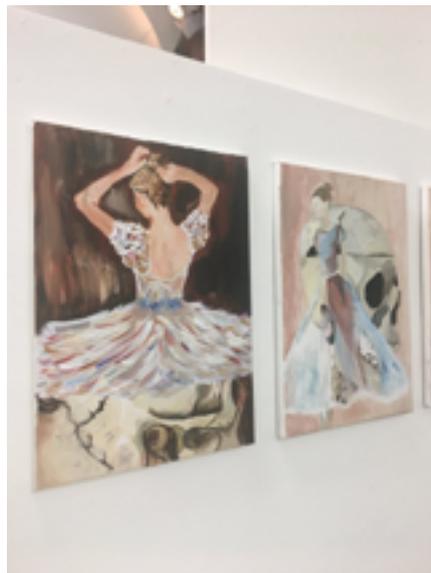
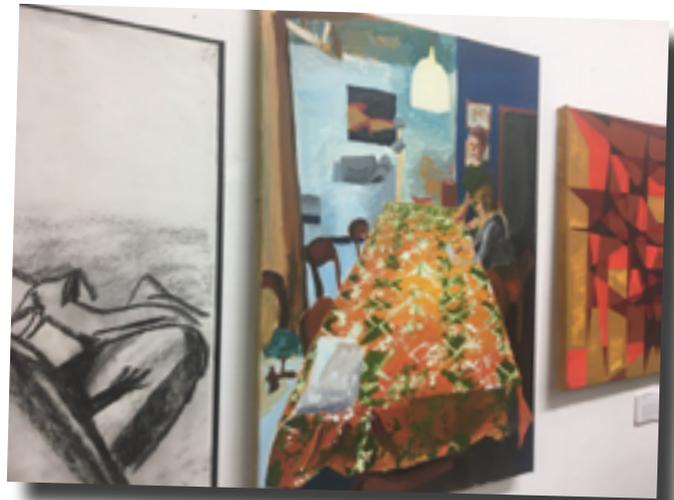


Dear Parents

Attending the IB Visual Arts exhibition at the end of last week and the West Road concerto concert this week, I was keenly aware that I teach in a remarkable school. It may be an extreme thought but I confess that I find myself musing whether there is actually any point to studying subjects other than the creative and performing arts!

Of course, I am only saying this for effect and, whimsically, I must say that I would not want to do without my own subject of Geography nor a few others! Nevertheless the creative arts have a special place in our curriculum. If students don't study them, they can at least all try to appreciate them, for it is really only in these subjects, arguably, that students have the chance to present something of themselves in the fullest sense with no restriction on style or medium. The fact that they can take the ideas of others, reflect upon them and reinterpret them or fuse them with original ideas that makes the creative arts just so powerful.



Knowing our own students helps to me place their art and performances in context and this is probably one of the reasons why I always find these events so powerful. Knowing that the same student has spent many of the previous weekends writing history essays or rehearsing for a cadets' parade or finalising their maths coursework means that their efforts in music rehearsal and art presentation are all the more laudable. The ability to maintain the mental agility to handle knowledge-intense subjects such as Biology or Economics together with the creativity and thought that is required for the arts is a worthy combination which chimes with what many employers are looking for. In fact, one recruitment consultant told me exactly this only last week.

Before you ask me, 'but what about sport?', I am not saying that the student who prefers to be involved in sports teams is somehow less thoughtful! The teamwork and camaraderie of sport as well as the need to practise and maintain fitness and expertise are admirable and highly attractive in the workplace. However, it is sometimes just worth making a shout about the arts, possibly in a provocative way, perhaps because they don't have the money and resources thrown at them beyond school in our society. The arts also have the potential to help us to slow down and think which is, I believe, something of value in its own right - just like reading deeply, for pleasure and curiosity (see an earlier newsletter from 25 November 2016 on why it is so important).

As this Easter vacation comes upon us, there is very much to celebrate and be grateful for in the 6th form. Our final assembly of term concluded with the acknowledgement that it was the last assembly for all the U6th to be together prior to their study leave commencing. We also noted that preparations for the Leavers' Service at Caius Chapel on 3 July and the Leavers' Dinner at Girton College on 4 July are well underway, as indeed are the plans for next September's Induction Dinner at St John's! There seems to be a never-ending spiral of activity and work that we probably all need to slow down and take stock on occasions!

Examination preparation is also ever with us especially, of course, in the U6th but also for many in the L6th who will take the final modules in the few, unreformed, A Level subjects. The danger could be that we see this time of year as being all about examinations and university decisions. These are extremely important but they have to be placed in a wider context of what is important and valuable in life so if students (and may be parents) find it useful to try to slow down a little and to pause and think this is probably a very helpful thing to do. Perhaps it will be by reading a book or watching a film or listening to a concert or attending an art exhibition or play that we can be rejuvenated and enthused about the tasks that lie ahead. Some would challenge this and say that a good kick of a football or a run (I continue to be impressed with Dr Tustin's 6th form running club!) is the tonic that is required. I guess, in the end, as long as we all have something that helps us to keep things in perspective and allows us to be challenged physically and / or mentally that is probably actually what we should be pleased about.

So, a final offering of best wishes to everyone for a happy Easter break and many thanks to the students and staff for the very many activities and events that have taken place over this term. Even just this week alone we have had a lunchtime talk on STEM careers and Canadian Universities from alumna Imogen Coe and a super afterschool Medical Ethics by Dr Julian Sheather from the BMA. We have a multiplicity of trips going out over the holiday including to Spain, Germany and to Ukraine. My thanks to the teachers for their hard work in making these possible.

Simon Armitage

Head of Sixth Form

Staff Farewell

Today we say farewell to Ms Caitriona McKnight as she steps down from Senior School and Sixth Form science teaching after almost three years with the Foundation. Ms McKnight has been a much valued member of the Physics Department and has also taught Chemistry in the Senior School. Her enthusiasm and energy will be missed, but we are pleased to say that she will continue to work for the Foundation as a part-time teacher of science in Dame Bradbury's School. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms McKnight for everything that she has done and to wish her happiness and success as she embarks on new adventures.

Talk on Medical Ethics by Dr Julian Sheather

The Foundation was recently treated to an excellent talk by Dr Julian Sheather of the BMA on medical ethics. He described the types of ethical dilemmas which those working in the caring professions are confronted with, drawing on real life case studies and the students debated the wide ranging considerations and value judgments which have to be taken into account. The topics included the right to have a child, obesity in children, euthanasia and situations which arise in theatres of war. Dr Sheather also works with MSF and was able to give an interesting insight into the role of the organisation and the difficult situations which the medical staff have to deal with in which ethical considerations are often entangled with political issues. Dr Sheather was delighted to have so many responses and questions to answer from the students and it was clear that the debates had clearly provided an opportunity to reflect deeply on some very thorny issues. All in all, it was a really enriching experience and Dr Sheather was hugely impressed by the enthusiasm of our students.

Mrs S. Thomas

A visit from Imogen Coe

"There is no education lost to travel"

We were delighted to welcome alumna Imogen Coe (left SPF 1981) and her colleague Alisha Koumphol, to talk at our 6th form about studying for a degree abroad, and STEM careers in particular, during part of the Cambridge Science Festival ending this week. Imogen was inspired by her own SPF Biology teacher, Mrs Patricia Munn, to study science further to her A Levels, and travelling around the globe, Imogen did just that, from Victoria, then California, before finally moving to Toronto. Now Dean, Faculty of Science, at Ryerson University in Toronto, Imogen is a strong advocate of international study and learning, particularly with such an international changing scene politically. Students were reminded that 'Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness' (Mark Twain). Students were able to ask questions about the costs of studying abroad, and other issues relating to overseas study.

Cambridge Nanosystems

On the 23rd of March, the Science Society at the Six Form hosted Dr Mieczakowski and Mr Schmid from Cambridge Nanosystems. Our guests talked about graphene, a not yet widely known material, and its potential, diverse applications. The presentation opened up an additional area of technology to our science students. The highlight of the visit was a video with an electrical circuit being 'drawn' on a piece of paper with graphene on Sharpie. This working circuit included a small battery and a glowing light bulb, and looked so simple, not like our own electrical circuits in the physics labs, made from twisted 'spaghetti' electrical wires. Our attention also focused on an iPhone made from a graphene-based material – the phone could be charged within seconds, have a non breakable screen and could even be rolled into a small tube. Such amazing applications of graphene led us to join our guests in saying "To graphinity and beyond!"

Eva B, L6, IB

Visit to John Bowlby Memorial Conference

Mrs Thomas and Miss Kotowska from our Psychology department recently attended the John Bowlby Memorial Conference held at the Institute of Child Health in London. This conference organized by the Bowlby Centre focused on Attachment Theory and its implications for psychological disorders in childhood and later life. It was attended by a range of Psychology professionals and provided a forum for dissemination and discussion of the latest research in this area. The insights gained during the conference will be passed on to our students both in lessons and in Enrichment and it is hoped they will broaden the knowledge which students gain from their A level and IB studies on this topic.



Oratory jousts

En février, huit de nos étudiants de Français ont assisté aux Joutes Oratoires (Oratory Jousts!) et ils se sont très très bien débattus! L'événement a eu lieu au Perse Upper, et Georgina W, Ewa B, Francesca P, Megan W, Serena L et Aidan G faisaient partie de l'équipe L6, et avec Nour L et Felicity R qui représentaient nos U6. Ils ont discuté des motions telles que le végétarisme, Brexit, l'égalité hommes-femmes et le nucléaire. Bravo à tous et à toutes!

In February, eight of our French students attended the Oratory Jousts! And they got into a very good fight! The event took place in Perse Upper, and Georgina W, Ewa B, Francesca P, Megan W, Serena L and Aidan Ge were part of the L6 team, and with Nour L and Felicity R representing our U6s. They discussed motions such as vegetarianism, Brexit, gender equality and nuclear. Congratulations to all!

You Said – We Did!

In 2016, we ran a survey across the Foundation which identified ways in which we could improve parent and carer communication.

Since this survey, the Marketing and Communications team have been busy developing a new website, which includes a brand new Parent Area. This new area brings all parent information into one easy-to-use section of the website.

As well as practical information on things like uniform, travel or weekly menus, you'll also find news and blogs from across the Foundation, as well as access to calendars, SchoolPost and WisePay.

You said...

"It's difficult to find what you need. I use practical info mainly."

"Information can be out of date or hard to find. E.g. uniform, travel, clubs and activities."

"It would be better if there were a parents' login section where one could access reliable info about upcoming events."

"The only information I have found it useful for is term dates."

"It is too wordy - needs to be more to the point, less promoting its attributes and more practical."

We did...

We have collated all information (including old 'practical info' into one central area for parents: www.stephenperse.com/parents.

Much of this information can now be found in a digital Parent's Handbook for each school. As this information is now online, we can regularly review and update it. www.stephenperse.com/parenthandbooks.

The new area includes a key events calendar - for activities such as forthcoming performances, exhibitions and talks. www.stephenperse.com/keyevents. NB: Dame B's events coming soon!

A calendar (filterable by school type) is now available, showing a broader range of key activities, including term dates. www.stephenperse.com/parentcalendar.

At a glance term dates are still there too! By creating a new area for parents and carers we can focus on promotional activities in other areas of the site, where it may be more appropriate.

Continues on next page...

You Said – We Did! *(continued)*

Other information you may find useful:

- Weekly menu planners: www.stephenperse.com/menus
- Parent and Friends Association: www.stephenperse.com/PFA

Coming soon...

We have additional website updates in the pipeline that will further improve the content for parents and carers. These include:

- A more dynamic area for sports fixtures and results
- An option to sync school calendar dates to your own calendar

We are always keen to hear feedback and new ideas from parents and carers, so please do drop us a line at news@stephenperse.com with any thoughts you have on this topic.