

December 2018

Dear Parents,

With the Christmas Holidays shortly upon us, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all of the tremendous support you have given the School, and indeed me personally in the role, over the past year and beyond, and to wish you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas and a happy New Year.

This term has seen many highlights, all of which mark out the School as the unique, distinctively Catholic experience that it is. Our new pupils in Junior House, First Form, Third Form and Sixth Form have all assimilated and settled well and are finding their stride in true Oratorian style, showing decency and courtesy as they move about the place and engage in their studies. The initial stages of inculturation are over, and each of the new entrants looks set to make a tremendously positive and constructive contribution to the already fantastic reputation of the School.

As (just about!) a relative 'newbie' myself I know that they have joined a warm, fully supportive and well-structured place; a place in which they can grow intellectually, morally, and spiritually – and one I would not hesitate to recommend, wholeheartedly, naturally!

Not only this, with my first year in post coming to a close, it may be timely at this juncture to see where we've got to and sketch out where we might still have to go in the immediate term as a school and as a community.

In terms of 'front-facing' changes, the past year has seen some former practices and customs excavated and restored. These include the re-introduction of Housemasters' Teas, where new parents have the opportunity to meet both their children's Housemaster and other parents in their child's form; the Rugby Committee Social Evening, the revival of the First XV Rugby Tour (a splendid success and a major credit to the School on all fronts) and, of course, the recent House Swimming Gala.

The year has also seen the renewal and refreshment of existing practices, not least the recently launched new website, and the inclusion of pupil achievement past and present in the weekly e-bulletin, amongst other relatively minor changes. And, finally, new initiatives have been introduced, not least the introduction of boxing training in the gym, and of course an alternative approach to presenting the School at the Sixth Form Open Evenings; and developments are afoot to integrate a coherent programme of Catholic character education throughout the School.

There have also been many sustained and high level achievements, which we can be in danger of taking for granted. Of particular note is the continued exemplary input and output in drama, where the seniors staged a wonderfully thoughtful production of *Our Country's Good*; continued excellence in participating in and hosting the Model United Nations, and, of course, there are the umpteen wonderful musical pieces, ranging from the Junior House Concert, the

Senior Choral Concert, the Senior Symphonic Concert, the ACN Carol Service, and the signature Schola Concert. That all of this has taken place on top of a very high level of routine day-to-day operations is in itself remarkable.

So, how is all of this possible, how is it that a maintained school, united in faith, but comprehensive in intake, and with ever diminishing funding resource, can punch at such a heavy weight? The answer is simple: exceptionally talented and dedicated staff in all roles, teaching and bursarial, backed up by supportive parents, all with a clear sense of unity and purpose about what the School is trying to achieve. As all the research indicates, where parish-parent-teacher-pupil links are strong, outcomes are fantastic and mutually beneficial all round. And what I heard about the School before I arrived here is absolutely true: it is London's Catholic powerhouse, as far as schooling goes, and long may it so remain.

So, on behalf of the staff, we wish you all a very merry, festive Christmas and a very joyful New Year, as we watch with anticipation for the coming of Christ more fully in our lives, in anticipation of His final, definitive return.

A very merry Christmas to you and your families – and thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. W. J. K.", with a short horizontal line underneath.