



ABINGDON

From the Headmaster: Michael Windsor, BA, MA

10 February 2017

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

This first half of term seems to have flown by and happily the vast majority of our pupils and staff seem to be recovering from the various illnesses that have been doing the rounds.

I hope parents are able to find the time to complete the questionnaire that was sent out earlier this week. I am very keen to gather parents' opinions as we plan for the future of the School.

The last few weeks of this half term have been dominated by two outstanding drama productions from extremely talented senior students at Abingdon and St Helen's. *Much Ado About Nothing* was immensely enjoyable to watch, lively, witty and very well received by the sell-out audiences. The ambitious and challenging production of *London Road* was superbly acted by the young cast and expertly accompanied by a demanding musical score. The audiences were enthralled. My thanks go to the drama departments at St Helen's and at Abingdon.

The School's musicians have also been taking to the stage with the New Year Charity concert featuring boys from all year groups. The music was impressive, ranging from Vivaldi's Concerto for Two Cellos (soloists: Alex Reynolds and Carl Olavesen) to variations on the James Bond theme from the Lower School and Brass Bands. The First Orchestra ended the concert with the first movement of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, a work that features in their tour over half term to Germany. The tour celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the School's exchange programme, which was established by Sir James Cobban, with the Bielefeld Ratsgymnasium. It is a tremendous partnership to have between the two schools, much valued by all involved, and I look forward to hearing the boys play on tour.

The music department also welcomed the Fitzroy Quartet to school to give a chamber music workshop for musicians in preparation for the first round of the National Chamber Music Festival For Schools, which took place this week.

Besides the Bielefeld tour over half term we also have boys on the usual German language exchange and a skiing trip to France. In addition, in what sounds like a fascinating experience, 12 boys together with 18 girls from St Helen's will be visiting the Cosmonaut Training Centre at Star City in Russia and spending time with former NASA astronaut Mike Foale.

Over the last three weeks boys have been involved with an interesting array of activities. A group of third years took part in the First Lego League Animal Allies Challenge and learnt how to programme a robot. The annual Big Physics Quiz at Birmingham University was a success with boys also enjoying a tour of the campus and a lecture on gravitational waves.

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Parents joined boys and staff for a trip to Reading to see professional artists from China's Jiangsu Province Department of Culture perform "Culture of China, Festival of Spring." And in the first stage of this year's Young Enterprise competition, three teams tempted the crowds with their innovative ideas at Oxford's Templars Square shopping centre.

The boarders are enjoying their weekend activity programme that saw fourth years from Crescent and School House taking on the girls from Downe House at ten-pin bowling. Third years, as part of their community service activities, made shortbread hearts as Valentine gifts for the ladies at the Older and Bolder exercise club. I am sure they were very much appreciated - and with the 14th February looming and living in a predominantly female household - I wonder if there were any left over?

Under the guidance of Jeremy Taylor, our Director of Drama, and professional filmmaker Duncan Pickstock, students from the AFU are working with Sobell House to produce a film about the hospice. It is not an easy project for the young students and one that will stretch them in many ways. I wish them all the best with the film and look forward to seeing it once completed.

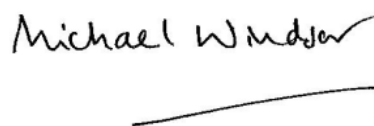
On the football pitch there were excellent wins for the senior teams against St Edward's and Shiplake but more mixed results against Reading Blue Coat and Reading Grammar. The Hockey Club recorded very impressive victories over Eton for the 1st XI, 16A, 14A and 13A teams and further wins against Bloxham. The 1st XI and the U15 and U14 A and B teams finish the first half of term unbeaten, an excellent record and best of luck for the next half.

The Swimming Club is looking particularly strong with an impressive victory for the U14 squad at the Warwick 100s last week and the Cross-country Club picked up a clean sweep at the Vale Championships at Radley College, winning the U13, U15, U17 and U19 races. The Cross-country teams went on to run well in the Wellington relays and the County Championships. Congratulations to the five athletes who were selected for the county team to represent Oxfordshire in the English National Schools Championships. In other sports, the Squash Club progress through the National Schools Trophy with a good win against John Hampden and a further win against Bradfield, and the Badminton Club, not to be outdone, secured victories over Wellington and Bromsgrove.

We wish our rowers every success in the GB trials over half term and individual congratulations go to Henry Isherwood and Harvey Jupp. Henry has been selected for the U18 South West Rugby squad and fifth year Harvey, a promising spin-bowler, was voted 'Young Cricketer of the Year' by the Wiltshire and Gloucester Standard.

I wish everyone in the Abingdon community all the very best for the break, and I look forward to a busy second half of term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Windsor". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Michael Windsor