



ABINGDON

From the Head: Miss O.F.S. Lusk, B.Mus

11 December 2015

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

Christmas is upon us after a very full and busy Michaelmas term. I hope that everyone is enjoying the various Abingdon Christmas touches, all those festive trees dotted around the school, and the mince pies which have made an appearance during this final week.

This term, the music department demonstrated the tremendous range and standard of music on offer at Abingdon. Chapel Choir enjoyed the opportunity to sing choral evensong at Dorchester Abbey and we were treated to a superb Joint Choral Society performance of Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle. Girls from St Helen's and members of the wider Abingdon community joined Abingdon boys and were ably supported by a joint Abingdon and St Helen's orchestra. In November we were privileged to welcome Dylan Quinlivan-Brewer to take a brass masterclass followed by a trombone recital and last week the Sheldonian Theatre was a fitting venue for the Christmas Concert with choral, wind and jazz bands, Gospel Choir and First and Second orchestras. Today the term will end with the whole school in full voice at St Helen's Church. Very many thanks to the music department for a stunning musical term.

The drama department has been working on Lower School and Third Year productions this Michaelmas, the plays were totally different and both thoroughly enjoyable and very engaging. The Lower School's "Calamities", which included work from OA Edward Rowett, had the audience laughing out loud whereas "Brainstorm" from the Third Year saw many members of the audience shed a tear. Accolades for "Brainstorm" were tremendous with audience members tweeting their congratulations to the ten third year boys whose perceptive performances gave a moving insight into what's behind 'typical' teenage behaviour. Third year drama students also benefitted from a fascinating voice coaching workshop with Ian Sexon, brother of Terry our Chemistry Technician.

As I look at all the activities that have gone on in the past few weeks of what is an extremely busy term, the energy, drive and enthusiasm of staff at Abingdon has got to be applauded. We have had joint events with St Helen's, not only musical but the MFL society lecture on French culture and psychology students from both schools attended the Science and Pseudoscience conference at Bristol. Abingdon's History Society enjoyed their annual quiz, welcoming back former teacher Dr Hubert

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Zawadzki as quizmaster. Community Service has had a very busy term culminating in a Christmas party for Abingdon residents, which is always a pleasure to see. Our physicists visited Warwick University for a series of lectures ranging from Superconductivity to Formula 1 and six boys also attended the All Party Parliamentary Engineering Group meeting at The House of Lords. Sixth formers attended a very topical series of lectures at the Annual Presentation on Asia in London with an extremely impressive line-up of speakers. It's not surprising that Abingdon boys debate well and many congratulations to Sam Farrar, Blake Jones, Tom Hampshire, Ryan Clune and Alasdair Czaplewski who were all recognised with awards for their performances at the recent Model United Nations day conference.

With all the extra-curricular activity plus academic commitments I was very impressed by the hours of practice that must have gone into the very slick performances from eight competitors in the Strictly Abingdon Teachers Come Dancing. Much fun was had by all and I feel this will become an annual opportunity to see the movers and shakers amongst our multi-talented staff!

Many congratulations to Ben Schneider, Angus Shen, Harry Lei and Jerry Yang who have succeeded to the final of the Senior Team Maths Challenge which will take place in London in February. Fending off 31 other schools in the regional final the boys gave an excellent performance and we wish them well for the final. Congratulations also to Giles Stratton who was runner up in the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire's Law Essay Competition on 'The Compensation Culture'.

The Chess Club has had a strong term and are joint 4<sup>th</sup> in Division 3 of the Oxford and District Chess League following a recent win against MCS Blackbirds. The Club welcomed Matthew Rose, Oxford City Chess Club's best player and the Oxford Times Chess correspondent, to take on 20 of our players at the annual simultaneous display. After 2.5 hours Mr Rose came out on top but many congratulations to Ray Ren who put in a very impressive performance to win his match.

One of the abiding features of Abingdon, I feel, is the modesty of the boys – it's impressive especially as the talent here is plentiful. It was one of the many things that attracted me to the School and it remains something that continues to impress. At a recent Fourth and Fifth Year assembly, where boys are commended for achievements, the range was excellent. Music accomplishments included the piano diploma and brass, drums, double bass, choral and bagpipe successes. In sport there were county representatives for badminton and hockey plus swimming, rugby, shooting, diving, orienteering, tennis, trampolining and fencing achievements not to mention AFU, drama and service awards. We can rest assured that Abingdon boys are making the most of all opportunities available to them.

As the Michaelmas term draws to a close we reflect on some excellent sporting achievements. The Swimming Club has had a very successful term, culminating in wins in both the U18 Freestyle and Medley finals at the Bromsgrove Relays and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> for the U15 team. The Cross-country Club had good results at the Eynsham 10k, Harrow and St Albans and the golfers are through to the regional final of the ISGA knockout competition at the end of February. Congratulations to Tom Digby, U6th, who beat the World Record for rowing 5000m on the indoor rowing machine.

The Rugby Club has had a good term with recent wins for the senior teams against KES Birmingham and Marlborough. In the block fixture against Bedford – a very strong rugby school – the 1<sup>st</sup> XV played a spirited game. Many congratulations to the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV who have had an unbeaten season against a very strong fixture card. On Wednesday, the 1<sup>st</sup> XV took on a tough and talented Bromsgrove team in the fifth round of the Nat West Cup, although defeated, the Abingdon squad fought hard and should be very proud of their performance in this match and in their achievements this term.

I wish all Abingdon families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Felicity Lusk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Felicity Lusk