



ABINGDON

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

2 October 2015

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

Term is proceeding happily and we are all benefiting from the extended summer and the opportunity to get outside.

I welcome Mrs Hongmei Wang, Language Assistant, and wish her well as she starts her time at the School.

I congratulate the following staff on the new additions to their families: Mr and Mrs Andrew Hall and their son Flynn; Mr and Mrs Mark Earnshaw and their daughter Poppy; Mr and Mrs James Golding and their daughter Emily; and Mr and Mrs Peter Coke and their daughter Philippa.

Congratulations to James Anderson-Besant in the Upper Sixth who has won the prestigious Organ Scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge. James has secured a deferred place and will spend 2016-17 as the Organ Scholar at Gloucester Cathedral. At Cambridge, James will be joining another Abingdon musician, Hugh Cutting, who has just taken up a place at the same college as a Choral Scholar.

In other achievements, fifth year Aravind Prabhakaran has created and coded his own computer game that has been accepted by the iTunes Apple Store and congratulations to the ten boys who received awards in the National Chinese Calligraphy Competition in which over 50 schools took part.

Amongst the many events that have already taken place this term we have welcomed several interesting speakers. Professor Keith Ward discussed the Philosophy of Idealism in the Edmund Society Lecture and Dr Andy Greenfield spoke to sixth form biologists from Abingdon and St Helen's about mitochondrial diseases and how they can be prevented. I am very grateful to the many eminent speakers who take the time to come and talk to us.

I am looking forward to the annual screening of the new films from the AFU taking place tomorrow after Open Day. The evening is a showcase for Abingdon's young creative talent in this very highly regarded Other Half activity. The AFU offers a tremendous opportunity for students to work with industry professionals and an

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impressive number of boys go on to successful careers writing, performing or producing for stage and screen. I was delighted to see that the AFU got a mention in The Week magazine's Independent Schools Guide where Abingdon's Other Half provision was voted 'Best of the Best'. We were also considered by the Tatler School Guides 2016 as "most parents' top choice" of the "excellent schools in Oxfordshire".

The Other Half is well underway this term. 12 fourth year boys enjoyed their Bronze DofE practice canoe expedition on the River Thames, camping overnight and improving a range of skills from cooking to canoe rescues. 45 fifth form boys also completed their Silver Duke of Edinburgh's three day practice expedition in the Peak District with most climbing Kinder Scout.

This year's "Be the best you can be" programme was launched in Lower School in spectacular fashion with the visit of Mike Mullen, former World Champion and 2014 UK Champion in BMX halfpipe. Mike encouraged the boys to realise that "the biggest challenges will teach you the best lessons" and that self-reflection and never giving up are crucial if you want to succeed. The lower school staff found themselves more fully involved than they might have expected with Mr Jenkins learning how to do a 'trackstand' on stage and the tutors volunteering themselves to be jumped over in an outdoor demonstration of Mike's BMX skills! (There is a tremendous photo and video on the website.)

The rugby season got off to a good start with ten teams winning against Berkhamsted followed by an excellent Plate victory for the U13s in the Dragon School Rugby Festival. The 1<sup>st</sup> XV narrowly lost in a tense match against Eton last Saturday but the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> XVs both had good wins. This week Sydney Grammar School came to Abingdon and we had the pleasure of reciprocating the hospitality shown to our boys during this summer's rugby tour of Australia and New Zealand. The tourists stayed with host families and played two excellent matches, resulting in two wins for the home side, against our 1<sup>st</sup> XV and an U15/16 team.

Golfers had a good opening fixture of the year against Radley College and the swimming team were on excellent form at the ESSA Secondary Schools Gala; we wait to see if they have qualified for the national finals in November.

Tomorrow is one of the busiest days of the year for the school as we welcome visitors to our Open Day. I am sure many will want to see the new Science Centre; however, we are not taking visitors inside tomorrow but all is on schedule for the opening on 15 October. I very much look forward to welcoming everyone to Abingdon for our Open Day.

Yours sincerely



Felicity Lusk