



**THE CEDARS**  
**SCHOOL**

14<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Dear Parents,

### **Another term**

The term just finished has seen several milestones passed, both for the school and for individuals. Most obviously, it has been the first term in which the school has had a full complement of year groups. Our small but growing Sixth Form is exerting a positive influence on the culture of the school as more and more of our older pupils start to take greater responsibility for activities and events. We have also seen our first university applications and I hope to be able to report good news on that front in due course.

The school's growth, while welcome, has put more pressure on the school site and made the new building project more urgent than ever. Some of you will have seen the plans when they were displayed in the main hall for about six weeks earlier this term. Essentially, the plan is to knock down the dining hall and replace it with a larger school hall and to build a larger new building on the site of The Beeches. The new building will contain three new science labs, a DT room, music area and various other classrooms and offices. Following pre-application meetings with Croydon Council, we expect to submit a formal application in the New Year with a July 2019 start date in mind. Once we have final sign off from Croydon, I will certainly circulate drawings of the design!

On the academic front, we were delighted with our second set of GCSE results. The proportion of top grades (8/9, equivalent to A\*) was three times the national average, and the average grade haul per pupil equated to between eight and nine grades at 7 (equivalent to grade A)! But the academic life of a school should not simply revolve around examination results. That is why it has been so pleasing to see the Becket Seminars and Friday enrichment flourishing so mightily under Mr Moloney's leadership. The enrichment programme is to be extended further from January, especially in the Sixth Form.

Another academic pursuit, debating, continues to go from strength to strength. Not only are our teams competing well with the best but there has been a huge growth in interest in debating as a co-curricular activity, as evidenced by our recent attendance at the Brexit Debate hosted by Intelligence Squared. We are looking forward to competing in the Oxford Union competition later this year. And earlier this week, **Tomas Nucette Fabelo**, was invited to the House of Lords to receive a prize for achieving third place in a national essay competition. Congratulations to Tomas and thanks to Mr Trafford for organising the school entries.

Those of you who attended last week's beautiful Advent Service will be aware of how rapidly school music is improving, and our recent triumph in the Worth rugby tournament is testament to

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the progress made in sport. One of the chief aims of a school's co-curriculum is to ensure that as many boys as possible are involved in activities outside of lessons. The benefits of taking part in school sport, music and other activities are well attested and I am grateful to Mr Thisanayagam for his promotion of the co-curriculum. There has been a marked increase in participation and I know that plans are in hand to increase it still further in the New Year.

### ***Staff changes***

You will already know of Mr Strinati's illness, and I can confirm that he will be taking sabbatical leave until the end of the current academic year. This is a heavy blow for the school but our thoughts and prayers are very much with Mr Strinati at this difficult time for him. He has promised to remain in touch during his absence and I hope that we will see him back here, in good health, before too long.

Mr Jamie Burfitt has given invaluable service to the school as a gap-year student during the last 12 months. He now returns to Australia where he will start a degree in Sports Science with teacher training. Jamie has been an outstanding colleague and he will be greatly missed. We wish him well in his future career.

Mr Alberto Kurti joins us next term as a part-time football coach. Mr Kurti is the holder of the highly regarded 'UEFA A Licence' and has worked for various local football clubs including Crystal Palace and Millwall. He also teaches sport at another PACT school, Oakwood.

Jamie Burfitt's place will be taken by Mr Greg Teague (yes, he's my son) who will spend the next two terms here as a gap-year student. Greg is a keen sportsman and a history graduate so will lend a hand in those and other areas of school life. I'm often told that there is a close physical resemblance between us, but I can't help noticing that he is taller than me and has considerably more hair than I do.

### ***Christmas is coming***

This morning, during our final assemblies, I talked to the boys about happiness, which always seems to be an appropriate topic at this time of year. It's also an important subject for all of us who are involved in education, whether as parents or teachers. We want happiness for those in our care but how do we help them to achieve it? There's a paradox at the heart of the search for happiness and it is this: that if we seek happiness above all else we do not attain it.

Happiness then is not something to be pursued. It is a more of a gift than an achievement. We can glimpse it, and sometimes taste it, but we cannot hold it in our hands. No sooner do we grasp at it than it disappears. Happiness here and now points to something greater. When St Augustine of Hippo wrote that "Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in You", he was expressing the profound truth that happiness this side of heaven is fleeting and imperfect.

We are made for more than all the world – even John Lewis PLC - can give, and it is not in seeking happiness that we find it but in seeking the good of others. In other words, love. Tolkien once wrote that a fairy tale's happy ending offers us "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief." Love is in every happy ending and that is where we start to discern God, if only "through a glass darkly".

In summary, if it is bad news that happiness is elusive here and now, then that is vastly outweighed by the good news that that is only the case because our capacity for happiness is so great.

I'll leave the last words to St John Paul II: *It is Jesus you seek when you dream of happiness; ... he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.*"

I wish you and your families every happiness over Christmas and in 2019.

Yours faithfully,



R. Teague

Mr Robert Teague  
**Headmaster**

Hilary Term begins on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> January** at 8.35 am.

