



# ABINGDON

From the Headmaster: Michael Windsor, BA, MA

14 October 2016

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

It seems hard to believe that we are already approaching half term. It has been a very busy few weeks and I have been delighted to see pupils so engaged in school life. I was particularly grateful for their excellent contribution to our Open Day on 1 October, when they made our visitors feel very welcome and gave them an opportunity to find out more about all aspects of the School. Many visitors commented on the quality of the tours and on the courtesy and insight that our pupils had shown.

I have been very pleased to see so many of our pupils showing their commitment to others over the past few weeks. The Charathon was an opportunity for every single member of the school to do this but it was also great to see a considerable number of pupils and staff completing the Oxford Half Marathon last Sunday for a range of local and national charities. Another particular pleasure has been to hear pupils reporting back on individual research that they undertook over the summer. Their presentations have been varied and insightful and have been a terrific example of the love of learning and of ideas that is a feature of life at Abingdon.

During my first half term at Abingdon, I have been very impressed by the range and depth of talent of both students and staff. Over the last three weeks we have enjoyed the AFU's 13<sup>th</sup> annual screening, the Music Scholars' Concert and the House Singing Competition, very different events but all examples of what Abingdon does well.

The Lower School was inspired by the presentation from paralympian and motorcycling world champion Talan Skeels-Piggins who launched this year's 'Be the Best you can be' programme. Our Joint MFL society also enjoyed their guest, Dr Helen Abbott, Professor of Modern Languages at Birmingham University, who joined them for the celebrations of the 15<sup>th</sup> European Day of Languages. We were delighted to welcome Dr Catherine Heyer of the Department of Physics at Oxford University to speak to sixth formers at a Physics problem-solving workshop. The boys welcomed Dr Heyer's very useful advice for Oxbridge applicants and enjoyed the challenge of the vector mechanics problems, designed by the Isaac Physics project team at Cambridge University.

Congratulations are due to Ivan Leung who achieved the highest mark in the country in Edexcel IGCSE Geography this summer. Ivan has been nominated for an award

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for excellence from the Royal Geographic Society. Six 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year linguists have also received awards in the 2016 National Chinese Calligraphy competition.

We have been able to celebrate plenty of success in a number of sports over the past few weeks. I would like to congratulate every pupil who has represented the School this term but particular congratulations are due to the 1st XV for their unbeaten start to the season, which has included fine, hard-won victories against Eton and Warwick. The day of the Warwick match was rounded off by the very enjoyable Touchliners' dinner, when we welcomed James Haskell who gave an insightful and highly entertaining speech. I am grateful to the Touchliners parents who put so much time in to ensure that the evening was a success.

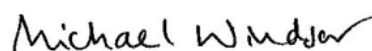
The Boat Club has also had a good start to its competitive season with four wins at Reading Small Boats. The U15A swimmers were very impressive at the ESSA Secondary Schools Relay regional qualifiers, breaking two Oxfordshire records. The Swimming Club went on to have a tough fixture against Harrow, narrowly losing but with some excellent personal bests and record breaking swims. In tennis the U14s defeated Dr Challoner's and now have Hampton School between them and the regional finals of the top 16 in the country. The Abingdon Vale biathlon time trials saw some good performances and the U18 boat at the SB20 National Championships picked up a well deserved first place.

The Abingdon Science Partnership, ASP, which is run by the School with the aim of widening access to science in the community, is co-ordinating the Abingdon Primary School Science Partnership alongside Fitzharrys School. The Primary School Science Partnership has recently achieved national recognition for their commitment to improving science teaching and learning by the Ogden Trust. This is excellent news for the five primary schools involved and for ASP. This week the ASP also hosted a very well received National Space Academy masterclass.

Over the last ten days we have hosted our partner school Ratsgymnasium from Bielefeld, Germany and it has been a pleasure to see the friendships develop between the students. This successful partnership will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. Many of our pupils will be involved with school trips over the half-term break. I hope that they enjoy their experiences and I will look forward to hearing about them on their return. I hope too that the next two weeks will offer some time for rest and recuperation. An excellent time, I would suggest, to enjoy some wider reading too...

I will look forward to seeing pupils again on Monday 31 October.

Kind regards



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Michael Windsor