

1 July 2008

Dear Parents and Guardians

When I wrote to you at the start of this summer term, snow lay on the ground. It is a relief that, as I look out of my office window today, we finally have a glimpse of summer.

Summer terms are always incredibly busy for students and staff alike as we prepare for examinations whilst continuing to engage in the rich opportunities that our extra-curricular life provides. The summer term is a challenge for all our students; the Upper Sixth completing their A levels and awaiting the results which will influence their future decisions, our Lower Sixth taking their first step towards A levels with their AS exams and the 5th Years completing their GCSEs. These students are now also joined by our 4th Years who are taking science modules as part of the new science GCSEs. Internal exams are also important for our 1st to 4th Year students as they help them understand their strengths and the areas for improvement. I have read many positive reports in recent days, both reflecting excellence and also where individuals have responded to previous advice. I would urge those who are not currently fulfilling their potential to reflect over the summer and to return invigorated.

The core of what we do as a school takes place in the classroom and the evidence of that achievement comes only in part through examinations. The opportunities offered outside the classroom also play an important role in developing and supporting young people. The following can only be highlights of a busy summer of sport and I would like to thank everyone who has participated in games throughout the term. The cricket season has seen many signs of progress and particular highlights include the 1st XI, who were staring at defeat at 14 for 5 chasing a Leeds Grammar School total of 209 when they recovered to win, remarkably, by 2 wickets. The U13 six-a-side team was a credit to the school as they were runners-up to Bramcote Scarborough in the Prep Schools festival, and it was really encouraging to receive many positive comments about the way in which they played and conducted themselves. The U12 XI had a successful season, winning 5 of their 7 fixtures. Tennis, amongst both boys and girls, has seen some real achievements. Of particular note was the success in the North Yorkshire U17 mixed doubles, with the school winning this competition for the first time since 1998 and also securing the Plate competition. Rounders has been played with real determination and success, with three senior girls, Laura Horne, Rebecca Sedcole and Sarah Megginson, being selected for England squads, whilst the U12 A IX won all ten of their fixtures. In athletics, there is continuing development and we were pleased that 17 of our students represented Humberside against North Yorkshire in a county athletics competition.

This has also been a busy and successful term for music, both for our groups and for certain individuals. The choir sang at the consecration of the new chapel by the Bishop of Selby on St George's Day, and shortly afterwards Hannah Dawes gave a solo flute recital as part of her A level course. Roxana Popescu, our Silvestri scholar, joined Hannah for a spectacular and enchanting encore to the recital, and roles were reversed last week as Roxana gave her own farewell recital, with an exciting finale, Doppler's *Andante and Rondo*. The Swing Band has continued to bring its own special sound to audiences in the school and the wider community; raising over £2,400 for Thornton church and King's Mill School, Driffield in a concert held in Thornton, before playing, with other fine bands, at the Friends' Association "Party at Pock" last weekend; a wonderful evening which reflected all that is good about the school. The final concert of term was held on Monday 30th June, bringing together musicians from Lyndhurst and Pocklington in celebration of our musical tradition. Our other significant news is that Alastair Wright has been accepted into the National Youth Music Theatre orchestra – playing clarinet, saxophone or oboe as required! Congratulations also to Alastair on his appointment as Head Boy and Ruth Carter as Head Girl.

The highlights for drama this term were the GCSE examination pieces in May. These were typical of the quality of work produced by drama pupils in this school; they were tightly rehearsed and of excellent quality, with the version of Steven Berkoff's *Messiah* performed to an exceptional standard. In June, the Lower School presented a colourful and fast-moving production of selections from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Also, all Lyndhurst pupils were involved in a vibrant production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Once again, the commitment, enjoyment and energy of the pupils was delightful and entertaining in itself. There is no doubt that everyone who has taken part in productions over the year has visibly grown in confidence, ability and imagination. Well done to all.

The CCF had a successful inspection earlier this term, conducted by Lieutenant Colonel J C Price, an Old Pocklingtonian. He was immensely impressed by the range of activities, enthusiasm, behaviour and rapport of the cadets and the leadership and knowledge of the NCOs. Just recently, the Pocklington CCF A team, captained by Sam Hill, successfully retained the Welbeck Trophy, seeing off strong competition from RGS Newcastle and the Welbeck team itself. This success means that Pocklington CCF have now won the trophy four times in the last five years. It is also pleasing to note for the future that our B team was the highest placed B team, in eighth place.

There are many other individual and team achievements throughout the school. It is always invidious in highlighting some, given success elsewhere, and we also learn through not winning, which I know all too well having come last in the staff relay! However, I would just like to congratulate Ed Hamer who achieved joint first place in a national climbing competition in the 14-16 age category and Joe Green for being offered an England U18 football trial this summer.

The summer term is also, sadly, the time when people leave, both students and staff, and we say a fond farewell to all those leaving this term. I would like to pay particular thanks to Mrs Beaumont, who leaves us after 14 years. She will be sadly missed as housemistress of Faircote, mathematics teacher, games coach and CCF officer. Though I have only known Stella for a short time, it is clear that she will be greatly missed by her boarders and many other students, parents and staff. We also say goodbye to Mr Stephenson, Deputy Head of Lyndhurst, who has been at the school for 25 years. He has been a huge support to colleagues and pupils alike. I trust that he will enjoy life by the sea in Scarborough.

Several appointments have been made recently to support the further development of the school which arose out of the current school development plan and the ISI inspection last year.

- Mrs Bracken, who holds the post of Deputy Director of Studies, has been appointed to the senior management committee to support further development in our teaching and learning.
- Boarding is an important part of our school community and to strengthen the management of boarding, Mr Taylor, Housemaster of Dolman, has been appointed Director of Boarding.
- One of our great strengths is the opportunities provided for pupils through our clubs and societies and Thursday afternoon activities programme. I have therefore appointed Mr Kettlewell as Director of Activities to bring his experience as Director of Music, a role in which he will continue, in providing leadership to this important aspect of school life. We are developing a Pocklington Award, which will allow each student to reflect on their own achievements and engagement with our extra-curricular programme. We will share more details with you as this idea develops over the coming academic year.
- We have strong pastoral support at Pocklington which was rightly recognized in the ISI report, and to further develop an important sense of identity for both the Middle School and the Sixth Form, Mrs Swann and Dr McNamee have been appointed Head of Middle School and Head of Sixth Form respectively.
- Following the appointments of Mr Kettlewell and Mrs Swann, we have appointed Mr J Taylor as housemaster of Hutton Middle School and Miss Metcalfe as housemistress of Gruggen Middle School respectively.

We will be starting work on the new changing room facilities over the summer and also seeking to finalise plans for our new Sixth Form centre, which we intend to have available for September 2009. A third ICT classroom will be completed for the Michaelmas term.

As the term draws to a close, there were three events that captured for me all that is best about Pocklington School. The charity walk last Thursday involved pupils and staff from Lyndhurst and Pocklington completing challenging routes. On Friday night, the final of "Pock's Got Talent" was an enjoyable evening in which students of all abilities were able to perform to a supportive audience; it is these opportunities to take risks which build confidence and success for the future. On Saturday afternoon, the willingness of 28 members of staff to participate in a 4 x 100m relay race highlighted to me both the energy and the commitment that our staff make to the school. The management of charity week by our Lower Sixth students has been outstanding and in total we have raised around £17,000 for four charities. Thank you for your support.

I do hope that you will all enjoy a relaxing summer holiday during which your sons and daughters can recharge their batteries for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Yours sincerely

Mark Ronan