



**THE CEDARS  
SCHOOL**

7 July 2017

Dear Parents,

### **A vision of character**

Yesterday morning I received a document from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at Birmingham University. *A Framework for Character Education in Schools*, as it is called, provides a brief overview of what character is and the role that schools can play in developing it. It is yet another sign of a growing interest around character education that we have seen over the last few years. As you know, we (and before us, the other PACT schools) have always been committed to character development and, at times it has felt like we were ploughing a lonely furrow. But, in the words of a recent recipient of the Nobel Literature Prize, *the times they are a changin'*, and whereas, not so long ago, talk of character would elicit a raised eyebrow (or worse), now it seems widely accepted as “a good thing”.

That is encouraging but the controversy has not gone away completely. There is much debate about whether character can, in fact, be taught at school. I have sympathy with the view that simply adding lessons on diligence (say) to the curriculum is unlikely, on its own, to make boys more industrious.

At a deeper level, the importance of the virtues stems from an understanding of what it is to be human. Virtues help people to flourish but they are not merely tactics to ‘get on in life’. It may seem obvious but it is nevertheless worth saying that it is not the outward appearance of integrity that we seek, but integrity itself.

Our vision of character is integral to our vision of education. We recognise that parents are the first and most important educators of their children and the role of the school therefore is to play a part within the wider educational project of the parents. This perspective of education preserves the idea of school as, primarily, a place of academic learning. Schools also fulfil other important functions but their main business is development of the intellect. Character is developed in and through the stuff of ordinary school life, just as it is also developed through the routines of home life. Academic rigour should go hand-in-hand with character development.

There’s another reason why character lessons alone cannot do the trick. As Aristotle said: “*The aim of our studies is not just to know what virtue is, but to become good.*” Good dispositions are important but virtues are habits that are acquired through practice. Effective character education has to move beyond theory and be lived out through actions.

Another article I recently came across underlines the essential unity between academic and personal development. In it, the root cause of boredom is described as “*a passive mind not engaged with real things*”. Education is liberating. It engages the intellect with the great adventure of real life and empowers the will to act with greater freedom.

### **Another year over**

It is hard to believe that, just three years ago, there were 24 pupils at The Cedars. In September, that number will have increased sevenfold and the need for extra buildings will have become even more urgent.

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Every year has its highlights and challenges but, by any reckoning, 2016-17 has been a good one for the school and we all hope it will be crowned with GCSE success in August. This has been our first 'proper' GCSE year and though the Year 11 boys seem happy, we will have to wait for another few weeks before we know for certain how they have done.

It was a real pleasure this morning to give out a record number of gold, silver and bronze certificates for achievement in the UK Mathematics Trust national challenges and to congratulate several of our Lower School boys on achieving second place in the Salter's Chemistry Competition for the second year running. Let's see what happens next year.

Over the last few years – quite a few actually – I've grown accustomed to a certain amount of ribbing about the football team I support: comments about thieves leaving empty-handed after breaking into trophy cabinets and that sort of thing. Happily, I won't have to endure any such persiflage in relation to The Cedars' sporting prowess. Two of our teams, U13 and U15, won the Kingston Rugby Sevens outright in their respective age groups, and the U14 cricket team made it to the semi-finals of the county competition earlier this term. Many congratulations to the boys involved! We'll need a sturdy lock for the trophy cabinet.

There have been other significant sporting developments too. The acquisition of two new minibuses has been a real boon as has the addition of extra changing space in Park Lodge. The two major tournaments that we hosted in rugby and cricket were a tremendous success and we will host more in 2017-18. The launch of the Real Madrid Social Sports School has started to benefit the local community and will have an even greater impact in years to come.

The end-of-term musical concert on Wednesday was the most enjoyable yet and I am amazed at the progress made in such a short time by our musicians under the leadership of Dr Bonnici and Mr Holden. The headline news is that we now have an orchestra which is growing steadily and is developing an ambitious repertoire. We also have four choirs and, just this morning, our new Schola provided music during Mass for the first time. We are looking forward to the introduction of weekly lunchtime recitals next year.

### **Farewell**

Sadly, a number of colleagues will leave The Cedars at the end of this term.

**Mr Dan Brown**, our Head of Rugby, leaves to take up an appointment at University College School in Hampstead. Mr Brown is an outstanding rugby coach and I am sure the UCS 1<sup>st</sup> XV will be even stronger with his coaching.

**Mr Matthew Codrington**, having joined us in September on a one-year teacher training course, has secured a job at Belmont Prep School in Surrey. 'Codders', as he is affectionately known, has developed into an excellent teacher and, even though he was only here temporarily, he will be greatly missed.

**Dr Anthony Radice**, an exceptionally gifted teacher, leaves to take up a new post in the Inspiration Trust, a large academy chain in East Anglia. His role there will be to oversee the teaching of English in a large number of primary and secondary schools. Dr Radice has built up a reputation within the UK educational community as an eloquent advocate of 'core knowledge' and, in this new role, I am sure he will continue to influence the debate in the UK.

**Mr Geoff Richards**, one of our rugby coaches, has finally decided to hang up his boots and return to his native Australia. He has left his mark on Cedars rugby and helped to put us on the map. It is fitting that our U14s Sevens tournament has been named in his honour.

**Dr Tom Spencer**, who has taught Latin here since 2015, starts a Coding course in September before, hopefully, returning to teaching. Dr Spencer has been a wonderful colleague, always willing to get involved in extra-curricular activities, and the Cedars will not be quite the same without him. His trumpet playing will be sorely missed at school concerts.

All of these colleagues will be missed and they leave with our very best wishes for the future.

### **Welcome**

Due to the growth of the school, the list of joiners is larger than the list of leavers. For now I will list our new colleagues with a view to introducing them in more detail in September.

<b>Mr William Ash</b>	Teacher of Classics
<b>Mr Chris Ashton</b>	Teacher of Physical Education
<b>Mr James Bell</b>	Teacher of Geography
<b>Mr James Gray</b>	Head of English
<b>Dr John Mullaney</b>	Teacher of Chemistry
<b>Mr Stephen Trafford</b>	Teacher of Religious Education
<b>Mr Steven Traynor</b>	Teacher of Mathematics
<b>Mr Trevor Young</b>	Rugby Coach

In addition, Mr Davis has been appointed as Assistant Head with responsibility for pastoral matters; Mr Rix will replace him as Head of Upper School and Mr Woodward will be Head of Lower School. Mr Doran will take up his role as Head of Sixth Form.

Looking forward to the new academic year, there are a number of new developments in the offing. The opening of our Sixth Form is a significant milestone in the school's history and we expect to see the start of other changes in the near future, both in terms of the curriculum and the site as a whole. I should have more news in September.

### **Thank you!**

I would like to finish by thanking you all, most sincerely, for your support of the school. We are fortunate to have such committed families and I hope that we will continue to work together in the future, for the benefit of your sons. I wish you all a happy and restful summer.

The new term begins on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September** for Years 7 and 12, and **Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September** for all other pupils.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Teague  
**Headmaster**