

## HEADMASTER'S LETTER TO PARENTS – SPRING TERM 2010

Dear Parents

Happy New Year to you and your family.

### **Emergency School Closure**

The start of term has been immensely frustrating for everyone due to the appalling weather. Heavy snowfalls in the Amersham area left much of the school site impassable and it was only thanks to a volunteer team of staff and students who came in on Thursday that we were able to make the site at least partially accessible. The most serious challenges were presented by the sloping drive and the car parks. As was proven last February, once the drive freezes over it is very difficult for most vehicles to make it up the slope. Despite the efforts of the clearance team, the car parks remain treacherous.

As I write, we are facing a forecast of yet more snow and freezing conditions over the next few days which makes for some very difficult decision making. I am always very mindful of the inconvenience which school closure causes to parents. However, I have to weigh this against the ability of staff - many of whom live quite a distance from Amersham – to get to work, as well as the condition of the school site. Despite the ill-informed comments in the media by Stephen Alambritis of the Federation of Small Businesses, no Headteacher makes a closure decision lightly. Indeed, it is very high up on the list of difficult decisions I have to make.

There is always a dilemma about how early to make the decision. While it is better for parents to know about a closure the day before, we usually try to leave the decision to the morning of the day concerned unless we are absolutely sure that we cannot open. An early decision is always likely to mean a closure decision and weather forecasts can be unreliable.

I was delighted that we were able to open the school to five year groups on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January and that the day worked so smoothly. We were able to operate a revised school day with a later start time and a shorter lunch break. Virtually all lessons took place as normal and attendance was very good. We are very grateful to everyone who helped make this possible – particularly J&L Coaches – and to our students for their excellent behaviour and mature attitude. Members of staff have also rallied round magnificently, overcoming many travel challenges of their own in order to be here.

Most of the revised bus routes ran smoothly and we are working with J&L to iron out the odd glitch which inevitably arose. These revised bus routes will now form a regular part of our 'amber' status in the future, something made possible for the first time by having a single bus company managing all our routes.

The school site is now safe for students although there is still a huge amount of snow around which makes it difficult for us to have all 1300 boys on site at once. Next week sees the start of A Level exams and we will make it a top priority to run those exams. Despite the continuing bad weather, we hope to be able to continue to open the school in either 'green' or 'amber' mode next week. If we can only open in 'amber' mode, we will rotate the year groups which come in. Boys in Years 7 and 8 should therefore familiarise themselves with the 'amber' bus routes. Work will be set on the VLE for any year groups which we cannot accommodate in school.

Please keep checking our website on a regular basis for updates on the situation.

## Oxbridge News

Congratulations to the following students who have received offers of places at Oxford and Cambridge. The number of offers received by students so far this year (25) is the highest in the history of the school.

### *Oxford University*

Michael Economou	Classics
Dominic Packman	History
Yaroslav Walker	Philosophy & Theology
James Ferns	PPE
Matthew Durey	Maths
William Hayter	Maths
Benedict Hutchings	Maths
Charles Lake	Maths
Thomas Lewin	Maths
Timothy Anderson	Music
Jack Coward	Chemistry
Nicholas Booth	Engineering
Daniel Osbourne	Engineering
Mazda Rustomji	Mechanical Engineering
Samuel Westaway	Medicine
Tristan Freeman-Sear	Physics
Alexander Stobbart	Physics

### *Cambridge University*

William Chaplin	Maths
Oliver Higgins	English
Ram Sarujan	Maths
Peter Gould	Engineering
William Phillips	Engineering
Thomas Watts	Engineering
Harry Dempsey	Philosophy & Theology
Steven Evans	Natural Sciences

## School Governing Body

Further to my recent letter, I am writing to inform you that there are four nominations for the Parent Governor vacancy on the school's Governing Body. This means that, under the requirements of the 1986 Education Act it is necessary to have a secret postal ballot. I am therefore enclosing a ballot form together with information from candidates which they have asked me to circulate. The ballot forms will not be attached to the electronic version of the letter and will be distributed as soon as we have a day when the whole school can get here to receive them.

Please indicate your votes on the voting slip. You may only vote for one candidate. May I emphasise that all parents and legal guardians are entitled to vote and may cast one vote each. Parents with more than one child on roll are not entitled to more votes. The voting slip should be returned in the envelope provided either via your child to the Student Development Office or, if you wish, through the post. It is important that the voting slip should be received by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January when the election is due to take place.

The returning officer for the election will be Mr S C Filsell. The result of the election will be notified to all parents via the Weekly eNews and will also be included in the next issue of 'The Challoner', once the election has taken place.

## Cookery Room and Sports Hall Extension

I am pleased to announce that planning permission has been granted for an exciting new development project which will further enhance the opportunities for students at Challoner's. From September 2011, boys will be able to learn cookery in a purpose built facility which is being funded by a grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This grant is part of the government's strategy to tackle obesity and promote healthy lifestyles for young people. Judging by the reaction of boys who have taken part in the 'Let's Get Cooking' scheme, the opportunity to learn practical cookery as part of the curriculum will be enthusiastically embraced. The cookery room will form part of an extension to the Sports Hall block which will also incorporate: a multi-purpose hall to replace the 1957 gymnasium; a small specialist classroom for GCSE and A Level PE; a weights room; an aerobics area and new changing rooms. Construction work is planned to start in April 2010 and to be completed by the end of the calendar year. Once the project has been completed, we are hoping to convert the old gymnasium and its associated facilities into a Performing Arts Suite to replace our extremely cramped Drama Studio in New Court.

## Catering Award

Congratulations to our catering team who have won Alliance in Partnership's in-house award for Team of the Year. In addition, our catering manager Mrs Noreen Howells has won the award for Manager of the Year. These awards are extremely well-deserved and are a tribute to the excellent and much improved service which has been provided to the boys since Mrs Howells took over.

## Cashless Catering

You should have received a letter on the first day of term giving details of our new cashless catering facility. Please remember to log on to Parent Pay and charge up your son's account so that he will be able to use his card when the scheme goes live on 18<sup>th</sup> January. Once the new arrangements have bedded down, we will be examining the viability of extending the system to cover educational visits and possibly other areas which currently involve the handling of cheques or cash.

## Disability Equality Policy

We will shortly be reviewing the school's Disability Equality Policy & associated Action Plan. If this is a topic that particularly interests you and/or you have a disability yourself and you would like to join our Action Plan Review Group, please could you let Matron know on 01494 787528 or via [matron@challoners.com](mailto:matron@challoners.com).

## Public Exam Results

Please note that the results of public examinations will be published on the following dates this year:

A Levels and AS Levels - Thursday 19 August  
GCSE - **Tuesday 24 August**

## Enrichment Day

The Humanities Team is arranging a Commonwealth-themed Enrichment Day for Year 8 on the 12th February. This will include a 'Commonwealth Games' with prize giving and we are therefore looking for a large flag from any of the 54 Commonwealth nations. The flag would be displayed in the Hall and returned immediately afterwards. Please contact [alan.roe@challoners.com](mailto:alan.roe@challoners.com) if you can help, or ask your son to bring any flags to Mr Roe in room N14.

## School Holiday Dates

	From			To		
<b>Spring Term 2010</b>	Tuesday	5 January	2010	Thursday	1 April	2010
<b>Half Term:</b>	Saturday	13 February	2010	Sunday	21 February	2010
<b>Summer Term 2010</b>	Tuesday	20 April	2010	Wednesday	21 July	2010
<b>Half Term:</b>	Saturday	29 May	2010	Sunday	6 June	2010

Bank Holidays during term: Early May Bank Holiday - Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2010

## Forthcoming Dates for the Spring Term 2010

Please find enclosed two copies of the calendar card which gives details of all school events and sports fixtures which are due to take place this term.

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 2010.

Yours sincerely



Dr M A Fenton  
**Headmaster**