

26th February 2010

NEWSLETTER NO. 24

Dear Parents and Carers,

The beginning of the Spring Term was certainly hectic and the severe weather unfortunately caused disruption but I am grateful for the support of parents and the sensible behaviour of students.

I start my newsletter with two pieces of very sad news. Mr Malcolm Parker, a member of our School Governing Body, died very suddenly after Christmas. Malcolm had been a loyal servant to this school as a Governor for nearly eight years. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

I am sure that many of you will have seen or heard of the tragic death of Stephen Young, a former pupil of the school, during the Half Term break. Stephen was killed in a mountaineering accident in Scotland. Again, our thoughts are with Stephen's family and friends at this sad time. Stephen's funeral is on 9th March and the school will be sending representatives. A collection is being organised with proceeds going, at the family's request, to the Scottish Mountain Rescue and Demelza House. If parents wish to donate please do so through the Finance Office (cheques payable to Oakwood Park Grammar School). The school will also make a donation.

In my last newsletter I neglected to welcome some new and returning staff which was remiss of me. Miss Medina joins the Languages Department where there has been some re-organisation. Mrs Stephenson has stepped down as Head of MFL, being replaced by Miss Kimmenauer with Senor Herrera becoming Subject Leader for Spanish. Mrs Stephenson will remain on the teaching staff this term on a part-time basis before she retires at Easter. Mrs Part joins our Learning Support Department and Mr Stock becomes our Senior Caretaker on the retirement of Mr Richard Wilkinson.

Mr Smith has returned to the PE Department after his sabbatical and resumes his position as Director of Studies for Year 9. Thank you to Mrs Green who was acting in that role last term. Dr Billinge has returned to the school on a part-time basis before taking up a full-time post as Second in the Mathematics Department in September. Best wishes to all the new staff, welcome back to the "returnees" and a long and happy retirement to departing colleagues.

I am pleased to introduce the new Head Boy and Girl and the Senior Prefect Team who begin their new roles after Easter this year. The new head Boy is Daniel Crittenden and the new Head Girl is Gemma White. The President of the Student Voice is Toby Housden. Our Deputy Head Boys are Joe Weeden and Scott Redington and Lauren Hopkins is the Deputy Head Girl and Thomas Huckstepp is Vice President of Student Voice.

The new Senior Prefect Team consists of Kerry Akast, Alexander Caine, Thomas Crickmore, Thomas Gillespie and Lucy Perks, all of whom will oversee a team of School Prefects, together with Stefan Goodwin who will oversee the multi-media and technology, Robert Hollands who will oversee the House Captains and Samuel Mawson who will support KPI and the Middle School Prefects.

All of the students were selected following a rigorous application process that involved staff and student interviews, in-tray exercises and production of an action plan for their time in the role. We look forward to them beginning their work and congratulate the outgoing team as they near the end of their year in post.

You may have seen recently the reports on the performance league tables for secondary schools. I think it is important to give a note of caution to them in that they do not always give the whole picture of a school. For example, no league table can report the extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that a school may offer. Nevertheless if league tables exist then it is very gratifying to see our school performing so well. At GCSE we were the top performing boys' grammar school in Kent in terms of percentage of GCSE's

(including English and Maths) and the average point score per student. The Government also has a value added measure that looks at progress between the end of primary school and secondary school. Our score of 1010.2 shows that our pupils are making more progress than the average. So overall this is excellent news for the school.

We have also had some tremendous exam results from our Year 11 and Year 10 GCSE students. 62 of our Year 11 students sat their GCSE Maths examinations in November. I am delighted to report that 97% of the grades were at A*/A. In Science 78% of the Year 10 module results were at A*/A. In Year 11 55% of the external module results were at A*/A. Overall these are really pleasing results and I should like to congratulate the pupils and the staff of the Maths and Science Departments for their hard work.

I was also very pleased to see our students won Secondary Team Mathematics Challenge at the Astor of Hever School on Wednesday 21st January. Congratulations to the team and Mrs Thomson.

In January 2010, Oakwood Park Grammar School was nominated in the category of 'Best Secondary School Physical Education Department' for the year 2008-2009. We were nominated for the following reasons:

1. 75% of all students, through all Key Stages, take part in at least 2 hours of physical education per week. This takes into account the amount of curriculum time the school gives to the students, clubs, fixtures and also the time students spend on activities in their own time, which the school supports, for example In-line Hockey, Archery.
2. The range of activities that we have on offer at the school.
3. The development of leadership and coaching we are bringing through the school, for example the use of students with coaching and officiating qualifications on enrichment days.
4. Our success within all competitions within the Maidstone Sports Partnership.

The presentation evening was held on Friday 29th January at Astor of Hever and was attended by Mr Keeling-Jones with two students. The evening was held as a Maidstone 'Sports Personality of the Year' format with many awards being issued. What was most pleasing was that Oakwood Park Students were scattered throughout all categories, many for the rowing contributions and successes and gymnastics efforts. Many of these students gained a top three placing which is superb, and they must all be congratulated. A full list can be found in the school magazine. Unfortunately for the Physical Education Department did not win the category, but it has now set a precedent for future years.

Many thanks to you all for your ongoing support of the Physical Education Department, without your help we would not see the successes we have done. This year has been frustrating in terms of weather; let's hope that the Spring brings a ray of sunshine allowing us the chance to continue the good work.

Last term, a parental survey was carried out and it was very pleasing to see 240 responses. A summary of the results is attached to this letter. The results are very encouraging but we are not complacent and the school will continue to ask parents and pupils on a regular basis for feedback into how to improve the school. I am also grateful to parents who have completed the survey at Parents Evenings which also helps us in developing the school.

For some time now, the role of the Student Voice has been growing in the school, and this year has seen further developments under its current President and Vice President, Rory Prescott and Sophie Drake. Theoretically, the student voice represents every student in the school. It is about giving students more of an opportunity to make their opinions heard on their school and is therefore about far more than a school council discussing changes to the school environment, although inevitably this can be part of it. It is also about students expressing their views on their own learning, to help us to create a curriculum and learning environment that engages their interest and helps them to progress most effectively.

This year, student groups have been working alongside staff on putting forward ideas for the new three year Key Stage Four and other possible changes within the school. Others have been trained to participate in a voluntary programme involving going into lessons and having conversations with staff about the learning that is taking place. Some will be working on furthering charitable fundraising, developing projects within the school such as a new school garden, or trying to bring together the whole student body through surveys and

feedback. A Year 9 and a Year 11 student are even in the process of setting up a school shop to sell stationery within the school. These core groups meet formally on a fortnightly basis - a meeting which is open to all - and they additionally have the opportunity to run question and answer sessions with senior staff within the school.

The school continues to use groups of students for more formal feedback, such as giving a learners' perspective on different subjects in the ongoing cycle of reviewing departments. They have acted as separate interview panels for every new internal and external staff appointment that we make. I myself have met with them to review the school's progress over the past three years and gain a students' perspective on where it should go in the next three years. Our students have much to offer and I always find their participation in such events shows how perceptive and creative they can be in reflecting upon their school and its future progress and I greatly look forward to working with many more students on such projects.

After the success of last year's Oh What A Lovely War! it was a challenge to decide which show we should choose for the whole school production that would be as exciting and dynamic. Since November Ms Lane has been working on a theatrical version of the story of Jack the Ripper. Using slapstick and a touch of black comedy the play is light hearted and comedic but with a serious underlying message. The play moves seamlessly between the back streets of Victorian London and a vibrant Music Hall so the audience are never quite sure if what they are seeing is reality or fiction. The show has been cast from all years and we are now reaching the final critical stage of fitting together the jigsaw of actors' rehearsals, band rehearsals, singing rehearsals, costumes, sound, lighting, set design and stage construction. At the end of the process we hope to have another great success on our hands so please join us on Thursday March 25th or Friday March 26th. Tickets will be on sale in school.

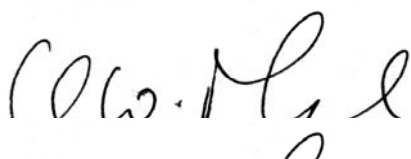
May I also take this opportunity to remind parents of the importance of students maintaining a good attendance and punctuality record; this being an essential prerequisite to effective learning and high levels of attainment.

With regards to holidays and individual days off in term time, the school can choose to authorise up to ten days absence in an academic year, however, this is discretionary and decided on a case by case basis. An absence request will not be authorised unless it is considered to be exceptional. The school asks that parents/carers contact Acting Assistant Headteacher, Mrs Lewell, well in advance of the proposed absence, outlining their request.

Some dates for your diary:

Monday 1 st March	Year 10 exams (until 12 th March)
Monday 8 th March	Year 8 Mentoring Week
Thursday 11 th March	Enrichment Day
Monday 15 th March	Year 8 Parents Evening 4 – 7pm.
Thursday 25 th March	Enrichment Day School closes at 2pm. for students
	School Production
Friday 26 th March	School Production
Wednesday 31 st March	Cuba Trip (until 7 th April)
Thursday 1 st April	End of Term – School finishes after assembly

Yours sincerely,



K.W. Moody
Headteacher

SUMMARY OF PARENTAL SURVEY

	<u>Strongly Agree/Agree %</u>
1. My child enjoys their experience at OPGS	95.92%
2. My child is making good progress because the teaching is good at school.	94.25%
3. I feel that my child is safe and well cared for at school	95.48%
4. Students' behaviour in school is good	90.59%
5. The school is well led and managed	94.92%
6. The school takes account of students' views	88.78%
7. The school takes account of the Views of the parents/carers and their suggestions and concerns	85.00%
8. The particular learning needs of my child are well catered for	91.78%
9. Students know the level they are working at and how to progress to the next level	93.31%
10. There are opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of the classroom	97.84%