

HEADMASTER'S LETTER TO PARENTS – AUTUMN TERM 2009

Dear Parents

Welcome back to Challoner's – I hope that you and your family have enjoyed a good holiday this summer and managed to avoid the rain! As usual, I am writing to you with a summary of current news from the school and information about some forthcoming events. In order to make sure that you have received this important information, I would ask you to ensure that the attached reply slip is returned by your son to his form tutor.

Public Exam Success

This year has been another outstanding one for the school in terms of public examination results. Although exam results are by no means our only measure of success, academic performance is crucial in helping our students achieve their immediate aspirations upon leaving Challoner's.

At A Level we registered our best ever performance, with 80.2% of entries being graded A or B. A total of 39 students achieved at least four A grades and six students obtained six A grades.

At GCSE, all our students achieved at least five passes at grades A*-C including English and Maths, while 84.9% of candidates achieved five or more A*/A grades. 77% of grades were A* or A, toppling the previous record of 75% set last year by the current Year 13. 56 boys in Year 11 achieved a clean sweep of A*/A grades including fourteen boys who achieved at least 11 A* grades.

Warmest congratulations to all the boys, their teachers and their proud parents!

Staff News

We are pleased to welcome a number of new teaching staff to Challoner's this year: Mr S Burn (Maths); Mr W Kirkpatrick (Physics); Mrs E McNally (English); Mr C Parsons (Physics); Miss F Rombough (English); Mr T Shinner (History); Mr J Thompson (Chemistry) and Mrs L Woodbury (Maths). Mr P Holt returns to the school as Team Leader for Art and Graphics. Mr J Davidson, Mr R Gledhill, Mrs M McKay and Mr O Runswick join the support staff team.

Several staff are also taking on new roles this term: Mr D Colquhoun (Assistant Director of Sixth Form), Mr D Smith (Subject Leader for Physics) and Mr D Spikings (Subject Leader KS3 Science). Mrs N Renyard will shortly be starting her Maternity Leave and Mrs R Williams is now the proud mother of a baby daughter and will return to school next year. Mr P Benson is now working full time within the Student Development team and will assume some of the responsibilities previously held by Mr P Garrett.

We welcome back Ms M Jackson (Art) following her maternity leave.

International School Award

I am delighted to be able to tell you that Dr Challoner's Grammar School has been successful in gaining the British Council's International School Award. This award is in recognition of the school's commitment to incorporating a global dimension into the learning experience of our students. We will be presented with the award at a national presentation event in London in October. Many thanks to Mr Simpson for his work in preparing our application.

Calendar Card

Your son has been given two copies of the calendar card for this term to take home with this letter. As usual, this includes all the main school events including sports fixtures for the term (with the exception, of course, of any cup matches which may have to be arranged). We are providing two copies for each family, one for parents to keep at home and one for the boys to keep in their blazer pockets.

Weekly e-News from Challoner's

The weekly e-News from Challoner's service has proved extremely popular with parents and will be continuing this year. If you have not been receiving the weekly update from us and wish to do so, please contact Mrs Narcisi (Administration Manager) on 01494 787536 or ena@challoners.com.

Website

Our new website will be going 'live' next week. The site will contain a great deal more information than previously and further content will be added during the year. The *Weekly eNews from Challoners* will keep you updated about new content on the site. Please note that to gain access to the Intranet and the Parental Portal from outside the school, students and staff will need to go to the 'Other Sites' page in order to log in.

Admissions

We currently have a small number of vacancies in Year 9 due to boys moving elsewhere in the country or into boarding education. Under our new Admissions Policy, late transfer admissions into Years 8, 9 and 10 is now determined by test score rank order within our catchment area rather than by distance from the school. We will therefore be arranging a testing date as soon as possible for potential applicants for immediate admission into Year 9. The tests will be in Maths and English and candidates will have to demonstrate the achievement of at least three Level 5s in Key Stage 2 SATs (or equivalent). For an application form, please e-mail your name and full address to Mrs Narcisi, ena@challoners.com.

Bus Timetable Changes

We have been informed by Transport for Buckinghamshire that there will be some changes to the local bus timetable with effect from September 7th. If your son uses the local public buses to travel to school you can obtain the new timetables at www.buckscc.gov.uk/transport or by phoning 0845 2302882. These changes do not affect the contract school transport services.

French Conversation

From September 17th, parents are invited to come along on Thursday afternoons from 4.15pm to 5.15pm to enjoy some conversational French. Details are available from Mrs Sealy on 01494 787572 or jsealy@challoners.com.

OPRO Mouthguards

The OPRO dentists will be in school on Friday 18th September to take impressions for customised mouthguards which take into account orthodontics and future growth. A mouthguard is compulsory for all boys. Forms to book an appointment need to be sent directly by post, internet or fax to OPRO before 16th September, and are available from Matron or via www.opro.com

Seasonal/Swine Flu

We continue to monitor the situation closely. It is essential that children with flu-like symptoms should stay away from school until they are free of those symptoms; you can find swine flu information and

advice on the National Pandemic Flu website www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu. Meanwhile we would urge you to encourage your sons to follow good basic hygiene practices both at home and in school.

Visit to Namibia

There are still places available for students in Years 12 and 13 on this fantastic expedition to Namibia in July 2010. Please contact Mrs Baker on 01494 787569 or careers@challoners.com for further details.

Sailing Club

The Challoner's sailing club sailing brochures for 2010 residential events are now available. We are also running some RYA theory courses – for details please contact Mr Graham on 01494 787556.

Parents' Cars on the School Site

May I remind parents that we do not allow the dropping off of students on the school site after 8.00am for safety reasons. Similarly, in the afternoons, parents should not bring cars onto the site **before 4.30pm**.

School Magazine

The 2009 issue of *Ad Astra*, the school magazine, is due for publication in the next few weeks. Please make sure your son passes on your copy.

Music

All instrumental teaching and extra-curricular groups and ensembles will commence on Monday 7th September. Students should check the notice board opposite W4 for information. Students can check their individual instrument timetable from home by logging onto the Music VLE: <https://internal.challoners.com/sites/music/instrumenttuition/default.aspx>. All KS3 and 4 students should remember that they need to bring a small pair of working earphones to every music lesson. Instrumentalists should place their instruments on the racks in the instrument store. They should not be left elsewhere and must not be left in the store overnight.

International Week

As in previous years, the Languages Team will be organising International Week for the week commencing 28th September, to start the new school year with a celebration of languages, cultures and diversity. The week long programme of events, all with an international flavour, is timed to correspond with the European Day of Languages (26th September), and builds on our status as Language College and International School.

This year, we would like to involve parents in some of the activities, and we would be especially interested to hear from parents who:

- Speak foreign languages at home and may like to offer a taster session in the language
- Use a foreign language in their place of work or who conduct international business and could offer an insight into the cultures of any country
- Could showcase any activity with an international feel, eg cookery/dance/craft/ sport/music

Parents who think they may have something to offer should contact Mrs Ashton via the School Office, 01494 787500, in the first instance.

Annual Giving Programme

Please note that contributions to the school's Annual Giving Programme should be returned to Mrs Atkinson via the Student Development Office or by post as soon as possible. If you would like further information, please contact her on 01494 787570 or clare.atkinson@challoners.com.

Cancer Research Over the Hill Family Fun Walk 2009

On Sunday 20th September, Cancer Research are organising a family fun walk to raise much needed funds. If you and your family would like to participate, full details are available from Marie Djela by calling 07958670511 or maria.walk@live.co.uk.

School Holiday Dates 2009-10

Autumn Term 2009					
Term starts	Thursday	03 September	Term ends	Friday	18 December
Half term starts	Saturday	24 October	Half term ends	Monday	02 November*
Spring Term 2010					
Term starts	Tuesday	05 January	Term ends	Thursday	01 April
Half term starts	Saturday	13 February	Half term ends	Sunday	21 February
Summer Term 2010					
Term starts	Tuesday	20 April	Term ends	Wednesday	21 July
Half term starts	Saturday	29 May	Half term ends	Sunday	6 June

N.B. Monday 2nd November is a Staff Training Day

Key Forthcoming Events

In addition to the new calendar cards, you should find enclosed with this letter your copy of the Handbook for Students and Parents for your son's year group (year 7-11 only) which also contains key dates for your diaries. I would encourage you to take the time to read the Handbook carefully. Such an investment of time at this stage in the year will undoubtedly save you time later!

Some of the most important forthcoming events are as follows:

Open Evenings – Wednesday 23rd and Thursday 24th September.

The school will close at 1.00pm on Wednesday 23rd September.

Welcome Evening for New Parents – Saturday 19th September 7.30pm

Tickets are still available from Claire Fowles. Her e-mail address is dcgstickets@googlemail.com and all new parents are encouraged to attend.

Junior Prize Giving – Friday 9th October 2.30pm

Parents of prize winners in Years 8-11 will receive an invitation to this event shortly.

Enrichment Day – Thursday 22nd October

Following the great success of Enrichment Days last year we shall be including them again this year. Students will be off-timetable for the day and experience year group activities either on or off site - full details of individual projects to follow.

Senior Prize Giving – Thursday 5th November 7.30pm

Parents of senior prize winners and parents of boys who took GCSEs this summer will receive a separate letter of invitation to this event. The guest speaker will be Professor Dame Sandra Dawson.

Finally, I would like to thank parents for their support and encouragement in the education of our students and wish you and your family all the best for 2009-10.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M A Fenton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr M A Fenton
Headmaster