



Head Master's Half Term Letter

February 2019



“Awe and wonder in education is not the icing on the cake. It is the cake.”

It has been a wonderful first half of term; the children have bubbled with enthusiasm and energy and there has been a great sense of anticipation as we emerge from the dark days of January. It is hard to imagine a busier six weeks, and there is no doubt that the children are in need of a rest and Half Term has come at the right time. Our school calendar has been bursting with events and activities, and I would like to thank my colleagues for ensuring we can offer such breadth here at St George's. I am immensely proud of all that the boys and girls have achieved this term so far, and Catherine and I feel very privileged to have joined the school community. Whether in the classroom, on the Games Field, in our Creative and Performing Arts, and out of school pursuits, your child has a great deal to celebrate and it is very rewarding seeing them grasp every opportunity.

Our desire at St George's is to nurture a community with a strong sense of collective mission, animated by a need to draw out the very best in each other. To thrive in the world beyond school, our children should be able to communicate, be adaptable, to inspire others, and build and maintain compassionate relationships with others. Giving children the confidence to articulate their point of view, but also listen to others and work in diverse teams is crucial, not only to create a happy school community, but to prepare our young people for the global opportunities they will seize in years to come. This has been reflected in many of the collective events of late, most recently our Theme Day and House Music Competition. Above all else, my three rules: 'Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind' is the essence of a happy school and happy children.

Highlights of the term so far

As the sun shone down on Wednesday afternoon during our matches, it was astonishingly difficult to imagine a more extraordinary setting for our children to celebrate their successes. It is equally difficult to summarise the achievements of our pupils in just a few sentences.



In the classroom, I have much enjoyed seeing the continued progress of the children, and I have been most impressed with all I have seen. The Lower School conjures up a feeling of imagination, whilst further up the school our Year 6s and 8s have worked extremely hard through their pre-tests and assessments for senior school entry. My warmest congratulations to all those who have sat these assessments, and to those who have won various awards. I shall highlight these more fully at the end of term as the remainder come in.

Our musicians have had a very busy term, and on my travels around the school it is a sheer delight to hear our choirs, singers and instrumentalists across every quarter of our site. Under the direction of Mr Wilkinson, our Chamber Choir have been busy preparing for their recording tour to Llandaff Cathedral, which will be in full swing as you read this. Year 5s are preparing for their concert at the Royal Albert Hall, and we have been treated to three sublime informal concerts.



As I head up the 'hundred steps' most evenings and into St George's Chapel, I observe our Choristers in absolute awe, and I should like to congratulate them on a wonderful half term in their Services. Both our internal and external chorister experience events were a great success and it is joyous to see our Chapel Choir continue to perform at a world class level.



As you will have seen from their Newsletter, the Boarding House has enjoyed such a happy atmosphere this term, and Mr and Mrs Onions and their team have been as busy as ever with the evening activities and events. Many of our day children sleep over at school and make the most of our fun and homely set up. Indeed, as I type this many children are with us eagerly looking forward to their Spa Night and Swim. It is lovely having so many children take advantage of our sleepovers, and it really is great fun. Do contact Mrs Onions (allison.onions@stgwindsor.org) if you would like more information.



Girls and boys have enjoyed considerable success on the Games Field and have exemplified the core values of sport that have been launched this term under our new Director of Sport, Mr Wright. The progress made across all teams is very noticeable, and I would congratulate all those who have represented the school in Cross Country, Swimming, Netball and Rugby, for their team and individual contribution.



This term we have welcomed Mr Adam Jennings, our new Drama Teacher, and he and Mr Wilkinson have begun planning for our production of 'Mary Poppins', to be staged in the Farrer Theatre at the end of the Trinity Term. LAMDA continues to grow in popularity, and I look forward to further development of our Drama, which I believe to be such an important area of the curriculum in so many ways.



There is a saying that 80% of what you learn is outside the classroom, and seeing the interest and engagement of our pupils in pursuing their own hobbies and clubs here at St George's is testament to this. Our co-curricular programme is thriving and I applaud our children for their involvement in this. The days are certainly long and busy for them at St George's, and whether exams are looming on the horizon or not, I strongly encourage them to use next week to relax, re-charge their batteries and enjoy family time. I look forward to hearing stories of adventures, time spent outdoors - possibly making dens - imaginative games and suchlike.



Looking Ahead

The pace certainly doesn't diminish after Half Term, and we have a great deal to look forward to in all areas of the school. Please do consult the school diary for details of various events, but may I draw your attention to a couple:

- March 04** Monday, 4 March 2019, 6.15-8.15pm Senior School Fair. We are very pleased to welcome 33 Senior Schools to St George's on this date. Registrars, Heads of Admissions and various Academic Staff from a range of schools will be on hand to showcase their school and answer questions you may have. We attach a letter with further information and a list of schools attending the fair, and we very much hope you will be able to come to this event. Senior school placement is an important part of our role, and we look forward to proactively supporting, advising and guiding you through the process. As an experienced senior school teacher, Catherine will be playing a key role with this and working to forge closer links with many schools, whilst I shall advise you. Please do make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your thinking for your child. I recommend this process starts in Year 4, though I will be very happy to begin the discussions at an earlier stage.
- March 11** Monday, 11 March The Royal Albert Hall. Our Chamber Choir and Year 5 are performing at the Royal Albert Hall on this day with the Berkshire Maestros. We have been specifically asked to join this event, and I couldn't be more proud of our choir for reaching such a high standard to have been picked for such a wonderful opportunity.
- March 15** Friday, 15 March 2019, 9.30-11.00am Open Morning. Interest in St George's continues to grow, and Ms De Vally-King has had an immensely busy six weeks with prospective families almost every day. We currently have over 40 registrations for our Open Morning and look forward to welcoming our visitors. If you know of any families who would like to join us, please do encourage them to make contact with us. I am also very pleased to see prospective families at any time.
- March 16** Saturday, 16 March 2019, Parents' Group Quiz. It is quite clear to Catherine and me that we are so lucky to have such a supportive parent body at St George's, and of course a most energetic Parents' Group. If you haven't organised a table for their annual quiz, may I encourage you to do so? Both Catherine and I are hopeless at quizzes, so at the very least you know you won't come last!

There are many more events that I hope you will be able to join us for. Please do look through the diary for further details.

The Next Chapter: Strategic Vision for the School

This is a good opportunity for me to outline our plans for the further strategic development of St George's to ensure we remain true to our guiding principles, but ready to be at the forefront of education in a truly innovative way.

As we return from Half Term, I shall be focused on discussions with Parents, Governors, Staff and members of our Senior Leadership Team to prepare 'The Next Chapter: Vision for 2025'. This will be a comprehensive plan for what the school will look like in 2025, and what steps we shall be taking to achieve these ambitious aims.

I have been in discussion with the Governors' Strategy and Development Committee, and we shall be holding an important Strategy Day on Saturday, 16 March. The objective of this day is to lay the foundations and guiding questions for parent consultations and staff collaboration as we move into the Trinity Term.

Before the end of the Trinity Term, we shall announce our strategic intentions and development for the school, laying out our core vision, guiding values and areas of change. All areas of school life are being looked at and priorities will be established following these in-depth consultations with all stakeholders.

Alongside this, we are looking at the site to bring together a plan for how we intend to maximise our facilities.

Collectively, we all have the highest ambitions for our school, and I much look forward to working with you all over the coming five months to map out an exciting pathway for the school over the next five years.

At the heart of 'The Next Chapter: Vision for 2025' we will be establishing a learner journey for our pupils so they are taking advantage of an extraordinary curriculum which prepares them to be change makers as they seize the opportunities the world will bring them. We must set the highest bar for them, and in doing so, ourselves.

Mrs Clare Davis and Mrs Mary Sandall, our Marketing team, have considerably raised the profile of the school externally. Part of this is further engagement with many publications, and I was delighted to be visited by Muddy Stiletto's this term and we look forward to sharing their review of us with you. We are also in contact with The Good Schools Guide and Tatler, and I am delighted with the renewed interest in the school. I am sure many of you are aware of the Tatler Schools Guide, a publication released every year in their October magazine. It is my aim that St George's features in this review in the not so distant future, and we are preparing our pitch to them. Part of this is a parent and a pupil questionnaire, which are both available on the Parent Portal. If you felt able to, I would be so grateful if you would spend a few minutes completing the questionnaires and sending your feedback via email, directly to Tatler – tatlerschools@condenast.co.uk. The questionnaires are completely anonymous and we do not have any sight of them. My thanks to you for considering supporting our quest to promote the school beyond the gates.

Our Theme for the Year

I wrote about the importance of having a 'Growth Mindset' in my start of term letter, and many of our visiting speakers in assembly have focused on this. Wanting to learn; accepting challenge; carrying on when things get tough; learning from mistakes and criticism – rather than ignoring it; finding inspiration from the success of others – rather than being threatened by it, counts for much more than the abilities we are born with and helps those with a 'Growth Mindset' achieve far more than those who might be clever, but don't apply these core principles. These are really exciting lessons and well worth learning. With this being a major focus for us at St George's, I am happy to report that our children burst with 'Growth Mindset'. This, alongside Emotional Literacy, will be a significant factor as we prepare to shape our curriculum.

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A significant purpose of education is enthusing others with passion, and I saw this first hand last week at our Astronomy evening, hosted by our Head of Science, Mr Foran. I witnessed many of our families taken on a journey by him, captivated by his passion for the stars above and there was a great sense of excitement shared by everyone, parents and children alike. It is this awe and wonder that drives our inner curiosity. This ignites true creativity, innovation and an academic thirst that is so important for our children to develop to be the change makers of the future.



What we can achieve on our own can be impressive, but has its limitations; the result of bringing the best ideas from a diverse group within the school community (as I saw at the star gazing evening) will be extraordinary and has endless possibilities. Our planning for 'The Next Chapter: Vision for 2025' has this at its core.

Finally

I would like to thank you for the very warm welcome you have given Catherine, Arthur, Patrick and me this term. We feel very settled in the St George's community, and have hugely enjoyed becoming immersed into school and chapel life. Your support to us, our colleagues and the school is greatly appreciated, and your child is an absolute credit to you.

I wish you all a very happy Half Term, and much look forward to welcoming you and the children back on Monday, 25 February 2019.

W. Foran

