



THE CEDARS SCHOOL

April 2017

Dear Parents,

Looking back over the term, it is hard to believe that so much has happened in such a short space of time. Back in January, there was no school orchestra, no sporting silverware and no link with Real Madrid, not to mention the Friday enrichment sessions and a number of other initiatives which were launched in the New Year.

Two of my personal highlights were the Easter Concert and the performance of *12 Angry Men*. The concert was certainly more ambitious than anything we have attempted before and the sense of occasion was intensified by the first ever performance of our new school anthem, *Sicut Cedrus Libani*, composed by Dr Bonnici.

12 Angry Men was also ambitious and, while it was not the first Cedars production to include music, the incidental music – again composed by Dr Bonnici - made a significant contribution to its success. The quality of acting was superb as was Mr Loembe's direction. The need for a more suitable venue for productions has become clearer than ever.

Turning to sport, I had not expected to see silverware on the mantelpiece quite so soon! Our Under 13 and Under 15 Rugby Sevens squads both won the Kingston Tournament in their age groups, beating some large rugby schools along the way. There were several other sporting highlights of the term, including football victories against Trinity and Wilson's and a defeat of Whitgift in the Surrey Rugby Sevens Tournament. Sport is going from strength to strength and, while cricket has not been our strongest game in the past, Mr Thisanayagam is quietly confident of further progress this season. Two new minibuses, which are due to arrive early next term, and an agreement to use local cricket nets, will help.

Staying with the sporting theme, I should really explain a bit more about the link that we now have with Real Madrid. The purpose of the Real Madrid Social Sports School is to help local young people acquire good personal qualities that will help them in their lives. The basic principle behind the project is that sport can be a great vehicle for personal development. That is why the aims of the Real Madrid Foundation are so closely aligned with ours and, indeed, we are now exploring the possibility of extending the scope of the Sports School to include mentoring in collaboration with another charity called CityWise. This would involve our Sixth Formers, along with university students, giving time to helping local children with their studies. It really is a very exciting project and I am sure it will bring great benefits to local people as well as to our pupils.

Real Madrid is always big news and so the launch attracted considerable interest from the press. We were even scheduled to feature on the evening news as camera crews from BBC, ITV and Sky hovered around the front lobby, cameras poised. As they waited, news of the terrible Westminster attacks broke and the majority of journalists present were instructed to hurry to various other locations to report on it.

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Despite being overshadowed by these tragic events, the launch itself was a success and the boys enjoyed meeting Real Madrid legend, Emilio Butragueño. Of course, Mr Butragueño was a great player in his day and one boy told me in hushed tones that he has even been accorded the status of a 'FIFA 17 Legend'. I am not 100% certain what that means – though I have an idea - but many of the boys do and they are suitably impressed. Once he arrived at school, it was clear why he had been chosen as an ambassador for the club. Mr Butragueño spoke powerfully to the boys about the importance of study and virtue, and his commitment to the work done by social sports schools was evident.

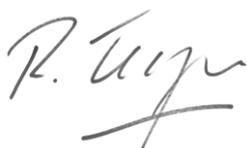
All of the events and developments that I have written about are very visible and we should not lose sight of the fact that often the most important things are the *least* visible. This is certainly true of the school. The routines of daily life – the lessons, the sport, the music, the clubs – are important in themselves but they also have a deeper purpose which is to bring about change. Your sons come to school to change: to improve; to increase their knowledge of the world; to sharpen their intellects; to learn how to live well; to learn how to get on with other people; to learn how to manage their time; and, hopefully, to learn more about the meaning of life, and to internalise the most important lesson of all – that our deepest fulfilment comes about through love and service of God and other people.

This brings me back to our school anthem, *Sicut Cedrus Libani*. The words are ancient, around two and a half thousand years old, in fact, as they come from Psalm 92. In our anthem, we use a re-worked English translation with the Latin refrain: *Justus ut palma sicut cedrus libani* – “the just man shall flourish like the Cedar of Lebanon”. The cedar ‘name-check’ is an obvious attraction of this verse but it is also a particularly apt summary of the aims of the school. Returning to the theme of the visible and the invisible, I spoke to the boys in our final assemblies about how the great cedar tree can symbolise great character. We may not see it on the outside but it is there, and the difference between great character and a lack of character can be as dramatic as the difference between a cedar and a bonsai tree. And it’s more important than what we *do* see!

Now that the great feast of Easter is here, I will finish with some words of encouragement from Pope Francis: “(T)he Good News [of Jesus’s resurrection] is no mere matter of words, but a testimony to unconditional and faithful love: it is about leaving ourselves behind and encountering others, being close to those crushed by life’s troubles, sharing with the needy, standing at the side of the sick, elderly and the outcast... “Come and see!”: Love is more powerful, love gives life, love makes hope blossom in the wilderness.”

The new term begins at 8.35am on **Thursday 20th April**. I wish you and your families a joyful and blessed Easter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Robert Teague
Headmaster