



From the Headmaster

Dear Parents

The autumn term is one of the busiest in the school calendar and this year has been no exception. We began on a high with the news of our success in the public examinations over the summer. I wrote to you recently to highlight these results which now sit at 50% A*/A at A-level and 60% A*/A at GCSE. These and other academic achievements were celebrated at our Senior Prize Giving Ceremony in September, at which former Head Boy and President of the Old Colfeian Society, Alderman Gregory Jones QC, spoke with characteristic humour and wisdom after awarding 150 prizes to students from Year 11-13.

This term also sees the start of our admissions season for pupils hoping to come to Colfe's next September. We have welcomed over 500 prospective families to the school so far, with another open morning in November still to come. My thanks, as ever, to the pupils who give their time to help at these events and always with such enthusiasm. The feedback we have had from visiting parents has been positive in the extreme and we are lucky to have dedicated pupils who have such genuine pride in their school.

JUNIOR SCHOOL

It has been an equally busy and enjoyable start to the new school year for the Junior School. We were pleased to see so many parents at our Harvest Festival celebrations – a lovely occasion and the first public performance for many of our Nursery and Reception pupils.

Year 4 spent two action-packed days at an outdoor pursuits centre in Thurrock, Essex, participating in sailing, canoeing, climbing, archery and high-ropes activities – an opportunity for the pupils to challenge themselves and work in teams. On a related theme, we are delighted to have introduced Forest School to the Nursery and Reception curriculum this year. Led by a qualified practitioner, the children have been climbing trees, searching for mini beasts, planting beans and garlic and squeezing their own juice from apples in the orchard.

For Year 6 pupils the focus this term has been all about preparing for their transition to the Senior School next September. This has included an evening with parents to talk about the transfer process and our 'Learning is an Adventure' day where Junior School pupils, alongside prospective pupils from other schools, were given a taste of life in Year 7 through a range of group activities.

ACADEMIC

Year 13 students have been working hard on their UCAS applications since the second half of last term. Last Friday was the deadline for priority applications which include all medical subjects and all applications to Oxford and Cambridge. Twenty-five such applications have been processed for Colfe's students this year, which constitutes more than a quarter of the year group. Meanwhile Year 12 pupils have begun their programme of enrichment lectures. These hour-long, weekly sessions complement the academic curriculum and involve speakers from all walks of life who talk on a wide range of topics. Thus far, lectures have covered ethics mental health, the judiciary, and drug and alcohol misuse. Speakers have included Ben Heason on his expedition to Angel Falls in Venezuela, Emma Cole on her story of living with HIV, and ex-soldier John Bradshaw – who was blinded whilst defusing a landmine – on resilience. Thanks to Ruth Elliot for her organisation of this thought-provoking and challenging series of talks.

Year 9 pupils have taken two trips this half term: Latinists headed west to explore two of Britain's best-preserved Roman sites, the imposing amphitheatre and barracks complex at Caerleon in South Wales and the spectacular Roman baths in Bath. Meanwhile our mathematicians visited Bletchley Park, where they learnt about the top-secret home of codebreaking during World War II.

We were privileged to welcome author and Classics Professor, Michael Scott (presenter of, inter alia, the popular BBC Two series *Sicily*), to our first John Glyn Society lecture of the year. You may recall Dr Scott giving his public support to our parents' Latin classes when they were the subject of a Daily Telegraph article earlier in the year. Entitled 'The Gritty Realities of Ancient Greece', a packed Beardwood Theatre thoroughly enjoyed this fascinating talk on what life was really like in Classical Athens during one of the most influential periods in human history.

ART, DRAMA & MUSIC

Year 12 Art students have enjoyed two gallery trips this half term – firstly to the Turner Contemporary in Margate, where they viewed ideas and techniques that could then be used to inspire their own pieces in an artist-led workshop; and secondly to the New Art Centre at Roche Court in Wiltshire to undertake research for their Art and Graphics projects. Year 10 pupils also visited Tate Britain to investigate the British Art collection in preparation for their first mini-project for GCSE artwork.

Aspiring actors took to the stage at the start of term to audition for the Senior School production of *The Thirty Nine Steps*, under the leadership of our new Director of Drama, Natalie Maher. The cast were lucky enough to have a visit from actor Mike Evans – who played the lead in the West End production of the play at the Criterion Theatre – for a workshop on comic timing and characterisation. Performances will run from 11-13 November at the Beardwood Theatre and tickets are available to book online.

The music calendar began with Dominic Peckham, Director of the National Children's Choir of Great Britain, working with Year 7 to launch the Instrumental and Choral scheme which allows pupils to try different instruments for a term before choosing which to continue with. The Senior School hosted its first platform concert of the year, featuring performances from soloists and group ensembles as well as our first musician in residence, classically trained pianist, Ksenija Laskova. You can read more about Ksenija on our website. We are proud to have forged links with the world-renowned Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance. Our new, monthly Lunchtime Recital Series invites Trinity Laban students to Colfe's to perform to pupils, staff and parents. The first concert of this term featured performances by cellist Thibault Blanchard and violinist Ben Richardson. My thanks to Director of Music, Emma Bond, for this exciting innovation.

SPORT

The sporting year started on a high note when we welcomed British Olympian Swimmer, James Goddard, to the school to host a swimming workshop for Senior School pupils. Colfe's teams of all ages are already enjoying significant success in the pool under the direction of Sarah Manzi.

First XV Rugby are through to the second round of the Natwest plate having won against St Benedict's School 20-19. This was followed by an impressive victory over Reigate Grammar 48-7 in our most recent block fixture and preceded by significant victories over Bancrofts and Caterham.

U13 Netball A team had a superb win against Benenden (24-16) and are now through to the next stage of the Independent Schools Cup.

Year 7 and 8 boys' and girls' cross country teams have made it through to the regional round of the ESAA Cross Country Cup having both finished in second place in the first round held at Dulwich College.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS & TRIPS

Year 7 went to the Lake District for a week in the beautiful Borrowdale Valley and, despite the dreadful weather, had a fantastic time canoeing, rock climbing, mountain-walking and caving. For some this would have been their first taste of independence away from home. This is a special trip that stays with pupils long beyond their years at Colfe's, as was made clear to me recently when I met up with a large group of Old Colfeians in the City.

Year 12 students spent a day at Stubbers Adventure Centre where they participated in 4 x 4 driving, raft-building and leadership exercises that promoted teamwork, energy and communication.

CCF students are heading off today to camp at Wattisham while 15 pupils from Years 11-13 will be leaving for The Gambia over half term, continuing our long-standing relationship with the Kotu Senior School – helping to build a new canteen and developing our unique relationship with the host school.



INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- Zack Shamroukh (Y8) was the spring term winner of the National Busta Rhyme Young Writers competition. His poem 'Human Scars' was selected from over 5000 entries.
- Luca Thurlow (Y8) took part in the Aston Hill Black Run downhill mountain biking competition, taking first place. Luca will be competing in the Thai Downhill Series in Chiang Mai, Thailand, over half term.
- Nathan Chapman (Y8) has qualified for the National Biathlon Schools Championship next year.
- Scarlett Brown (Y9) has been selected to play netball for the U17 Superleague Team 'Pulse', in the National performance league.
- Luke Okosieme (Y12), who came second in the National U17 Indoors High-Jump Championship this year, achieved a personal best in August with an incredible jump of 2.02 metres.
- Holly Walsh (Y13) has recently begun a course in circus skills, specialising in trapeze and aerial hop.
- Nigel Le Gassick (OC 03) rowed non-stop and unassisted around Great Britain with a time of 38 days. This ranks him third out of the 19 crews that have attempted the journey (with only eight successful in completing it).

NOTICES

If your son or daughter wishes to change from school to packed lunches, please remember that you need to give half a term's notice. To switch over from the start of the spring term 2018, notification is needed before 6 November 2017. Please email pkeogh@colfes.com in the Bursary Office.

A reminder to any former pupils that the Old Colfeian Society AGM is on Wednesday 15 November, 7.30pm at Horn Park and the Old Colfeian Society Dinner is Friday 24 November, 7pm also at Horn Park. Tickets for the dinner are available to book [here](#).

I wish you all a restful half-term break and look forward to seeing pupils back at school on Monday 6 November.

Best wishes

Richard Russell
Headmaster