



ABINGDON

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

6 November 2015

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

I hope that everyone enjoyed the half term break.

I wish a warm welcome to three new members of staff during October: Miss Alice Crouch has joined the Philanthropy and Alumni Relations Department as Alumni Relations Officer; Mrs Helen Morris joins the Health Centre as Assistant Nurse; and Mrs Denise Chiddington joins our Housekeeping department. I wish them a happy time at the School.

We say farewell to the following members of staff: Mrs Sian Cave, Management Accountant, and Ms Sharon Cousins, Housekeeping. I wish these colleagues well in their new positions.

There was a palpable sense of excitement as boys, parents, staff and guests gathered to celebrate the opening of the Yang Science Centre just before half term. We were honoured to have the eminent scientist, Professor Sir David Weatherall, Regius Professor of Medicine Emeritus at the University of Oxford, to open the building and to be joined by Lady Weatherall and their son and OA, Mark. I was not only delighted by Professor Weatherall urging boys to 'turn everything they are taught about science on its head', but also by lower sixth former Jonah Walker talking of the 'buzz' amongst boys about the new facility and how it will bridge the gap between school and university science. James Anderson-Besant composed a marvellous fanfare for brass ensemble and Grant Baldwin (Senior Science Technician) provided the sound effects to the 1812 Overture! Many thanks to all those who have worked tirelessly to bring the project to fruition. A video of the Science Centre can be seen on the website.

The week before half term also saw the House Singing Competition. Ten polished performances of current hits and classics from the 60s, 70s and 80s raised the rafters of the newly refurbished Amey Theatre. School House took the cup with a wonderful performance of *Shosholozza* with a very impressive Zulu rendition from Solomon English.

The music department held the second of the Scholars' Concerts this week. These provide a platform for new young talent and we will watch their progress with

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pleasure. We have much to look forward to with the musical finale to this term; the carol services and concerts herald the start of Christmas for me.

I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about the recent School House boarders' trip to London to complete the London Monopoly Challenge. 40 boarders from all five year groups were split into teams and given four hours to visit as many locations as possible that feature on the classic London Monopoly board. In each location they submitted a photo of themselves with the street sign and points equal to the value of the property on the board were awarded. It sounded great fun, I wouldn't mind having a go at that myself!

I was also interested to hear about two new Other Half activities that got underway this term, the Entomology Society, where young entomologists learn insect husbandry, and the Lego Architecture Club where boys have been researching iconic buildings and then using Lego to design their own. You can see a bit of what they get up to on the website.

The Chess Club, which is a popular and long standing OH activity, has started the season well with a win in their first match of Division 3 of the Oxford and District Chess League, having been promoted at the end of last season. The Club also enjoyed a win in the National Schools Championship with both Abingdon teams qualifying for the zonal stage after defeating Radley. I congratulate Rafi'i Al-Akiti and Ray Ren who played for Oxfordshire in the Chiltern Chess League.

The first half of term finished on a high for the Rugby club with the 1st and 2nd XV's both winning matches in the local derby against Radley College. Over half term there were three rugby tours with the 3rd and 4th XV's visiting Somerset and the U14 A and B squad playing in Cheshire. The 1st XV travelled north to play a very tough fixture against Kirkham Grammar.

Although hockey is not played at school this term, the Hockey Club has enjoyed notable success outside school with 15 players involved with England Hockey's Single System and Charles Stoker and Max Carter Keall going through to the Futures Cup, where selection for the national squad takes place.

The swimmers set new school records in the gala against St Edward's and Stowe finishing first in all three age groups. Daniel McNamara also put in very impressive performances at the ESSA Inter-Divisional Championships.

The Cross Country Club had excellent runs, finishing second and third at the Longworth 10k and taking the first three places at Sunningwell.

Fencing got off to a fine start to the year with a win against Winchester in the first fixture and James Fotherby competed successfully at the Hamlet Open. Ben Schneider, who has fenced at a national level for some time now, competed for England at the Junior Commonwealth Championships this summer, winning the gold in the U17 Epee – what an achievement.

Also over the summer the Rifle Club shot well at the National Small-bore Rifle meeting with strong performances from Henry Waterson and Drew Farwell. More recently the club has enjoyed considerable success at the Oxfordshire 50 metre competition. Magnus Gregory continues his kayaking success winning a bronze medal for GB in the K2 event at the World Championships in Hungary.

Abingdonians have been out and about in recent weeks. In October two school exchange visits got underway with the Spanish visit to Santiago de Compostela and we welcomed visitors from Bielefeld in Germany. Over half term, classicists enjoyed a fantastic trip to Croatia, boys undertook training for the upcoming Vietnam expedition and rowers trained and competed in Philadelphia. Boys also took part in DofE Gold and Silver Canoe practice expeditions and Gold and Silver yachting practice expeditions.

I'm just back from observing a chemistry lesson in the Yang Science Centre. It really is the most glorious space and the boys are clearly enjoying their new surroundings. Not sure about that pale grey carpet (not really practical for boys and mud ...) but otherwise there is a tremendous sense of space, light and colour. I hope that you will be able to visit on a future occasion to see for yourself.

Yours sincerely



Felicity Lusk