

12<sup>th</sup> December 2010

Dear Parents,

It is always a mixture of feelings in The Priory at the end of the Michaelmas Term. One can sense that the boys are very tired and looking forward to the comforts of home but there is always the anticipation of the carol concert, the house supper and the lure of Christmas to keep them going for just that bit longer. What the boys can do is to look back on a term in which much has been achieved and how, once again, the kind and generous manner in which they treat each other, their great good humour and their sense of individual ambition and common purpose, has combined to make a truly impressive house spirit.

As I said to the house in my speech at house supper, the quality of boy we have is, I think, unparalleled. That they do so well is partly a result of the care and attention they receive and in this regard, I do want to thank those many people who do so much in the house. The Priory is fortunate indeed to have a superb set of tutors; Dr Gould, Mr Carrington, Mrs Cosford, Dr Pitts and Mr Whiteman, who have a rapport with the boys which is so conducive to a happy, positive atmosphere and a matron, Andi Wolford, who devotes herself so selflessly to the boys' well-being. In addition to this, the team of ladies who cook and clean are so vital to the smooth running of the house. Last and certainly not least, I am very grateful too to Sarah, my wife, who every day takes up the role of housemistress here, minutes after leaving Foremarke as Head of English.

The arts have kept many boys busy of late: Will Hutchby, James Watson and Patrick Tuffy were all on stage in 'Macbeth' with Dan Oppenheimer and Josh Golding behind the scenes. Will Dingwall-Fordyce, Jake Leese and Ankit Rai were all involved in singing or playing in the carol concert with Jake and Cameron Melville also involved in the Christmas Concerts, Cameron also winning the Junior Brass this year. Musical highlight had to be our in-house carol concert where the renditions of various well-known tunes, and certain customised Priory favourites, were both imaginative and unique, and made an interesting prelude to the incentivising mince pies and sausage rolls. Our version of the Jackson Five's 'Blame it on the Boogie' in next term's Unison should prove sensational on this form, particularly if our own Louis Spence, Callum MacIntosh, can pull out some extravagant dance moves for the house to follow.

Sport has been a victim of the weather this term with the house poised to play a Reserve House final and a Senior House Match semi-final hopefully early next term. Both teams are strong and we should have a good chance of a memorable double. We have had a great many boys play 1<sup>st</sup> XI football this year: Oli West, Josh Golding, Doug Redfern and Patrick Tuffy, who all also played for the ISFA North team, Dan Moxham, Callum Elliot, James Lewis, Harry Croft, who won 2<sup>nd</sup> XI player of the year, Alex Clarke-Dowson and Callum MacIntosh, along with a host of others in their various age groups. The juniors, led by

old hands, Ramsay, Bell and Sanders, and buoyed by a number of new stars in Bennett, Bee, Storer and Sooriah did well in the JHM competition and will be among the favourites next year. As ever, the league teams, captained in the juniors by Bell and Sanders and in the seniors by Richard Doxey have proved both exciting and entertaining watching. In the seniors, the ceaseless running of Sam Martin and Andrew Jopson and the goals of Leaver and Harold have proved important. Never the strongest in the pool, the house achieved a creditable mid-table position in the inter-house gala, James Lewis' individual win and a number of good relays being the highlights.

While all of this was going on, we also managed to raise over £2000 for the Sale of Work through the usual combination of an excellent and well-supported Curry Evening, the quiz, the raffle, Gladiators, the slave auction and Wear What You Dare Day, the wonderful ducking stool and the car wash. I am grateful to messrs. Gould and Watson for organising much of this and to the boys for their hard work.

In many of the exam year groups, now is a good time to take stock, once a good rest has been had. Some coursework has already been done but some opportunities still remain to get marks in the bank before sitting the exams. Notes too need to be reviewed and reading done to put each candidate in the best possible position for the brief but intense Lent Term programme which focuses more intently on exam techniques and learning.

Some pupils in the Upper Sixth have vital AS retakes on their return in January and proper revision for these over the break could help the focused pursuit of high grades in the summer. In addition, the Lower Sixth also have early modular exams which could set them up for a very successful summer.

I was pleased in general by the approach to work of the boys in the house, as a responsible work ethic is something we have worked to foster, not just in prep time but for a few hours in their free time during the week and at weekends. There are many who have received excellent reports and exam results and can be justly proud of their achievements thus far. Some need to heed the advice; from subject staff, from tutors, and from me, to improve their performance in certain areas but the good news is that there is time to do this if they act now. Our best wishes go to Godfrey Chan and Josh Golding who are awaiting contact from Cambridge which we hope will be good news regarding an offer of a place for next October.

**Next term begins on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January (boarders should arrive between 6.00 and 9.00 pm that evening) with lessons beginning for everyone on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January.**

Sarah and I have thoroughly enjoyed the company of your children this term: they are a credit to you. We are so pleased at the enthusiasm, skill and determination with which the house approaches life.

It only remains for me to thank you for your many kind gifts at the end of term and to wish you all a very merry, restful and happy Christmas from Sarah, me, Jack and Josh.

All best wishes for the New Year