



Liverpool College

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## Principal's Newsletter

28th January 2011

Dear Parents,

It is a sure sign of my advancing age that new gadgets can capture my imagination. The latest invention to do so is the Kindle, an electronic reader made by Amazon. My family gave me one this Christmas. The kindle is thin, and light, and the battery does not need long and constant charging. The Dutch look for value, so when my daughter pointed out to me that you could download many classics of world literature into the little machine at no cost, I did so.

This little gadget, and the sudden presence of all this literature at the touch of a button, anywhere and everywhere, has helped me rediscover the joys of reading books I used to dislike. I hated the circumlocutions of Dickens and the interminable plot development of David Copperfield when I was in Year 10. But now, I find the characters very funny and I read the book with pleasure. It is particularly striking to use a gadget, something digital, to read something so good, and so old. Dickens on a kindle shines and I am struck by an implicit comparison. Dickens is making me realise just how much junk I consume through websites, TV and other media.

Our pupils seem less enamoured of the kindle, although I was pleased to see one excellent Year 7 candidate pull one out of his bag during his interview and explain how he had already read all of Harry Potter on it. Much more popular are social networking sites. One Year 11 pupil told me recently that he spent approximately three hours in this other world daily. I am not a Facebook consumer but the mind aches to understand the scope of daily activity of this kind. Facebook is a constant presence in our school. Our pupils access it whenever they can, even surreptitiously on their phones. Clearly much good comes out of people from all over the world keeping in touch and communicating immediately as we have witnessed in Iran and are again in Tunisia and Egypt, but sadly, as teachers we regularly see the effects of abuse of this medium. It is amazing what pupils who are otherwise polite, respectful, friendly and mannered write about each other and the expressions they use, believing that their real selves are not writing and their real friends are not reading. It is as if they have an out of body experience when they log on to Facebook. The sort of experience one has when reading a great book or watching an engrossing film, is replicated by this experience.

A recent study in the US shows how studying is declining as an activity, at every level of education and in every social group. One would expect something similar in the UK. University students in the US now study on average 40% less than they did 25 years ago and 20% less than even 10 years ago. Many theories for this change are adduced, but it seems obvious that the web and social networking play a part in this trend. There are only so many hours in the day. Yesterday, a Sixth Former and I discussed an idea for an Extended Project Qualification. We used the internet to get some ideas, run down a few sources, discover leads and ideas. But quickly we were talking about books, and timeless stories, which challenged and engaged our imaginations and also our intellectual curiosity. The really exciting stuff at school is still about the books, the pupils and the teachers. I think the kindle may have a future after all.

I missed the confirmation service this Thursday and the Palm House concert today, as I am in Bulgaria this weekend for a boarding school fair. Our 1st XI football team played well against QEGS Blackburn on

Wednesday, and now face an even tougher test against Shrewsbury. The hockey league is in full swing, and it is pleasing to see so many Year 7 boys enjoying their hockey.

May I remind parents not to park on the yellow zig-zag lines outside school when dropping off and collecting pupils.

Mr Cartwright and Mr Miller are holding DT workshop support sessions for A Level and GCSE students every Monday to Thursday at lunchtime (1.25-2pm) and after school (4-5.30pm). They are also holding sessions every Saturday from 10am-1pm.

Mr Donnelly is also running an art workshop this Sunday from 9.15am until 12.30pm for GCSE and A Level pupils. Physics IB revision classes with Mr Gunawardena start this Saturday at the College from 10am to 12pm.

It remains for me to remind you of several dates:

On **Thursday 3rd February at 6.30pm** we are holding our termly **Parent Information Meeting** in the Dining Hall.

The Upper School production of '**Oklahoma**' runs from **Wednesday 9th February to Friday 11th February** at 7.30pm in the Sutton Timmis Hall. Tickets cost £6 for adults and £4 concessions and are available from the school office. If the performance of Oklahoma is as good as the poster we are in for a treat.

On **Tuesday 22nd February**, there is the **Sixth Form Options Evening** for Y11 pupils and parents in the Dining Hall starting at 6pm.

I wish you and yours a happy weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Hans van Mourik Broekman  
Principal

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