



From the Headmaster, Mark Ronan BA

7 May 2010

To: Pocklington School and Lyndhurst School
Parents and Guardians

Information: Governors, Teaching and
Support Staff

Dear Parents and Guardians

Nature, in the form of an ash cloud, conspired against a 'normal' start to the summer term with some pupils and staff, myself included, stranded as a result of its impact on air travel. I am grateful to colleagues for undertaking additional work to ensure that school continued to run smoothly for those here and for providing support, via our website, to those overseas.

We are committed to supporting students to achieve their best both within the classroom and beyond. At the end of last term, the government released performance tables, representing 3,000 schools and colleges, which reported on the progress (value added) that students made from **GCSE to A level** last summer. We are delighted that the **progress made by our students** is significantly above the national average, placing us just outside the top 5% (150) of schools in the country: Pocklington students, on average, achieved in each subject nearly the equivalent of one A level grade higher than the average attained by similar students in other schools.

The skills of independent and critical study have never been more highly valued by universities, and to enable our students to demonstrate expertise in this area, we have introduced two new qualifications to the Sixth Form curriculum. Both courses involve independent study during the summer holiday of the Lower Sixth with completion in the Michaelmas term of the Upper Sixth, enabling the results to be included in individual university applications. The **Open University Module** offers students the opportunity to undertake degree standard work. Students prepare by completing set reading and taking online tests. This term, 21 students have entered courses ranging from fiction writing to volcanoes and tsunamis. The **Extended Project Qualification** is also being introduced this term. Students undertake a major piece of evaluative research which is exciting because it allows individuals complete freedom to choose their area of study. With its emphasis on independent learning, critical thinking and long term planning skills, this course is highly regarded by universities, including Oxbridge, as an important transition qualification in preparation for university study. It is hoped that in the coming years the number of students taking the EPQ will grow significantly.

The school is currently reviewing its **reporting system** which was introduced this year. Parental feedback is an important aspect of this process. If you have views with regards to the current reporting system positive or suggestions for improvement, then please email or write to Jonathan Webb, Director of Teaching and Learning [webbj@pocklingtonschool.com] by the end of half term.

The revival of the **Debating** Society has been highly successful, characterized by the vocal, the provocative and the vibrant. All members have been active and committed, achieving our first public success in the Rotary competition; two teams competed in Hull, returning with the Speaker's trophy and taking a place in the leading four. Quick to innovate and reluctant to lose pace, the pupils then created an open forum for debate with their own Question Time, held in the Tom Stoppard Theatre. Teachers and society members were placed under significant pressure and the resultant debate was fiery and littered with sharp humour. Audiences were made up of pupils and staff on both occasions and it was they- and the highly organized Sixth Form members- who made the initiative such a success. The Lent term closed with an exceptional evening of entertainment hosted by the society under their other guise of 'Lectern Club'. Mr D'Arcy provided fine food and wines and the Sixth Form spoke most eloquently upon the theme of 'Love'. Chris Iyer took the trophy, but the competition was fierce and a reason to celebrate that particularly individual and natural talent which makes Pocklington School so very remarkable.

The Senior GCSE and A level moderator for this year's public examinations was extremely complimentary about the quality of our **drama**. At A Level he judged our students' performances to be outstanding work of the very highest quality, further commenting that the students are absolutely exceptional as well as charming, motivated and dedicated. He deemed GCSE work here to be inspirational and beyond the reach of most performing arts students of that age.

There has also been significant personal success in **music**. Olivia Turner won trophies for two classes, both of which were open to older singers of Grade 8 and higher standard at the Pontefract Music Festival. Meanwhile, Peter Micklem Cooper, who is also a chorister at Beverley Minster and a member of the Yorkshire Youth Choir, and Henry Smith, a member of the National Children's Choir, were both successful within their respective age groups. Also there were some outstanding results in the Easter session of Instrumental Music Examinations. Of 26 entries for Associated Board examinations, all passed, with 11 pupils gaining a distinction. A further four students passed Trinity examinations at merit or distinction. However, special praise must go to Felicity Pocklington and Robert Foot who have both achieved DipLCM in piano teaching and clarinet respectively.

On the **sporting** front, Chloe Stokes is the North Yorkshire Schools Girl Golf Champion and now goes forward to the Northern Regional Championship in June. Will Broadbent has been selected for the Humberside U15 Boys hockey squad, whilst Alex French continues to perform well with his pony racing. All the school's summer sports are now under way, with promising cricket results from the Ampleforth and Worksop fixtures, excellent results from girls' and boys' tennis against Silcoates and Ashville respectively and pleasing performances from the athletics events at Barnard Castle and Gateshead. We wish Tarek Mursal and the rest of the Yorkshire squad well for the final of the National Under 20s cup at Twickenham on Saturday.

At the Welbeck National Leadership Competition, our 4th Year **CCF** cadets showed tremendous strength of character, tenacity, perseverance, commitment and no little mental toughness, competing against much older and more experienced cadets. All credit to them for coming through the arduous two days with tired but happy smiles on their faces. All this will be reflected next week in our Biennial Inspection by Air Commodore Ian Stewart, Commandant Air Cadets from RAF College, Cranwell.

Thank you so much to those parents who have made kind donations to the '**Project Archive 1514**' appeal – we really appreciate your support for this exciting development. If you would like to discuss what is planned or indeed would like a brochure/donation form please contact Rachel Dare in the Pocklington 500 Office: darer@pocklingtonschool.com or telephone 01759 321307.

Charity week in June, including the school walk, will seek to raise funds for the following: The Mkwakwani School Project, our fourth year of five pledged years' support; Seeds for Development, an enterprise which enables Ugandan farmers to 'get going'; the Sue Ryder Home in Holme on Spalding Moor and the local Hearing Dogs appeal.

I do hope that you will be able to support your children by attending some of the events that will be taking place at school during the second half of term. Both staff and pupils invest a great deal of energy into the planning of these events and it is always a pleasure to share them with an appreciative audience.

Yours sincerely

Mark Ronan