



ABINGDON

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

3 July 2015

Dear Parents, Colleagues, Governors and Boys of Abingdon,

We have reached the end of the academic year 2014/15 and what a year it's been. Looking back through these letters, I'm amazed at the achievements and progress of the boys.

I am delighted with the appointment of Michael Windsor who is to succeed me in September 2016. I am sure that the School will flourish under his leadership.

News of governors: Emily Hohler, who is a Mercers' Company representative on the governing body, steps down this month. She has been a wonderful support to us all, so interested in what we do and her particular influence will be seen in Matthew Lane Sanderson's sculpture which has been commissioned for the Science Centre, and will grace the three storey stairwell in December.

Three colleagues retire at the end of this academic year.

Nick Pritchard was one of the last appointments of Headmaster James Cobban, who led Abingdon from 1947 to 1970. Nick's 46 years of teaching may well be a record. As well as teaching maths, latterly part-time, Nick ran a very effective cross-country team, and has been involved in football here for the last 20 years. An able mathematician he is renowned as a crossword setter. Rumours of his earlier life as a pop impresario are still met with "no comment". Nick's commitment to one-to-one maths tutoring is set to continue after his retirement.

When Chris Cross joined Abingdon she was already an experienced Head of Learning Support. Her work here as our first full-time professional quickly blossomed. She won the confidence of the boys, parents and staff, and has greatly helped the learning of the boys. Her work has always been warmly praised in our various School Inspection reports, which have reported that the boys are keen to seek the help of the Learning Support department - a recognition of a real transformation in pupils' perceptions.

Jan Wijek came into teaching seven years ago after a career in business and IT. As well as teaching, coaching tennis and tutoring, Jan has been very active in preparing our best mathematicians for the rigours of university entry.

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We also say farewell to the following members of staff who are leaving Abingdon:

When Vanessa Penrose became Head of Maths seven years ago there had recently been a large change of personnel in the department. Vanessa has effectively built up a large team, including training up many staff new to the profession. She has broadened the approach many take to the classroom, and our participation in external competitions has flourished. Seeing computing as a natural adjunct to mathematics she has developed opportunities here for the boys. Vanessa's commitment to teaching and learning shows its further development in her new school-wide role at Cokethorpe as Director of Academic Development.

Estelle Slatford first came to Abingdon as a modern languages assistante in 1996, and returned later in 2002 to teach French. During her time she has been a very effective Head of French and is often seen out running with the Cross country Club. She leaves for Bournemouth where her husband, whom she met at Abingdon, is to be a Head.

Ed Davies' nine years at Abingdon, since his arrival as a newly-qualified teacher, have seen him make a significant contribution in many areas, notably in history teaching, rugby and football, and among the boarding community. First as a live-in tutor and subsequently as a boarding housemaster, Ed has continually brought new ideas and worked to improve our offering to the boys. He leaves to be Assistant Head (Middle School) at Rugby School.

In 2010 Rachel Yarrow joined Abingdon as Second in Department, and has been head of English for the last three years. Much has happened in the department, with many boys going out on theatre trips, the appointment of a writer in residence, and many more boys studying the subject at A level.

During the last four years in her part-time post Ruth Tufnell has contributed to the flowering of artistic activity, with boys doing well in Young Art Oxford.

When Rob Colbourne arrived in 2012 he was still writing up his DPhil and was new to teaching Classics. As well as developing his craft he has been involved in cross country and athletics.

During Amber Waite's three years at Abingdon, her drive and enthusiasm for Chemistry have shown themselves in the very promising start made to our science partnerships and in the new role of adviser on applications to American universities. Her leadership qualities have been recognised in her promotion to head of department at Ashford School.

Andy J Hall first came to Abingdon as a music assistant and returned to teach composition part-time. Andy's great ability as a composer and his natural gift as a teacher have made him hugely successful in this role.

Matt Poynter left his career as a surveyor a year ago and came to teach geography part-time. He has been heavily involved in rugby, rowing and the boarding community, and leaves for a full-time post at Dulwich College.

The pace of the end of term has been fast and furious. The last two weeks have seen a myriad of events from the recognition of a multi-talented year group at Leavers' Day and the end of an era celebration at the Griffen Ball to induction days for new boys. We have seen the musical talent to come in the Second Orchestra at the Summer Concert and at the Lower School Concert, which is reassuring as we say goodbye to some exceptional musicians this year. I will follow their careers with interest. Sporting activities have culminated in inter house competitions and of course the rowers at Henley, who had a disappointing early exit.

Since my last letter I am pleased to say that we have been granted planning permission for the new 3G football/rugby pitch at Tilsley Park. Work will take place over the summer alongside refurbishments to the school campus including the Amey Theatre. The Science Centre is on track and we have a meeting at the beginning of August to finalise the schedule for taking over the building.

As many of you will already know Waste Court is to become Austin House from September 2015. James Golding will be taking over from Edward Davies as housemaster but the name Austin House will be a permanent fixture as with School House and Crescent.

Last week the School launched its first Abingdon Anthology – a collection of 37 short stories from pupils, staff and our Writer-in-Residence, Jason Hewitt. We have contributions from the First Year to the Sixth Form and from staff across a wide range of departments including the Health Centre. What a lovely legacy for the School and many thanks to the Annual Fund for financial support for the project.

Congratulations go to Anthony Bracey who continues Abingdon's impressive track record of UK selection for the International Linguistic Olympiad. Anthony's achievement marks three consecutive years of Abingdonians representing their country and we wish him luck for the competition in Bulgaria at the end of July.

Our partnership with Fitzharrys School saw two recent events with the lower sixth Greek set giving a presentation to a Year 8 drama class and a joint lesson on Computational Physics. The Abingdon School Science Partnership is also thriving with activities this term ranging from Family Science Club to Continuing Professional Development for science teachers.

The boys have had a creative few weeks with some of the Lower School, who didn't go on the Normandy trip, enjoying a joint Art/Classics workshop. The boys turned their artistic skills to illustrating classical Greek gods, the Myth of Perseus and to making Metopes. We also had a musical treat last Monday when boys and staff were invited to perform any style of music in our own Fête de la Musique.

Over the last two weeks boys have taken part in CCF camps, visited the House of Lords, enjoyed the classical sites of Fishbourne Roman Palace and set sail in Greek waters. They have also walked and canoed for DofE expeditions. The Silver Award canoeists executed an impressive rescue of a sheep that had fallen in the river, it makes for an entertaining video on the website! The Lower School has been particularly busy with the culmination of their Be the Best You can Be! programme, the Carnegie Forum, athletics at Tilsley Park and a tense final of the lower school pool tournament!

The 1st XI cricketers have had a good season despite their early exit from the National T20 competition and the U16A, U15B, U15C XIs teams all had impressive unbeaten records. The golfers achieved an excellent second place in the ISGA National Plate Final and there have been good tennis results particularly the U15A IV coming third in the Eton Pairs competition. We wish the Rugby Club every success with their tour of Australia and New Zealand later this summer and our best wishes to all the boys and staff who are involved in the trips to Moldova, Honduras and India.

It always takes a few days to return to normal after a busy end of term and I am really looking forward to having the time to relax with a glass of NZ wine and take a few minutes to savour the “term in pictures” on the school website. It is a wonderful way to reflect on what has been a fantastic term and indeed year for the School.

I wish you all the very best, especially those leaving Abingdon and those waiting for exam results in August. I hope you have an enjoyable and relaxing summer and I look forward to seeing you all refreshed and raring to go in September.

Yours sincerely



Felicity Lusk