



WOLVERHAMPTON

GRAMMAR SCHOOL

December 2009

Dear Parents,

It doesn't seem like a year ago that I was writing my first end of term letter to you as Head of WGS. Back then we were packing our bags for the sports tour to Barbados and, as temperatures began to drop last week, I thought how lovely it would be to be heading back to that sunny island for Christmas 2009.

Indeed, when I was kidnapped by Mrs Laceby and Mrs Grantham-Wright, dressed as pirates, my hopes for a festive season in the Caribbean were briefly rekindled! Unfortunately, Miss Munden, hiding within a massive heart costume, soon shattered my illusions. Nevertheless, we're very grateful to all the students who purchased wristbands to sponsor my "kidnap" on behalf of the British Heart Foundation and the Lords Meade Vocational College which we sponsor in Uganda. In all, we raised £425 – a great effort.

As usual, the Autumn term has been a busy and eventful one with trips, sport and music enriching the students' experience and education.

Visits

Our German scholars went on a cultural trip to Berlin during half term.

The Girls U13 Hockey tour went to Newcastle

Year 11 students went to Nottingham University to get them thinking about Higher Education.

Year 10 Artists visited the Black Country Museum

Year 9 went on their History trip to the Black Country Museum

Year 7 visited Birmingham Arts Museum & Gallery

Big Six visited the Jackfield Tile Museum

Sport

As I often remind the students in assembly, the breadth and quality of sport at WGS is superb – from Badminton to Swimming, from Fives to Rugby and most sports in between. It is heartening to see so many students representing the school at all levels and doing so well.

We have reached the mid-point of the football season. The 1st XI had a great win against Cheadle Hulme before losing narrowly to Charterhouse in the ISFA National Competition. The 2nd XI are playing well, recording notable victories against St Bede's and Repton. The U15 and U14 teams are also playing attractive football – the U14's won a triangular tournament involving Repton and Shrewsbury schools. The U13's continue to show a lot of character, whilst the U12's came runners-up in the City 11-a-side and 6-a-side tournaments.

Netball continues to flourish, both the Senior and the U14 girls were runners-up in the County Championships while the U16 won the tournament – all three teams will now go on to represent the County in the Regional Competition. The Junior girls are also playing well and six of our nine teams were victorious against the very strong Cheltenham Ladies' College.

Our Hockey teams are battling bravely. The 1st XI girls are improving with every game and the 1st XI boys have defeated both my former schools, KE Aston and Camp Hill – much to the relief of their coach, Mr Anderson!

The U15, U14 and U13 girls are improving all the time, especially the U13's following their very successful half-term tour to Newcastle.

Our Rugby squads continue to expand with the 1st XV, in particular, doing very well against established "rugby schools", and it's great to see the U15's and the U12's developing their confidence and skills as the year progresses.

Our Badminton teams have enjoyed winning starts to the season, our boy swimmers competed well in the City Championships and our Fives teams are going from strength to strength, with Tom Watson winning the prestigious Rossall School's Tournament.

And, if we needed any further reminders that cricket is now an all year round game, the U14's finally played, and won, the County Final earlier this term. So, many congratulations to them.

Music & Drama

Just as on the sports field, so it is with our musicians and actors. The Soloists' concert in November was an opportunity for our rising stars to shine and, now that we have a musical piece at least once a month in assembly, the whole school has the opportunity to appreciate the depth of talent the school is blessed with – whether it be Grace Lawrence playing the harp beautifully at Prizegiving, Ellie Griffiths' superb voice in assembly, Quincy Young's virtuoso performance on the saxophone or WGS's very own Sinatra (Ed Holden) smoozing the audience. The Senior Choir sang beautifully at Founder's Day and at our smashing Christmas Concerts which incredibly featured over 250 of our musicians, there was a very special spirit apparent in these two evenings this year. You could really sense when a performance touched the audience and the phrase: *You could have heard a pin drop* might have justifiably been used on many occasions. Our large scale instrumental groups were out in force, including Junior Concert Band, Intermediate Concert Band, Senior Concert Band, String Ensemble, String Orchestra and Samba Band. Great music brilliantly played to a very high standard indeed and what was particularly pleasing was the sheer breadth of musical styles performed. The two large scale choirs sang superbly in performances that thrilled the audience with power and sensitivity. A special mention must go to our two soloists in the Senior Choir's rendition of *In the Bleak Midwinter*. Felicity Maidment and George Rowe sang beautifully creating a truly magical effect. The formation of *Bella a Cappella* has wowed audiences with their sense of style and their performance in this concert proved no exception. This year though, saw the unveiling of their male counterparts, *Fella a Cappella* who sang with great panache. X-Factor watch out!

In Drama, rehearsals are already well underway for this year's school production, *Godspell* which is due to play for four nights in February – (3rd – 6th). Tickets will be available in the New Year from the General Office.

Staff

As many parents will be aware, Mr Kevin Bremner (Chemistry), has been with us as part of a teacher exchange programme for 2009. Kevin returns to New Zealand at the end of term and Dr John Edlin will return in January from his year at Inglewood High School.

Mrs Louise Stanley (Geography) will be on maternity leave until June and Mr Mervyn Brooker has joined the school in her stead. Miss Lisa Harris (English) begins her maternity leave at the end of term and is also due to return in June. Mr Richard Clay has been appointed as cover and he will join us in January.

UNIFORM

I've been very pleased with how the revisions to the uniform have bedded in this term. The students look smarter and the badge and grey V neck really do brighten up what was previously a rather dull uniform. In the Sixth Form, grey is clearly the new black and our older students have responded well to being able to determine their own dress code.

We're still not quite as smart as I'd like though; some skirts are still too short and ties and shirts can, on occasions, be all over the place. But, we're getting there without compromising the relaxed atmosphere of the school.

HOLIDAY DATES 2010/11 CONSULTATION:

My thanks to the 30 or so parents who wrote or emailed in their thoughts regarding the two-week Autumn half-term/two-week Easter arrangements. By a majority of 2:1 the parents who responded supported the new arrangements. There was no strong feeling either way in the Student Parliament - some year groups were broadly for the new arrangements and some were broadly against. The

Governors believe that we should allow the arrangements to run for at least two years. The staff raised points for and against the arrangements – more against than for at this stage. Given these responses to the consultation, my senior colleagues and I believe that we should confirm the dates already published for 2010/11 and make a decision for the longer term, again after consultation, next year.

PARENTS ON THE GOVERNING BODY

As I've mentioned in previous letters, the Governing Body are currently going through a process of Incorporation. This means that, although the aims of the school remain the same, we will become Wolverhampton Grammar School Limited and the Governors will be protected from personal liability.

This reorganisation has provided the opportunity for Governors to look at the structure of Governance, and the recruitment of and succession planning for the Governing Body. Clearly, the Governing Body play a key role in nurturing the many strengths, high standards, traditions and ethos of the school, as well as planning strategically the future development of WGS.

In that regard, the Governors, many of whom are OW's or have been parents of students, are keen to welcome expressions of interest from the current parents who might be willing to serve and help to shape and support the future development of the school. Governors are not required to have any particular experience or qualifications but, clearly, if you could bring a particular area of expertise, interest or background which the Governing Body currently lacks, then that would be hugely valuable.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a Governor and would wish to be considered when a vacancy arises, please email me or write to me in confidence and I will provide further details.

FRIENDS ASSOCIATION

My thanks to the Friends/Parents Association who organised a very enjoyable quiz last month, although the new technology on show could not help the Head's team finish any better than mid-table!

In closing, please make special note of the notices attached to this letter:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Communication from school❖ Examination fees & Photographs❖ Access arrangements & Snow❖ Year 9 Drugs booklet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Parking outside the school❖ Getting Messages to students❖ Staff Training day (advance notice)❖ Interim Inspection❖ Draft calendar Spring 2010
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and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any ideas, observations or concerns about any aspect of school. We will welcome back the students for the Spring Term at 8.45am on Tuesday 5th January.

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and every best wish for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Vincent Darby
Head

COMMUNICATIONS FROM SCHOOL

As part of our drive to improve the efficiency of its communications with parents and to help reduce our impact on the environment, WGS is looking to issue a number of its communications electronically, rather than as a traditional hard copy format.

The first area in which we would like to offer this service is the Head's termly newsletter, where we would like to encourage as many parents as possible to sign up to receive an email version of the newsletter as an alternative to the paper version currently used.

If you would like to receive a digital version of the termly newsletter via email, then please go to the school website: (<http://www.wolverhamptongrammarschool.com/newsletter>) where you can register by filling in a simple form. The form also gives you the opportunity to sign up to receive text notifications of the arrival of each newsletter, as well as advance notifications of school events such as plays, concerts and exhibitions.

Each service is offered on an opt-in basis only and parents still wishing to receive a paper version of the newsletter do not have to do anything. However we hope as many of you as possible will support us in our drive toward greater efficiency and 'green thinking' and, in order to encourage you, we are offering the added incentive of a small prize, a USB memory stick, to every 25th registration received before 31st January 2010. In addition, all registrations received by this date will be entered into a draw to receive a prize.

Thank you in anticipation and we look forward to your support.

(IT Manager)

EXAMINATION FEES

Parents of Upper Sixth, Lower Sixth, Year 11, and all Year 10 students will note that both their Spring and Summer term bills will contain examination fees.

Bills received before Christmas will include a copy of the **information that we hold on computer** about your son or daughter. Please check them very carefully, amend or add information as necessary and, whether or not you make any changes, sign it and return it to your child's form tutor on the first day of next term. **Unfortunately, we often find that the information we are holding is out of date, in particular emergency contact numbers, so we do ask you to perform this important annual check.**

(Bursar)

PHOTOGRAPHS

I would like to remind parents that we take a great many pictures of school activities that may include your son/daughter for our magazines, our prospectus and other publicity purposes, and we assume that we have your permission to use them unless you inform us otherwise.

(Deputy Head)

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD

The school site will be closed from 4pm on Friday 18th December 2009 and will reopen at 8am on Monday 4th January 2010. Students must realise that they cannot have access to the site during this closure, so please make sure that your son/daughter has collected all the books and folders they need for the holiday period.

(Bursar)

SNOW

If a decision is reached to close the school because of heavy snow, notice of closure will be:

1. Posted on the school website www.wolverhamptongrammarschool.com, - Please keep refreshing the site, to ensure that you get the most up-to-date information,
2. Announced on Beacon Radio (97.2) and Wolf Radio (107.7) early that morning,
3. We will endeavour to email the contact addresses we possess, plus text those who have registered as above,
4. If possible, a message will also be added to the school's telephone answer machine.

Parents and students will be heartened to know that, unless they hear from one or more of these sources, the school will be open as usual! (Head)

YEAR 9 DRUGS EDUCATION This term Year 9 students studied the topic of drugs in their Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons: the booklet *A parent's guide to drugs and alcohol* is enclosed with their report. (PSHE Dept)

PARKING OUTSIDE THE FRONT OF THE SCHOOL

We are aware of frustrations caused to local residents on Compton Road between 3.30pm and 4.10pm when parents park on both sides of this narrow road whilst waiting to pick up their children, and of problems on Merridale Avenue outside the Hutton Theatre. We would not wish to upset our neighbours further and respectfully request that parents park sensibly so as to ensure the easier flow of traffic along the road at all times and not block the drives of residents. Please also avoid the zig-zag lines, the bus lane and refrain from parking on the pavement! (Head)

GETTING MESSAGES TO STUDENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR AFTER SCHOOL

When family arrangements have to change at short notice, we are always happy to try to get messages to your children. However, although we always do our best, if you phone in during the afternoon, it is quite possible that we might not be able to get a message to your son or daughter by the end of school. The library is open until 5:30pm every day, and that is where we would suggest that you meet your son or daughter if your arrangements for picking them up go awry. (School Office)

Advance notices: STAFF TRAINING DAY

Please note that school will be closed on Monday 14th June 2010 for staff training.

INTERIM INSPECTION

Sometime during 2010, the school will receive 5 days notice of an Interim Inspection. Two inspectors from the ISI (Independent Schools' Inspectorate) will be in school for two days looking at teaching and learning, regulatory compliance and progress since the last inspection (January 2007).