
Principal's Newsletter

22 March 2019

Dear Parents,

Reports of a great victory have reached our shores. The Year 9 Wilton Scholars team has won the regional All About STEM 'Bright Futures' competition at Unilever. They delivered an exceedingly professional presentation to the executives of the company, introducing the use of cork to make a plastic free, sustainable product. Thanks to Mrs Doran and to Mr Cartwright for his careful and extensive coaching and preparation of this team. Now the team move on to the NW finals on July 2nd. You can read more about our prize winning entrepreneurs on the College website news page. Next week, the winning pupils will be in action again, presenting their pitches to all pupils interested in entrepreneurship and environmental issues as part of our STEM and careers programme.

Reports of our pupils' advocacy and passion in highlighting environmental issues have also reached us via a member of the public who heard Sama I (Howson's) speak at a recent climate change event:

I was walking through Liverpool town centre and heard a young woman from your school passionately speaking on top of a bench. I was in a rush to get to an appointment that day but I felt compelled to stop and listen. It was so wonderful to listen to a young person speaking so passionately about matters that mean so much to her and this generation. I could not stay to listen to her for a long time, but she inspired me to go home and read and listen to what more young people have got to say about this issue.

The app is working again. You may trust its calendar. The app brain trust in an office in Milton Keynes appears to have solved the problem.

Next week we will hold our Speech Night and Prize Giving for the secondary phase in the Anglican Cathedral on Thursday. We have previously sent you an email detailing the arrangements for this mandatory evening. This is not a religious service and all pupils are therefore expected to attend. Now that the programme for the evening is finalised, we also anticipate that the event will finish at approximately 8.45pm. As part of our preparations we conduct a risk assessment. It is in this context that I must advise you as parents that, in the event of a fire or evacuation of the premises, you can collect your child from our emergency muster area, the entranceway walkway outside the Cathedral.

As if this is not enough of an organizational challenge, we will also have our annual inspection of the CCF next week on Tuesday. Our inspecting officer this year is Group Captain Will Dole RAF.

The PP2 marks are in, the Year 3-6 and 10 parents' evenings completed. We are hitting what in football terms is called the business end of the season. Anxiety is higher among staff than seemingly among some of our about to be examined pupils. Whilst it is always good for pupils to maintain perspective, and face challenges in a sober and stoical way, without undue alarm or panic, the attitude of many pupils is frankly too relaxed. I regularly listen to pupils and students tell me about their amazing plans, often inspired by our careers programme, and marvel at the insouciance with which they address themselves to the question of whether they will obtain the qualifications necessary to pursue their chosen future. It may be argued that it is too early to determine whether someone will become a doctor, nurse, building surveyor or engineer etc., but it is simply a fact that education in this as in many countries consists of a number of hurdles which have to be comfortably cleared to stay in the race. I hope all of us will impress on our pupils facing examinations that it is, to use another mixed sporting analogy, all to play for. We are less than two months away from the first exams.

More than 20 pupils attended an Oxbridge information day at Aintree racecourse. I am not sure whether that location is in fact intended as an ironic comment on the arbitrary nature of the admissions process, but our students returned determined to pursue matters further. For the remainder of Year 12 and the first part of Year 13, this group will be supported by their participation in the Oxbridge programme which begins Friday 29 March.

The colours and sounds of *Alice* still play across the mind's eye. This show included a cast and crew of 129 pupils. They danced, they sang, they made music, collected tickets, and thrilled us all with their talent and sense of fun. There were some new stars in the firmament. Ruby K grasped the challenge of playing the enormous part of Alice, Zara T confidently singing, dancing and playing under her cowboy hat struck everyone as another "one to watch". Purely from the perspective of management and organization, these shows are masterclasses in what can be achieved in school. Ms Clark and all her team deserve our thanks and so much credit.

The Iberian Peninsula has been the destination of two groups of College pupils recently. As I reported last week, 17 Art and Spanish A level students returned from Valencia. This cultural trip had watched some football and had also indulged in some very highbrow art viewing. Now we are off to Spain again. 26 Prep School pupils flew out to Barcelona and will return on Sunday.

Our Spanish theme then continues next week when we will be hosting a choir from Barcelona. Their visit will culminate in a joint performance with the College choir and orchestra at a lunchtime concert on Monday 1 April at Liverpool Cathedral.

More sport this week. We won and lost a hockey game against Kings Chester, our Year 9 team triumphed at yesterday's tournament at Greenbank and we are playing a fixture against Merchants. Hockey is about to enjoy the installation of a new AstroTurf surface on our pitch during the months of April and May. By May half term, a brand new top quality surface will be inviting hockey players to plan and dream about their next season.

One area where the school is working hard to improve rates of pupil progress and standards is writing. You can read in our last [inspection report](#) that the HMI felt we should do better there. Impressive changes are under way in the Prep School in relation to writing. Across the College we want to focus on increasing the quality and challenge of longer written work by pupils. The ability to write a good paragraph, or perhaps even three in a row, is so rare that it immediately elevates a person into the ranks of the educated. To organise thought into writing requires one to have some thoughts. The Year 8 Wilton Scholars masterclass invited our young scholars to reflect on how they would define learning. Here before my eyes, one could see the results of education in young people as the group gave focussed and thoughtful answers, developed deeper understanding, and thought their way to the nub of the issue. Thinking is a very exhausting and active pursuit and rather like handwriting, needs to be practised to become developed. The cultural environment in which we teach writing militates against the deliberate composition of coherent thoughts over a length longer than a Snapchat message. My own theory is that this explains to some extent the enthusiasm that exists for extended writing in the primary phase, and the slow diminishment of this enthusiasm as pupils get older. The more we use our phones, the less well we write.

May I wish you and yours a dry and peaceful weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Hans van Mourik Broekman
Principal