

Dear parents,

Although this has been a term in which events for Sarah and I have sometimes taken on an added poignancy once the decision to leave The Priory at the end of the year had been finalised, as I said to the house at our thoroughly enjoyable house supper on Friday night, it has been one of the best. The house community is as strong as I can remember it and the boys, in their many different ways and with their many different strengths and qualities, really are a pleasure to be around.

I made a point at house suppers of highlighting the work of the chef, Viorika Llewellyn, and of all the other ladies who cook, clean and iron for the boys to send them to school full, smart and ready for the day ahead. If the reports I have just read are anything to go by, the results of their labours are impressive indeed. The girls and ladies, from Jess, our ever-reliable tea girl, through her aunts, Mel and Hayley, who are in the kitchen, to her grandmother Steph, who runs the dining room, to Matron and Sarah, have a real input into the boys' lives and in the latter cases especially, often a profound one and I am grateful for all of their hard work.

The gentlemen are well represented too and it is my great good fortune to have a fine team of tutors who selflessly give of their time and expertise for the good of the house. Messrs Carrington, Pitts, Gould, Whiteman and veteran new boy, Mr Kew, have been faultlessly dedicated in their support of your sons and I am deeply grateful for their efforts.

The pastoral care network also extends through the older boys as well and the role of the head of House, a position of real responsibility, has been superbly executed by the sympathetic and loyal figure of Henry Eldred ably helped by his committed team of prefects: Andrew Jopson, Callum Elliott, Sam Martin, James Watson, Ed Gould, Ben Chapman, Oli West and Jonny Rowles. I cannot stress enough how pleased I am at the kindness and good humour with which older boys treat younger boys in the Priory and the delighted response it receives. For me and Sarah, this has been at the heart of everything we have tried to do in the house and I firmly believe it gives the boys a confidence and security which underpins all they attempt at Repton. Each boy deserves respect and in turn has a responsibility to preserve

that of his fellow and, on a daily basis, this translates into an often entertaining familiarity for which I cannot praise your sons enough.

This term, I was very aware of just how many things the boys did in addition to the many academic requirements they face which, year on year, seem to add more pressure to young lives. I think that they withstand that pressure very well (some too well at times, it has to be said!) but it is impressive how much else the Priory boy does in any given week of school, taking advantage of the marvellous opportunities at Repton.

I think too, it is always important to have examples one can point to, or be impressed by, and seek to emulate. For musicians, many play instruments and have lessons, but as a next step, might try an ensemble like Jazz band or Concert Band like Josh Riley, John Shore, Deepak Devikanand or Jake Leese. They might like drama but then might like to audition for the school play, as Harry Benson and James Watson did in the marvellous 'Repton Mysteries' or seek to be involved backstage as Tom Hunter and Dan Oppenheimer were. I pick a few names but many more also sought to extend their Repton experience by taking the initiative. How good it was too to see so many boys going to Debating Society, Gurney Society - our innovative scientific experimentation society, named, incidentally, after the housemaster who gave the Priory building to the school - or to the Literary society or Medsoc.

Sport has, as ever, loomed large this term and so many boys have represented the house and school. Sam Lloyd, Patrick Benc, Dom Bennett and Ben Clague are all in the hockey development squad and we wish Ben well in his quest for a welsh cap like his father, SJC. Kieran Taylor, Ben Chapman and Victor Li are all playing 1st XBV rugby. The U15 footballers are still going strong in the ISFA cup, after an amazing 8-0 win away at Millfield, with Bennett, Sooriah, Bee and Riley all playing. Amongst the older years, old teamers Oli West, the captain, Callum Elliott, Doug Redfern, were joined by Andrew Jopson and Joe Humphreys in the Repton 1st XI this year and Henry Eldred also made his debut. All played their part in a good season but Oli West has been simply magnificent in goal and once again represents England in the full ISFA team. This talented group, joined by the fighting spirit of messrs Martin, Ramsay, Chapman, Leese, Lloyd, Cole, Benc, Bell, Carver, Sanders and Leaver brought the SHM football trophy back to its spiritual home with a fine 2-0 win over Latham in driving wind and rain. What was also great to see in such atrocious conditions was the rest of the house urging their fellows on to victory.

This win capped a memorable term in which the junior league team (Wells, Devikanand, Annable, Mann, Frost, Robinson, Chaffey, Edwards, Clowes, Martin, Benson, Storer, Jacques and Rai) captained by Ben Clague beat The Cross 8-1 in a really great house occasion. The juniors also enjoyed victory in the house basketball (Bell, Ramsay, Mann, Sanders, Hunter, Kam, and Chaffey).

I would also like to thank all of you for your fantastic generosity in supporting the Curry Evening and the Sale of Work day, in particular the through the very generous donations for the Priory hampers, which, all told, managed to raise over £2000 for the Sale of

Work. I am very grateful to the lower sixth, but especially to Marcus Wells, Billy martin and Victor Li for organising much of this and to all of the boys for their hard work.

It doesn't seem quite fair to talk about work as the festive season is so eagerly anticipated after such a long term, but there is always now a need to consider it carefully and then to act appropriately. In many of the exam year groups, now is a good time to take stock, once a good rest has been had. Some Controlled Assessments have 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. Equally, 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, and the O Block will have mock exams later in the term. As ever, much expert advice is contained within the reports which accompany this letter. I remain buoyant at the prospects for this hard-working set of boys and pleased by the grades and comments their efforts have elicited from my colleagues. Although the magnificent SHM football trophy is dear to my heart, winning the Cattley Shield as top academic boys' house last term on the basis of the average (and I mean that mathematically, not as a criticism!) efforts of each pupil in every set of reports was a proud moment. All Priory boys should aim to be Renaissance men! Finally, I would like to wish Yaroslav Popov every success in his application to read Economics at Cambridge.

Next term begins on Wednesday 4th January (boarders should arrive between 6.00 and 9.00 pm that evening) with lessons beginning for everyone on Thursday 5th January.

All that remains is to thank you all so much for your very generous gifts at the end of term and, from Sarah, me, Jack and Josh, to wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Best wishes,