVs – such as courses, books and trips.

#### **Civil Service Club**

I am delighted to inform you that we have now completed the purchase of the Civil Service Club adjacent to the school grounds. We now own the two buildings which housed the Civil Service Club and the indoor bowling green as well as the floodlit 5-a-side court. We will also benefit from significant increase in our parking spaces. We are now planning how best to utilise the buildings and space in the short, medium and long term. In addition as part of our lease agreement we are sharing the games fields with the Civil Service Club.

#### **Wyvern Magazine**

These will be distributed to pupils via their tutors on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September. Please

ask your son or daughter for your copy when they return home. Copies will also be posted to parents of boarders. My thanks to Mrs Evans and her team for producing such an attractive record of the year's achievements at Queen's.

#### **Individual Sporting Achievements Over the Summer Holidays:**

Congratulations to Sam Harris who took part in the London Triathlon as his first major Senior Championship and he came a very creditable 57<sup>th</sup> overall. Some of you may have seen the event on Sky sports last weekend. Many congratulations to Katie House who had a very successful summer of show jumping. She won the Goldeneye Photography Winter 138cm Championship at the Royal International Horse Show at Hickstead on her new ride Lucy VIII – a fantastic achievement. Congratulations also go to Chris Shapland and Frank Spurway who as members of Taunton Cricket Club U12 team defeated Bath Cricket Club in the final of the Somerset Cricket Board Competition. At the Club's presentation evening Chris was presented with the 'Most Improved Player' and Frank was awarded with the 'Best All-Rounder'. I would like to offer my congratulations to Blair Brown and Sidi Duke who represented Somerset at the English Schools Athletic Championships in Sheffield on the first weekend of the holidays. They both performed well and Blair ran a personal best to come 6<sup>th</sup> in the 1500metres Steeplechase. He still has another year in this age group. Sidi also competed well in the discus. This is a highly technical event and she came 7<sup>th</sup> overall.

#### **Chapel**

My thanks to the Chaplain who led our first All School Worship of the term and in his sermon made reference to risks and challenges as we embark on a new school year. Also to Mr Evans who took the boarder's service last Friday evening and spoke about the remarkable life story of a friend of his.

#### **Crossfire**

Thanks to Mr Paul who runs the society. The first meeting featured Austin Milne which provoked some deep thinking discussion on the existence of God. Mr Paul addressed the first meeting of Xamine which is our Junior

and Middle school Christian Union.

### **Café des Amis**

On Thursday we held the official opening of the Café with 'Unplugged' which featured a number of excellent musical contributions from both pupils and staff including Peter Evans. The Café and balcony were packed with pupils, parents and staff. Thanks to all who participated and those who supported the event. It was so popular that I am sure it will be the first of many. The Café is open daily between 11.00am and 5.30pm during the week as well as on Saturdays before and during sports fixtures. Parents are extremely welcome to visit the Café and partake in the wide range of drinks and snacks available. A mug of cappuchino at 75p is much better value than you will find in town! And I think you will find it a comfortable environment in which to wait for your sons and daughters.

### **Trips**

Year 7 had a very successful day at Wimbledon on the first day of term. Thank you to Mr Neenan for organising the day.

The boarders enjoyed their first Sunday outing to Woodlands theme park. 4 boys also undertook 5 dives at Winscombe on the first Sunday of term and passed their Ocean Divers Course. Well done to all.

The Year 7 geographers had an excellent day on the Quantocks. They were attentive and hard working throughout as well as being extremely courteous and polite. The Year 9s had a successful day at the Eden Project with the RS department. The lower 6<sup>th</sup> politicians enjoyed their tour of the House of Commons and House of Lords and the lower 6<sup>th</sup> geographers had a busy day up on Exmoor.

### **D of E**

The gold and silver canoeing and mountain biking groups had a hugely successful overnight expedition at Wimbledon last weekend. The walking groups are preparing for their first practice expedition of the term.

### **Assemblies**

Thanks go to the Year 11 drama group who provided us with a memorable and moving assembly on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September in which we remembered those who lost their lives in the twin towers in New York on 9/11 8 years ago. Congratulations and thank you to Blair Richards, Alex Dance, Emily Brown, Ellie

Triffett, Henry Maxwell-Lyte, Poppy Turner along with James Blackwell, John Nixon and Adam Cockings.

Many thanks also to Maaz and Abdullah Akhter who provided the school with a fascinating insight into Ramadan and Eid. They shared with us their experiences of the celebrations when they visited Pakistan last year.

### **Saturday Morning Activities**

It is great to see the school so full on Saturday mornings with pupils participating in a wide range of purposeful activities. The rehearsals have begun for this term's production of Macbeth and the Performing Arts groups are also rehearsing. Some wonderful apple pies were produced in Cookery Club last Saturday and the swimming pool and sports hall have hosted a wide range of sports and games.

### **Sport**

The opening Hockey and Rugby fixtures have been tough but our teams have played with great spirit.

Results – my reports of all matches can be found on the school website.

Congratulations to Captain of Rugby – Jack Kohler and the Captain of Girls Hockey - Amy Alger-Green. The highlights of the sporting term so far have been the girls Ist XI 5-2 victory over Taunton School in their opening fixture. A huge 84-0 victory for the U13A Rugby team against Downside. The Ist XV also had a superb 12-8 win against Downside.

It is always good to see so many of our parents on the touchlines supporting our teams. This is very much appreciated. Please find enclosed with this letter a code of conduct from the Rugby Football Union which all schools are asked to pass on to parents and spectators. The RFU guidelines promote the atmosphere in which I hope all our school matches are played.

### **Quartz**

The annual Quartz festival is now only a week or so away and I look forward to seeing many of you at the shows and exhibitions. A 'Show of Hands' on the 10<sup>th</sup> October has now sold out but there are still some tickets available for the wonderful Sandy Toksvig on the opening night October

7<sup>th</sup>. For me the other highlight of the festival will be the chance to hear General Sir Mike Jackson speak on Afghanistan, Iraq and other controversial military issues. Once again the Friends of Queen's College will be staffing the wonderful Quartz Café in the Old Music Room during the Quartz festival. If you are able to volunteer your services on a one-off or regular basis please contact Margie Tuffin on 01823 421544.

### **Learning Resource Centre**

Mrs Ross has asked me to inform parents of pupils in Years 7-11 who have timetabled study periods or who are off games through minor injury or illness that they are expected to attend the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). They benefit considerably from this additional study time if they plan beforehand what they are going to do whether it be homework, coursework, revision or catching up with missed work or reading for pleasure. Mrs Ross requests that parents when writing 'off games' notes reinforce to their children the message that they should plan their LRC session and use the time effectively. Much time can be wasted and they can be disruptive to pupils who are trying to work quietly by wandering around aimlessly. Thank you for your support in this matter.

### **Art**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> September all the A Level Art students went on a drawing day to Forde Abbey near Chard. They enjoyed a beautiful sunny day and the work that they have done in their sketchbooks will be the basis of their work for the rest of term. Miss Burgoyne's arrival at Queen's has taken the Art department by storm, particularly in the areas of sculpture and textiles. This year's Quartz flags look to set to be dramatic.

Photography - This is proving to be a very popular course with our students in Years 11, 12 and 13. Mrs Western, Miss Burgoyne and Mr Henden are meeting up with a big group of photographers on a regular basis. Students will have the opportunity to take an AS examination and their work will also be a great asset in recording many aspects of school life at Queen's. The Art department is taking a group to Paris at the beginning of half term – a busy schedule is planned with particular emphasis on the work of Picasso.

### **Open Morning:**

This will take place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October and you should by now received a letter from me with all the details. A large number of pupils will be required in school that morning and all the school buses will run – arriving at school at 9.00am and leaving school at 1.15pm.

### **House Singing Competition**

This is being held after school on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October. All pupils are involved and the competition is due to finish at 6.00pm. The school buses will leave school at 6.15pm on that evening.

### **Parent Consultation Evenings**

I look forward to meeting you at the Parents' Consultation Meetings Evenings this year which have been arranged as follows:

Year 8	Thurs 12 <sup>th</sup> November at 4.15pm
Year 12 & 13	Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> November at 6.00pm
Year 11	Thurs 28 <sup>th</sup> January at 4.15pm
Year 9	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> February at 4.15pm
Year 10	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup> March at 4.15pm
Year 7	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> March at 4.15pm

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

**HEADMASTER**

