



ABINGDON

From the Head: Miss OFS Lusk, B.Mus

22 January 2016

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

Michael St John Parker (Headmaster, 1975 -2001) referred to the Lent Term as “the concrete in the middle”. I hope that everyone has made a positive start to this important term for consolidation and getting through syllabi, as well as continuing to enjoy all that Abingdon has to offer outside the classroom.

I welcome a number of new staff to Abingdon this term.

Mr Jeremy Thomas joins us as a Physics teacher, science partnerships co-ordinator and tutor in Austin House. He will also be helping with sailing and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Miss Beata Podskarbi joins the Finance team as an Accounts Clerk, and the following join our Housekeeping team: Miss Sharon Knight, Miss Liann Johnson and Miss Louisa Ross. I hope all these new colleagues enjoy their time at the School.

I also congratulate Mr and Mrs Simon James on the safe arrival of baby Toby over the Christmas holidays.

At the beginning of term, I was delighted to be able to share with you the Independent Schools Inspectorate’s findings from their recent inspection. To receive ‘Excellent’ across the board is a tremendous achievement and I am absolutely thrilled for everyone here. It is lovely to receive such a ringing endorsement from this independent body.

The Christmas holiday seems distant now but I would like to thank my 21 colleagues who took trips out over the three-week break. Besides the activities in the UK with training for rowers and footballers and the CCF at Kineton, we also saw hockey players competing in Barcelona, and, what sounded like a fascinating, and at times very tough, winter activity trip to Finland.

On Tuesday there was great excitement at the unveiling of the ‘Science Fusion Tower’ - the hugely impressive, 10m tall sculpture that spans the three floors of the Yang Science Centre. The artwork, which is the centrepiece of the new building, rises through the stairwell and illustrates themes from Biology, Physics and finally Chemistry on each of the corresponding floors. Made from recycled zinc coated

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steel and enamel the themes range from nuclear fusion to the tree of life. The piece is inspirational. My thanks to sculptor Matthew Lane Sanderson for this wonderful creation and to OA Martin Iredale and his family whose donation made the sculpture possible.

Also this week we enjoyed an excellent New Year Concert featuring a diverse range of music from talented musicians of all ages. This followed a very impressive Scholars' Concert on Wednesday and an excellent Woodwind Masterclass with Paul Harris. Many thanks to all involved. I am very much looking forward to the Chilingirian Quartet's concert at Abingdon on 10 February. This is open to the public as well as boys, parents and friends and, if their previous concerts are anything to go by, should be a very enjoyable evening.

Many congratulations to James Hogge in the Fifth Year, who finished as runner-up in the National Cipher Challenge, run by the University of Southampton Mathematics Department. James won an £800 prize and has been invited to the prize giving ceremony at Bletchley Park in March. Many congratulations also to the boys who achieved impressive results in the A2 Physics Olympiad.

Academically there is a lot to achieve this term as revision and public examinations will be upon us before we know it. It is a tense time for those boys applying to university and we wish them luck with their applications. Reassuringly, the vast majority of Abingdonians do get to their first choice of university – but not without a lot of hard work over the coming months. On Tuesday we welcomed back Rob Fishpool, OA 2013, who spoke to sixth form linguists about the university application process, choosing courses and studying languages, including doing a language ab initio and the year abroad. Many thanks to Rob for his time. My congratulations to all the boys who have received offers from universities to date, including the 13 boys and OAs who have Oxbridge offers or places. Please do not worry if boys have not received offers yet – there is a wide variation in the timing of offers by universities and it is very course dependent.

Hockey and football fixtures have got off to a good start this term with the 1st XI footballers beating Radley College and an U18 development squad defeating Our Lady's in pre-season matches. There were good performances against Bedford Modern and Aylesbury Grammar and the Thames Valley Football League has also got underway. Hockey results against St Edward's were excellent with eight wins from ten matches and a good win for the 1st XI, who also recorded one of the few wins in the block fixture against Wellington the following week. The Squash Club is doing very well in the U19 National Competition having defeated Bradfield, RGS High Wycombe and St Edward's. The Lower and Middle School competed in the Vale round of the National Badminton Competition this week playing some tough matches with the older boys progressing through to the Oxfordshire round.

My very best wishes to everyone in the Abingdon community for a happy and successful 2016.

Yours sincerely

Felicity Lusk

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