



From the Headmaster

Dear Parents

The Careers and Higher Education Convention earlier this week was the best and largest such event that we have had in recent years. Old Colfeians and current Colfe's parents turned up en masse to talk to pupils in Year 10 and above about a very wide range of options for university and beyond. All the main professions were well represented, as well as leading universities in the UK and the Netherlands. Many thanks to all the Old Colfeians and current parents who responded to our call to arms earlier this year and, of course, to Judy Cardnell whose encyclopaedic knowledge of the world of Higher Education and Careers was a critical factor in making the event such a success. Parents may also be interested to know that I am in the early stages of organizing an autumn universities conference which will focus on some of the more interesting options outside of the mainstream in Higher Education. Speakers will include Sir Anthony Seldon and AC Grayling who will talk about their respective universities. Interest in more conventional universities is already an important focus for Lower Sixth students, many of whom have already visited Oxford and Cambridge this term.

Public speakers won the prize for 'Best Host' and finished in 2nd position overall in the prestigious ESU (English-Speaking Union) regional competition against eight other teams including JAGS and Blackheath High. Well done to Keelan Swords, Patrick Dunbar and Vinesh Ravindran (from Years 10 and 11 respectively) while Ally Bulgin (Year 11) - who won 'Best Host' - was ably supported by Year 9 pupils Dan Kelly and Thomas Linaker, both performing up a year in the GCSE level event. Meanwhile Mr Hillmer's Robotics team came through strongly in the First Lego League South Competition, placed third overall with a Judge's Trophy for Innovation. Their efforts were recorded in the local press, along with the further success of Luca Thurlow who has been representing Great Britain for the third time at the BMX World Championships. Old Colfeian Tom Gregory also became the subject of recent media attention when the BBC discovered that he was the youngest person ever to swim across the English Channel at the age of just 11.

Recent visitors to the school have included author and story teller Vanessa Woolfe who for the second year worked with our youngest writers in the Pre-Prep and Nursery. Historical novelist Ben Kane (author of novels including his Spartacus series: The Gladiator and Rebellion) met with a group of Classicists to talk about the Roman military. It was also a pleasure to welcome back Bishop Michael of Woolwich who, accompanied by our Chaplain, Father Steve Hall, led the senior school assembly on Monday.

The GCSE and A Level Art and Graphic Communications Interim Display was amongst the cultural highlights of recent weeks. Pupils talked reflectively and with passion about their work which reflected particularly well on their teachers. Meanwhile Year 5 pupils travelled to India without leaving the comfort of their classrooms thanks to a visit from the Freshwater Theatre Company who recreated the Chembakolli village in the Nilgiri Hills. Prep School pupils also celebrated Chinese New Year with a special dance workshop dressed in traditional lion or dragon costumes and ended this busy half term this morning (Friday) by joining our linguists in the senior school for their French Breakfast.

More senior linguists took a study trip to Barcelona last weekend which entailed, amongst other things, a choice between a visit to the Nou Camp stadium and two hours of shopping. I was relieved to hear that the groups were not gender specific. Students of German will be setting off for Vienna later today for a busy



weekend of activities, including (but not simultaneously), the making of apfelstrudel, learning Viennese waltz, and visiting the house of Sigmund Freud. I am grateful to all my linguist colleagues for organizing and leading these valuable educational visits.

The 1st XI hockey team have won impressive recent victories over Highgate (3-0) and St Dunstan's (7-0.) Key players included Megan Marchant, Anna Patel, Jemma Stephenson and Eloise Hembrough. It is particularly pleasing to see hockey enjoying such a resurgence this year, with improved performances from teams in all year groups.

In swimming, Colfe's hosted a Year 7-9 Gala with our girls' and boys' gold squads both finishing 1st beating Babington, St Olaves and Eltham College. Years 4-6 swimmers also performed well in the South of the River gala at JAGS against 13 local schools. Well done to Roshanak Li-Sue Foulds and Nell Williams who were awarded silver and bronze medals (respectively) for their Individual performances.

After a strong start to the season the 1st XI football team faltered slightly last weekend, losing to a strong Brighton College team but recovering with good wins over Sevenoaks and Epsom College in the highly competitive Sevenoaks Futsal Tournament. Meanwhile the U14s have enjoyed strong wins against Royal Russell and King's Canterbury in the Surrey and Kent Independent Schools' League.

Girls of all ages have been successful on the netball courts over the last two weeks with victory for the U18s over Forest, Reigate Grammar and Bancrofts. Both the U14s and the U13s defeated Bullers Wood and the Year 7 team (U12s) were successful against Blackheath High, Sevenoaks and Bancroft's. In the Prep, the Year 3 team (U8) and Year 4 (U9) both had solid wins against Royal Russell and Breaside – Year 4 playing their first games of 2016.

The U13 girls' cricket team has made it through to the U13s area final of the Lady Taverners Indoor Competition, with victories over Townley Grammar and Chislehurst School for Girls.

In Cross Country the girls performed well at the Greenwich and Lewisham League – a special mention to Blythe Jolley-Ellis (Year 7) who finished 3rd in the U13 event just narrowly missing 2nd place on a photo finish. In the London Schools' Cross Country (which has around 100 runners in each race) there were notable performances in Year 7 for Denny Ashison (18th) and Luca Thurlow from Year 6 (placed 7th). Well done also to Tom Simpson (7th) and Gabriel Foley (15th) in the Inter boys race (Years 10 and 11). Tom has since been selected to represent London in the national English Schools event later in the year. Having been placed 2nd in the County Cross Country championships whilst running for his club, Cambridge Harriers, he will also represent Kent at the Inter-Counties Championships in Birmingham in March.

Other recent individual achievements include:

- Teddy Gibbons (Year 8) who took part in the Blackheath Youth Theatre's production of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht.
- Sophia Clark (Year 10) who performed four routines at the LA Lights Rhythmic Gymnastics International Competition in the USA. Sophia placed 4th in the free style event, and 33rd overall in the junior division. The competition has 323 competitors taking part including teams from the Ukraine and Belarus.
- Francesca Rameaux (Year 9) as part of the Capital Arts Choir performed Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde* Opera at St Paul's church in Covent Garden.
- Ciara Perry (Year 9) is taking part in a 22 day trek around Nepal over Easter as part of the Lewisham North Scouts group. The education initiative supports local Nepalese school EPHC.
- Show Jumper Luke Wilkes (Year 13) is training to take part in the qualifier round for the British Championships at Duckhurst in Staplehurst this March.
- Alex Coode (Learning Support) is training for the London Marathon to raise money for Spinal Research www.justgiving.com/Alex-Coode1.

With best wishes to all for half term

Richard Russell
Headmaster