



From the Headmaster

Dear Parents

I hope the new term (and the New Year) has started well for you all. I was delighted to welcome pupils back to school earlier this month as we look forward to a busy and productive term ahead.

The arrival of weather more appropriate to the season has coincided with welcome news for our Oxbridge candidates, with offers to read Medicine at Churchill College, Modern Languages at Newnham College, (both Cambridge,) and Engineering at Mansfield College (Oxford). Other applicants for Medicine have received offers from other medical schools and several have been called for interview in the near future. Our hit rate with Russell Group universities more widely looks like it will be very high indeed this year. On a related point I am extremely grateful to all those parents and Old Colfeians who will be supporting the Careers and Higher Education Convention which will take place on Wednesday 10th February from 6.30 to 8.30pm. The dual nature of this event underscores our commitment to preparing pupils not only for university but also for what may come next. I look forward to welcoming all pupils and parents from Years 11 and the Lower Sixth as well as anyone in Year 10 or the Upper Sixth who wishes to attend.

The Year 7 entrance examination involved a record number of pupils this year: just over 350 in total, with almost equal numbers of boys and girls and 35 candidates from one local prep school alone. The prospective parents whom I have met already speak warmly about our school and, in particular, they remember how impressed they were with our pupils at the open mornings last term. It is especially welcome to hear that the academic improvements of recent years have been noticed. Our new Stewart Building is also attracting a lot of positive comment.

This term's first meeting of the John Glyn Scholars' Society featured Professor Geoffrey Hosking OBE who is a leading expert on Russia and the Soviet Union. He spoke with great knowledge and authority about Putin's Russia and the consequences of the break-up of the Soviet Union. Future events will include an address from Professor Paul Bew, an eminent Irish historian who will talk about the historical context and significance of the 1916 Easter Rising in its centenary year. Lord Bew is also the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life, in which capacity he may also be willing to take questions on duck houses in garden ponds. I am extremely grateful to Emerald Henderson, Head of Philosophy and Religion for her excellent organisation and promotion of the John Glyn Society.

Senior mathematicians have matched the success of the 1st XV rugby team with victory over Eltham College in the first round of the knock-out stage of the Hans Woyda maths competition. The finish was particularly close, with Cheran Suriyaprakasam clinching victory with a correct response to a tie-break question.

Congratulations to Cheran, Emma Williams, Arthur Drury and Nicholas Orde on a victory which takes us through to the last 8 of this prestigious competition. Thanks, as ever, to Dr Vijapura for his tireless support for extreme mathematics.



COLFE'S

Newsletter

New Year Resolutions have been reflected in a focus on kindness, friendship and happiness in our personal and social education programmes, paying particular attention to diversity, democracy and the law for years 1 and 2. I am grateful to those who have been leading this important work within the school, including Sarah Walsh (Pre-prep) and Naomi Herbert (senior school).

Thank you to those of you who have already responded to the music department's first 'musical instrument amnesty' whereby all donated unused musical instruments will be gratefully received and utilised for our Year 7 instrumental lesson scheme. Please let our acting director of music, Emma Bond ebond@colfes.com know if you wish to donate.

Year 10 cadets have returned from a leadership Cadre exercise in St Martin's Plain in Folkestone this weekend. This coincides with Major Chris Cherry's decision to relinquish his role as Commanding Officer of Colfe's CCF Squadron after twenty years of outstanding service. Over that time Major Cherry has done an exceptional job in developing and leading what has now become one of the most respected school cadet forces in the country. He will of course continue to run our extensive Outdoor Education programme as well as taking over responsibility for our partnership with the Kotu School in the Gambia. Command of the CCF will transfer to the capable hands of Squadron Leader, Garry Hooton.

The cessation of the rain has finally enabled our football teams in the senior school to commence their season with the 1st XI, captained by Freddie Beasley, kicking off with an emphatic victory (3-0) over Worth and two goals from Alex Harris. The senior netball teams (U18 and U13) have had good wins over Allyn's and Bullers Wood. The seniors also defeated Forest School convincingly earlier this week, discreetly supported by our newly appointed deputy Head, Donna Graham, who is currently the Senior Mistress at Forest.

Unaffected by the weather, Year 3 and Year 4 swimmers participated successfully in a gala at home against Merton Court, Farringtons and Oakfield. Further up the school, swimmers from year 7-9 put in strong performances in the Kent Secondary Schools' Competition with particularly impressive performances from those competing in the 100m Individual events and 200m, a number of whom were competing up an age group. Congratulations to Panos Philalithis, Denny Ashison, Ben Jarman, Marco Droghieri, Stan Greenleaf, Elspeth Oliver, Katie Deveney, Anna Hadingham, Christina Knyazeva, Sophia Kirkman and Blythe Jolley-Ellis.

Parents of pupils in the junior part of the school know already that we will be uniting the pre-prep and prep schools under single leadership, effective from next September. The Governors and I are confident that this will enable us to be (even) more efficient and effective, providing continuity of education across the 3-11 age range.

Recent individual achievements include:

- Luca Thurlow in Year 6 is representing Great Britain in the pinnacle of the BMX racing calendar – the World Championships - for the third time. This time he will be heading to Columbia for the week-long event in May.
- Music scholar Ruby Collins (Year 12) played principal bassoon at the Barbican for a performance of Beethoven by the London Schools Symphony Orchestra (LSSO) last week. It was her first principal role at National level.
- Hannah Orde (Year 13) played Madame Lyubov Ranevskaya in Chekhov's Cherry Orchard for the Blackheath Youth Theatre (Blackheath Conservatoire) at the Old Bakehouse theatre.
- Ana Lyons (Year 8) took part in a dance show for her dance academy, Zoo Nation (part of the Zoo Nation Company). Anna performed two street, hip hop dances at The Place Theatre in Euston.
- Charlotte Kirk, Arthur Drury and Feben Alamerew in Year 9 were invited by the Royal Institution to attend maths masterclasses at Greenwich University over the next five weeks.

With best wishes for this (remarkably busy!) term.

Richard Russell
Headmaster