

8th November 2007

To : All Parents

### **Newsletter : November 2007**

I hope the half-term break was an enjoyable and relaxing one for your son. The purpose of this newsletter is to draw your attention to various matters. Please note, in particular, the dates referred to in items 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

#### **1. Prizegiving**

I would like to thank those of you who attended Prizegiving. We were very fortunate to have Andrew Higginson, the Finance and Strategy Director of Tesco plc, and an Old Boy of the school, with us and I hope you found him an engaging and entertaining speaker. He was also with us on the following morning, when he opened the recently refurbished Art and Science Block in the Junior School. This year's earlier start time, and slightly shorter programme, seemed to meet with approval.

You will be aware of the importance I attach to Prizegiving being a whole-school occasion. While I fully appreciate that parents with other commitments cannot always rearrange those commitments in order to attend, I should be grateful for parental support in helping boys whose parents are not attending Prizegiving to make alternative travel arrangements – eg travelling with a friend whose parents are able to attend.

Prizegiving is the only occasion in the year when we have an evening expectation of all the boys and I ask both boys and parents to regard the evening as a priority. If it really is impossible for a boy to attend I should be grateful if a letter requesting permission for him to be absent could be sent to me with as much notice as possible. Thank you. The date of the 2008 Prizegiving will be announced when it has been finalised.

#### **2. School Photograph**

The 2007 school photograph was taken just before half-term. You should have received details of prices and an order form – sent by 'boy post' earlier this week.

#### **3. Homework**

On Monday morning this week I spoke to the boys in Assembly about homework. Parents may be interested to know what I said and I reproduce the text below.

*It is, I regret to say, not all that unusual for parents to comment to me that the amount of time which some of you spend on homework is not great.*

*At the beginning of each academic year we publish a homework timetable and give some indication of how much time should be spent doing homework. The suggested times are: 1st Form: 20-30 minutes per subject; 2nd Form: 25-35 minutes per subject; 3rd Form: 30-40 minutes per subject; 4th and 5th Forms: 35-45 minutes per subject; 6th Form: 4+ hours per AS subject per week; 7th Form: 6+ hours per A2 subject per week.*

*I wish this morning to do two things – first, to emphasize the importance of homework, and, second, to emphasize the importance of a disciplined setting aside of time to do it.*

*First, homework is an integral part of the learning process. Its purpose is to help you:*

- a) to consolidate your grasp of work done in class*
- b) to reinforce your understanding*
- c) to explore a topic more fully*
- d) to prepare for further work in class*
- e) and to develop the skill of independent study and learning – a skill which will be of great value to you later in life, not least when, as many of you will, you find yourselves working for professional qualifications when you are in employment*

*For all of those reasons, homework is important.*

*I wish also to emphasize the importance of a disciplined setting aside of time to do your homework. When parents talk to me about homework, they often say to me: ‘Tom (or whoever) seems to manage to do what he’s been set in a shorter time than the homework timetable indicates’. One possible response to such parental remarks is to question the quality of the work which is being done. I usually hesitate to make that point – because those who teach you will no doubt have things to say if your work is not of a good standard. Another possible response is to say something about how the time for homework should be spent. While I accept that some of you work more efficiently than others, what I wish to emphasize this morning is that you should not view the homework period each night as coming to an end when you have completed what has been set.*

*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 2+ hours.*

*If you have completed what has been set before that time has elapsed, then use the remaining time to do some work of consolidation, revision or further reading. I have no doubt at all 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. To repeat: 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 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.*

I should be grateful for parental support in encouraging the boys to respond positively and with a disciplined commitment to the above.

#### **4. German Exchange**

Our annual exchange visit with our partner school in Cologne took place in the week before half-term and I am grateful to those parents who kindly acted as hosts. The German party consisted of 18 students and 2 members of staff and they were officially welcomed to Bury by the Mayor and Mayoress at the Town Hall. The exchange – which has been running since 1954 and is one of the oldest of its kind – was again a most enjoyable and successful one, and the BGSB boys were delighted to win the Baumsteiger Trophy in the traditional football match.

#### **5. Battlefields Tour**

Over half-term 40 boys and 6 members of staff went on the school's 14th annual Battlefields Tour. Each tour has a different itinerary and this year's tour concentrated on visiting sites connected with the twin battles of Messines and Passchendaele which were fought in 1917. As always, a number of Old Boys and relatives of people on the tour were specially commemorated. These included a founder member of our Cadet Force, and the 8 Old Boys of the school who were killed in the Battle of Passchendaele and are buried or commemorated at Tyne Cot Cemetery. On the last night of the tour members of the CCF took part for the ninth time in the famous Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres, in front of a large crowd. At the end of the ceremony several people expressed their thanks to the boys, including a former sergeant-major in the Grenadier Guards, who said that they were a credit to their school and to the Cadet movement.

## **6. Congratulations**

Earlier this year Matthew Couchman, one of our Seventh Formers, passed his English Cricket Board Coaching Badge Level 2. From a nationwide list of those who passed this course, Matthew has been selected as one of only twenty to take part in a one-day session at the England Cricket Academy in Loughborough with Peter Moores, the England Head Cricket Coach.

## **7. Representing the school at sport**

I would like to remind parents that, in common with most other schools on our Games Circuit, we expect boys who are selected for a school team to be available for matches. We hope the boys regard it as an honour to be asked to represent the school. On a few occasions recently some boys have given very late notice of their inability to play in a fixture. This clearly creates problems for staff. It can also affect the ability of the school to field a competitive team and, therefore, the enjoyment of the absent boy's team-mates. We should be grateful for parental support in our expectation that a boy selected for a school team should regard this as a priority over playing for a non-school team (unless playing at a higher, eg County, level). If, on a particular occasion, there really is an unavoidable reason why a boy has to miss a fixture (other, of course, than illness), we ask that parents write an explanatory note to Mr Hilton, our Head of PE and Games, as early in the week as possible – and certainly no later than the Tuesday before a Saturday fixture. Thank you.

## **8. Car parking**

I have received a letter from the Court Manager at Bury Magistrates' Court. I reproduce the letter below verbatim.

*I write in relation to an issue that was raised at a staff briefing session. The issue was in respect of the dangers which are occurring outside the school on Tenterden Street.*

*The issues are:*

- \* Parents are blocking the road whilst letting children alight*
- \* Parents are stopping on double yellow lines causing obstructions*
- \* Parents blocking the junctions*

*There are obvious dangers to the above, the initial being the safety of the child which is paramount.*

*I would be grateful if you would kindly remind parents of the aforementioned dangers and of the poor road use.*

I ask parents to respond appropriately to the above. Some parents may wish to explore the possibility of encouraging their sons to use public transport.

### **9. Non-uniform day : Friday 16th November**

The Junior School and the Senior School will be having a non-uniform day on Friday 16th November. The aim is to raise money for the BBC's Children in Need Appeal. Boys may, if they wish, come to school in casual clothes upon payment of £1.00. In all other respects the day is a normal working day.

### **10. Lunchtime Concert on Monday 26th November : an addition to the Calendar**

There will be a lunchtime concert in the Assembly Hall on Monday 26th November from 1.15pm to 1.55pm. The concert will be given by boys who will be sitting instrumental examinations in December. Parents and friends – and not only of those who will be performing - are warmly invited to the concert and your attendance will be much appreciated by the boys.

### **11. Fifth Form Parents' Meeting : Tuesday 27th November. PLEASE NOTE AMENDED TIMINGS**

The Fifth Form Parents' Meeting will take place on Tuesday 27th November **from 5.00pm to 7.00pm** (and not, as printed in the Calendar, from 5.00pm to 8.00pm). This is the occasion when parents are able to meet with subject teachers. The boys themselves are invited to accompany their parents.

### **12. Inaugural Christmas Lecture on Thursday 6th December : an addition to the Calendar**

We will be holding our inaugural Christmas Lecture on Thursday 6th December at 7.00pm in the Assembly Hall. The lecture, *Music to your ears*, will be presented by 'Science Made Simple', a company based at the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Wales in Cardiff ([www.sciencemadesimple.co.uk](http://www.sciencemadesimple.co.uk)). The company seeks to offer inspirational and educational experiences that are tailor-made for schools and the public. The lecture promises to be an exciting presentation, with lots of demonstrations and audience interaction, and to reveal the secrets from the basics of sound to the latest in music technology. Parents and friends, as well as the boys themselves, are warmly invited. Seasonal refreshments will be served. Tickets (for which there is no charge) are available from the School Office (0161-797 2700).

### **13. Christmas Concerts : Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th December**

You and your families and friends are warmly invited to the annual Christmas Concerts, which once again will bring the boys' school and the girls' school together and will be held in Bury Parish Church on Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th December at 7.30pm. No tickets are needed and there is no charge for these concerts (although a retiring collection will be taken each evening). Seasonal refreshments will be served afterwards by members of the Parents' Association.

### **14. Reports**

Full reports will be written on all boys, except those in the Fifth Form, at the end of this term. They will be posted from school on Wednesday 19th December. Reports on Fifth Form boys will be written after their trial examinations in January.