

8th September 2008

To: All Parents

### **Beginning of academic year newsletter**

I hope that you and your family enjoyed the summer break and that the new academic year has started well for your son.

#### **1. Examination results**

We are delighted with the excellent examination results which the boys achieved this summer. At A Level, 70.4% of the entries were awarded A or B grades, and almost 10% of the Upper Sixth (7 out of a year group of 72) are on their way to Oxbridge. The 7 students are: **Richard Barker** (Natural Sciences at Magdalene College, Cambridge), **Christopher Bryant** (Mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge), **Richard Chew** (Classics at Emmanuel College, Cambridge), **Shantanu Kafle** (Law at Magdalene College, Cambridge), **Scott Mody** (English at Christ Church, Oxford), **Christopher Stanton** (History at Peterhouse College, Cambridge) and **Richard Stanton** (Theology and Religious Studies at Pembroke College, Cambridge).

We were very pleased to be informed by Edexcel, the UK's largest awarding body, that **Christopher Bryant** was among the top ten students nationally. Christopher sat the Further Mathematics (Additional) examination and achieved one of the highest overall marks.

Over 20% of the year group achieved at least 3 A grades. Five boys (**Christopher Bryant, Richard Chew, Andrew Hoyle, Scott Mody** and **Joshua Taylor**) achieved 5 A grades; four boys (**Thomas Brooks, Ciaran McCaughey, Joshua Okhiria** and **Richard Stanton**) achieved 4 A grades; and seven boys (**Richard Barker, Niall Gaffney, Joshua Garside, Shantanu Kafle, James Mallon, Usamah Sohail** and **Christopher Stanton**) achieved 3 A grades.

At GCSE, the percentage of entries graded A\* or A was 53.1%. All boys achieved at least 6 passes at Grades A\* to C.

Two boys achieved an A\* in each of their subjects: **Nicholas Hobhouse** (12 passes at A\*) and **Alexander Jackson** (10 passes at A\*).

The following boys, almost 20% of the year group, achieved either A\* or A in all of their subjects. (The number of A\* Grades is given in brackets.) **Robert Hernandez** (9), **Ethan Clough** (8), **Mitchell Cocker** (8), **Martin Hagan** (8), **Christopher Long** (8), **Thomas Barling** (6), **Matthew**

**Grindrod (6), Joseph Martin (6), Simon Powell (6), Matthew Latham (5), Jonathan Tsim (5), James Tsim (4), Edward Turck (4), Joel Watkinson (4), Harpreet Sahni (2) and Samuel James (1).**

This has been an excellent year for BGSB. I congratulate the boys and their teachers for working so hard to turn their high aspirations into high achievements.

## **2. World Challenge Expedition to Mongolia**

Another highlight of the summer was the school's first World Challenge Expedition. 17 senior boys and 4 members of staff spent a month in Mongolia. The expedition consisted of four elements (acclimatization, charity work, trekking and, at the end, some days of rest and relaxation) and was the culmination of two years of planning, preparation and fund-raising. The expedition was clearly an immensely enriching experience for all who took part. An evening is being planned for boys, parents and staff to hear more about the expedition and details will be announced in due course. In the meantime, a second expedition is being planned – to Peru in the summer of 2010. This expedition will be offered to boys currently in the Fifth Form and the Lower Sixth.

## **3. Homework**

Homework is an integral part of the learning process. Boys are made aware of the importance of homework and of the expectation that it be completed to the best possible standard. It is very helpful if parents encourage the boys in such good habits as doing their homework each evening (at least on Monday to Thursday each week) before engaging in other activities. This year's homework timetable will be sent with the next newsletter.

Boys in the First to Fifth Forms are expected to record their homework in their termly calendars each day. These calendars are inspected and signed by Form Tutors during the Form Period on Thursday mornings each week. **We should be very grateful if parents were to inspect their sons' calendars each week and, on Wednesday evenings (prior to the Thursday morning Form Period), sign the calendars in the space provided.**

The following time allocations should be regarded as guidelines:

1st Form	20-30 minutes per subject
2nd Form	25-35 minutes per subject
3rd Form	30-40 minutes per subject
4th Form	35-45 minutes per subject
5th Form	35-45 minutes per subject
L6th	4+ hours per AS subject per week
U6th	6+ hours per A2 subject per week

While writing about homework I should like to emphasize the importance of boys regarding 'homework set' as the minimum amount of work which should be done each evening. Once boys start their GCSE courses in the Fourth Form, they should be doing two hours' homework each night (Monday to Thursday, with four hours being done at some stage during the weekend). Parents may be interested to know that I said the following to the boys in Assembly last week:

*I have no doubt that the amount of time and effort you spend on your homework has an effect on the grades you achieve in your public examinations. A disciplined setting aside of time each evening – at least Monday to Thursday, with Friday's homework perhaps being done over the*

*weekend – is important. 1st Formers – you should be spending between 1¼ and 1½ hours each night on homework; 2nd and 3rd Formers, between 1½ and 1¾ hours; and 4th and 5th Formers, and 6th and U6th, 2 hours. If you finish what has been set before that time has elapsed, use the remainder of the time for consolidation, revision or further reading.*

#### **4. Three matters relating to PE and Games**

a) **Muslim boys and Ramadan** We wish to be sensitive to and supportive of the boys during this period. We also wish them to participate as fully as possible in their normal school routine. In recent years we have adopted the following guidelines for PE and Games lessons:

- a) Boys should participate in all PE lessons except swimming.
- b) Boys should participate in Games lessons if they wish to do so.
- c) Boys will not be expected to shower.
- d) Any boy who wishes to be excused from Games lessons is expected to bring a letter from home, addressed to Mr Hilton, our Director of Sport.

I trust that these guidelines are acceptable to you and I should be grateful for your support in ensuring the boys' compliance with them.

b) **Parental support of matches** Parents are warmly invited to attend sports fixtures – particularly those on Saturday mornings – and to come for refreshments in the Dining Hall afterwards. Such parental support is greatly appreciated by both boys and staff.

c) **Games kit** We have new PE and Games kit which is available for all boys in the school. The full kit is compulsory only for boys in Introitus and the First Form. The new football shirt will, however, be required for all boys who represent the school at football. We will no longer be wearing the striped shirt for school football fixtures, although this shirt may still be worn during Games periods. We are, therefore, asking all boys who represent the school at football to purchase the new navy shirt from one of our two suppliers. Boys in the Second Form and above will not be required to purchase the new football shorts and socks – but they are, of course, welcome to do so if they wish. Our first football fixtures of the year are on Saturday 13th September and it is hoped that all boys representing the school will have the correct shirt.

#### **5. Absence procedure**

I should be grateful for your cooperation with our procedure relating to absence. If your son is absent from school, and we have not previously been notified of the absence, we ask that you 'phone the School Office (0161-797 2700) between 8.15am and 8.45am on the first morning of absence and ask for his Form Tutor to be informed. (A member of the School Office staff will 'phone the parents of a boy who is expected in school and who has not arrived by 9.30am.) When your son returns to school you are asked to provide his Form Tutor with a written note explaining the absence. This enables us to record the absence as an authorised absence.

#### **6. Parking**

I would like to remind parents that, from this week, the school playground will no longer be available for use as a car park during the school day. With so many cars being parked on the playground each morning and afternoon, we are very concerned about the possibility of an accident and of injury to the boys. (The playground will be available for cars when we have such evening functions as Parents' Meetings, Concerts, etc.)

### **7. After school supervision**

From this term boys are permitted to stay at school until 5.30pm if they so wish. They will have to be on the first floor of the LRC and will be expected to get on with their homework or other private study. They will be supervised and there will be no charge to parents. We hope that this facility will be useful to parents who are not able to collect their sons at the end of the school day. Boys have been told that their behaviour is expected to be exemplary – and that, if it is not, the facility will be withdrawn from the boy concerned.

### **8. Parents' Meeting for parents of Upper Sixth boys who are taught in the Girls' School**

This meeting, at which parents are able to meet with subject teachers, takes place in the Girls' School on **Tuesday 16th September**, beginning at 7.00pm. U6th Formers (who are also welcome to attend the meeting with their parents) should make appointments with their teacher(s) in the Girls' School.

### **9. Staff INSET day : Friday 3rd October**

Parents are reminded that the Junior School and the Senior School will be closed for a staff INSET day on Friday 3rd October.

### **10. Open Morning : Saturday 4th October**

This occasion is for parents who are considering BGSB for their sons. We will publicise the event in various ways, but I should be very grateful if you were willing to encourage those known to you who are thinking about their sons' schooling to come and see what we have to offer. Parents, as well as the boys themselves, are important ambassadors for the school and we should greatly appreciate your help and support here. Thank you.

### **11. Prizegiving : Wednesday 22nd October**

Prizegiving takes place in the Victoria Hall, Bolton. It is a whole school occasion for us, so that the whole community – boys, parents, staff and Governors – can be part of an annual celebration of the boys' achievements and successes. We use the Victoria Hall in Bolton simply because there is no venue in Bury able to accommodate us all. The Guest of Honour will be The Rt Hon The Lord Hurd of Westwell – who as Douglas Hurd MP was successively Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary between 1984 and 1995. All boys will be required to attend – and I very much hope that all parents will be with us as well. If transport presents a problem for a boy, I should be grateful if parents would explore the possibility of the boy travelling with a friend and his parents. Lessons will end at 12.20pm that day and the buses will leave at 12.45pm.

### **12. Enclosure**

Sheet giving key dates for this term. **Please retain this for reference.**

I hope the new First Form boys are settling happily at the school and that they enjoy their time at Plas Menai. I hope, too, that all the boys will have an enjoyable, rewarding and successful term.