



**THE CEDARS
SCHOOL**

6th July 2018

Dear Parents,

Another year

At this early stage of the school's development, it seems that every year is important in its own way and probably the most significant aspect of the last year has been the foundation of our Sixth Form, which in subtle but important ways, is transforming the culture of the entire school.

In other respects, the story is one of steady development. Our registration number was increased three times during the year by the Department for Education and as I write, we have a record 181 pupils on roll, still small but a far cry from the 24 pupils here just four years ago! For the first time, the whole site is now in use and several projects which came to fruition during 2017 have provided a new Art Room, Physics Laboratory and various workrooms to accommodate the growth in pupil numbers.

On the academic front, much work has been going on behind the scenes to further enhance the curriculum and to foster good study habits among the boys. Last August we received our first GCSE results and, according to DfE league tables we were 1st, 3rd and 4th in the three measures that apply to both independent and maintained schools in Croydon. This was pleasing as, while we expected to achieve high 'value added' (which we did), we had not expected to do quite so well relatively to some other schools in terms of raw attainment. In short, what this means is that the boys did exceptionally well in relation to their starting points.

In fairness to some of our neighbours, I should point out that the performance of certain independent schools in these tables was brought down by their decision to enter pupils for qualifications which are not recognised by the DfE. You may have seen an article on this subject in The Times last weekend. I don't really want to say more about it except to acknowledge that there are several good reasons why a school may decide to choose IGCSE instead of the new GCSE. It's not necessarily a matter of league tables and, in many cases, I'm sure it isn't.

Clear progress has been made this year in sport and music and the recent production of *The Play that Goes Wrong* was hugely enjoyable. The collaboration with Love Theatre Arts will continue and be strengthened further over the coming year. Debating has been an area of particular growth and our hosting of the London Regional Final has brought us a good number of invitations for 2018-19. Chess, too, is starting to take off and we recently received confirmation that we will be joining a competitive league in the autumn.

There have been a good number of group and individual successes during the year, not least William Awomoyi's election as Croydon's first ever Young Mayor. Given that he was the youngest of nearly 30 candidates and had probably the smallest 'core vote', it was a remarkable achievement.

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Last but not least, this has been the year in which our first ever cohort sat their GCSEs. Some will leave to study elsewhere and some will progress to our Sixth Form but I hope they will all keep in touch with us.

It's He's coming home!

I don't know whether 'it's coming home' in 2018 but I'm sure those of you who know him will be pleased to hear that Mr Peachey is returning in 2018. In all, we welcome four new teachers in September:

Ms Sonia Beetlestone has been appointed as Head of Art. Ms Beetlestone joins us from Colfe's School, where she has worked for 16 years, having gained her first degree in Liverpool before obtaining a PGCE in Manchester and an MA from Goldsmith's College, University of London.

Mr Robbie Carew will join the Science Department, specialising in biology. Mr Carew studied neuroscience at the University of Manchester and is a new teacher. A keen footballer (and a discerning student of the game with superb taste in football teams), he will also assist the sports department in the football season.

Mr Anthony Nelson takes up his role as Head of Design & Technology in September. He has previously worked as a Head of DT and Director of Studies at Latymer Upper School, Hammersmith and Halliford School among others. He has a BSc in Design & Technology from Brunel and an MBA from Thames Valley. Mr Nelson is a keen sailor, diver, golfer and chess player.

Mr Roy Peachey will need no introduction to many of you as he previously taught at The Cedars. Educated at the Universities of Oxford, London, and Lancaster, Mr Peachey has degrees in History, English, and Chinese Studies, as well as a postgraduate diploma in Lake District Studies. His book, *Out of the Classroom and Into the World: How to Transform Catholic Education* will be published on 10 July. Mr Peachey will teach English and Sixth Form Core Studies as well as overseeing the development of the school's curriculum.

Farewell

Sadly, we bid farewell to **Mr Gerard Holden** who is leaving to pursue his various musical interests. An outstanding musician and a great colleague, he has been a mainstay of school music since 2015. Many of you will be familiar with his band which played at the summer barbecues in 2016 and 2017. I very much hope that Mr Holden's association with the school will endure and that we will see him back performing before too long. Mr Fox will take over Lower School music duties for the time being while Dr Bonnici and our team of Visiting Music Teachers will continue as before.

Mr Jack Phillips has been with us as a gap-year student for the last academic year, having completed his A Levels at Trinity last summer. An all-round sportsman (though his main sport is cycling), he has been an invaluable help to the sports department and his quiet efficiency and good humour will be missed by all. Both Mr Holden and Mr Phillips leave with our gratitude and good wishes.

Bricks and Mortar

I promised last week that I would give an update on the progress of the various planned developments of the site. Though no new buildings have yet appeared, a lot has been happening behind the scenes. Before Christmas, PACT appointed a firm of planning consultants, DP9, to oversee the overall plan for the school site. Architects were also appointed and the services of

various other professionals, including an expert on heritage, were engaged. We are in discussions with Croydon Council about the future of the site and we hope to have three additional classrooms ready for use in the autumn as a short-term measure while we continue to work towards a new building on the site of The Beeches. Other short-term projects to be completed over the summer include a new classroom on the second floor and a new Sixth Form area and music practice rooms in The Beeches.

There is also a pressing need to develop some of the school's outside space and this is now part of the wider discussion with Croydon Council. One piece of good news is that we finally have permission to install cricket nets on the playing field. Although we received the green light too late for this season, we can now have the nets installed in time for next spring.

In the know

This time last year I wrote about how character development was slowly starting to move back into the mainstream of British schools. Another significant development in the UK educational landscape has been the growing influence of cognitive science. Researchers such as Robert Bjork, John Sweller and Daniel Willingham have made great strides forward in understanding how we learn, and the fruit of their research is now starting to influence how we teach.

One particularly interesting insight is the central importance of knowledge in the learning process. A few years ago it was common to hear talk about preparing young people for “jobs that don't yet exist” by equipping them with “21st Century skills”. Another popular refrain was: “Who needs to remember anything when we have Google?” This all sounds perfectly plausible but it doesn't square with the findings of cognitive science which indicate that if we want to think fluently, if we want to be able to analyse, synthesise, hypothesise, and so on, we need a solid foundation of knowledge. There's a sense in which those skills are really aggregates of knowledge, which is why skills are rarely as transferable as we expect them to be. In order to be able to think like a historian or a mathematician, you need to know a lot of history or mathematics.

Knowledge doesn't just provide a context within which thought takes place; it is the very stuff of thought. One of the reasons why it is so important is that our working memory relies heavily on our long term memory in order to think. A related insight is that learning must involve some change to the long term memory. If nothing has changed then nothing has been learnt.

This understanding of learning has consequences for both teaching and the curriculum. If knowledge is important, then which knowledge, exactly, should be taught? One of the attractions of the “skills agenda” was that it made such value judgements about the curriculum irrelevant, but now these important questions can no longer be sidestepped. Some knowledge is important to enable later learning. For example, it is useful for pupils to have some understanding of the historical period in which their literature set books were written. There is other knowledge which is just good to know. Blessed John Henry Newman in *The Idea of a University*, one of the most important books about education, puts it like this: “*Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward.*”

An analogy can be drawn here between character and knowledge. Both are useful at a fairly superficial level but both also go far deeper than their merely instrumental purposes. It could be argued that our most human characteristics are our capacity to love and to understand – our will

and our intellect. The virtues enable us, above all, to love. As Donald DeMarco has said, the virtues are “love in action”. Just as our will is there to love with, our intellect is there to know with – to apprehend goodness, beauty and truth. Knowing and loving, then, are intensely human activities which lead to our flourishing; and character development and the academic curriculum are parts of a unified whole.

This is why we are so keen to promote a genuine love of learning at school. Success in public exams is hugely important because of the doors it opens, but an education should aim beyond exam success and should endeavour to cultivate a sense of wonder and joy that will remain long after GCSEs and A Levels have been and gone. Our weekly enrichment sessions and seminars are important in this regard and, from September, boys in the lower years will be issued with a Study Manual which will distil the essential knowledge for the year.

Time

The theme of the final assembly of the year is usually related to time in some way and this morning was no exception. Boys will certainly need some rest and relaxation over the summer but the weeks ahead also provide an opportunity to do many things that would not be possible in term time. A change is as good as a rest, as the saying goes, and some of our pupils have interesting activities lined up. One of our sixth formers has secured an internship at the prestigious Polis Institute for Languages and Humanities in Jerusalem where he will spend five weeks working and learning Hebrew. And later this month, a group of pupils will be walking a section of ‘el camino’, the ancient pilgrimage route to Santiago.

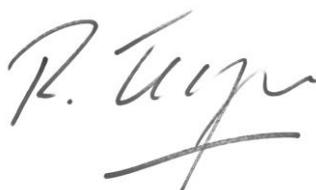
It’s not necessary to travel, of course, and the advice I give to boys leaving for their holidays is to plan to do *something* constructive. Seven weeks on a PlayStation may sound like an enticing prospect but we know it will not deliver happiness – quite the opposite. Human beings are made for greater things even than PlayStations and x-boxes...

Fr George, our chaplain, is fond of saying this: “If you’re going to waste time, waste time with people.” The implication, as I think the boys understood during assembly today, is that time given to others is not wasted.

I wish you a happy and restful summer and I hope too that you will be able to spend some time together with your family. Thank you all for your support during the past year.

The new term begins on **Wednesday 5th September** for Years 7, 12 and 13 at 8.35am and at 11.00am for the rest of the school.

Yours faithfully,



Robert Teague
Headmaster