

Dear Parents,

In the penultimate week of term, I was at the Diocesan Heads' Conference in Edinburgh. The journey there and back provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on St. Anthony's, as did the conference itself. There is an old joke among teachers: Question: '*What is the collective noun for a group of Head-teachers?*' Answer: '*A **Lack of Principles!***' Most of those attending the conference were state school heads and the waspishness implicit in the joke could not be further from the truth.

I returned somewhat chastened by their quiet heroism. Many of the heads in the diocese are working in very difficult conditions and yet were full of irrepressible optimism: what struck me most poignantly was their extraordinary commitment to the welfare and nurture of their children. We discussed how recent events tarnish the notion of *faith* schools, yet we felt we were inclusive and inspired tolerance, rather than division. We all tried to pin down what we are supposed to be doing about inculcating *British Values* and what tolerance means, if you also want to defend a world view which is not simply secular.

I headed down from Edinburgh to my college gaudy in Oxford. Fascinatingly, almost all the conversation that night seemed focussed on the pressures we felt our children are under, relative to what we had encountered. There was the inevitable nostalgic reflection on halcyon days, when school and university were apparently less tense, less driven and less pressured. Beneath the self-indulgence and humorous arguments about who had gone most grey and plump, there was a serious collective sense that we are in danger of stressing the young to the point of destroying childhood.

On the train journey home, I said a few quiet prayers of thanks for the unmerited grace of being at St. Anthony's. It is a tribute to the pupils, parents and staff that I was relieved to be back at school on Monday and excited to be 'home', although the term has been very intensive and challenging. Train journeys play odd tricks with time, as do events such as gaudies. I had plenty of time to consider what we are trying to do here and how we are, whatever our faults and possible delusions, genuinely attempting to mitigate some of the grimmer pressures faced by our pupils and parents.



A loaf of bread, the Walrus said,  
Is what we chiefly need:  
Pepper and vinegar besides  
Are very good indeed-  
Now if you're ready, Oysters, dear,  
We can begin to feed!



Food for thought.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/News/Fish-Tasting-Fun/>

I will confess that I also said a special prayer of thanks to Adrian, Sadie and Crispin.

There must be a German conjunction for the joys available in the dining hall: rhythmic, dramatic and gastronomic which avoids any trace of bacchanalian indulgence? (*Die Tanzenessentheaterfreude?*) One has to suffer Virgin Trains' breakfast, hotel food in Edinburgh and an Oriel College breakfast to truly appreciate how lucky we are that Adrian and his team feed us. Apart from the way he makes our daily bread so enjoyable (literally and metaphorically), he has also been offering a triumphant cooking hobby. As one mum put it to me; '*My son will remember making his first gingerbread man as vividly as anything else he does here.*' That anecdote might not be used by Anthony Seldon, but it is good enough for me.

The dining hall and the activities within it in the last weeks, say much about the school and its values; and its sense that valuable activities can actually be fun. I do believe deeply that the way we '*break bread*' together is important and it is striking that the boys seemed to have been inspired by the vision of *Mary's Meals* and how we should reflect daily on those children, who through no fault of their own, cannot eat and do not have an education.

<https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/>

Many thanks to all of you who have been helping to collect money and, in particular, to Janet whose cookbook has already raised £400

One of the things I happened to recall at my gaudy was having had to write a philosophical essay on the meaning of dance and movement. (The context (for those who think all philosophy mad or misguided) was how best to understand *Whirling Dervishes* and 'ecstatic evangelism' as in the '*Toronto Blessing.*') One quotation I had used from Nietzsche resurfaced as I shared the audience's delight as Sadie inspired the Junior House boys to exuberance.





*We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. (Nietzsche)*

Sadie's wonderful shows were complemented that week by the Year Seven shows wherein the boys explored a variety of dramatic genres; Crispin, as ever, wove a series of remarkably convincing performances. Each of the three plays was especially composed for the evening. Each one (*The Lights; The Magic Water Bottle and The Escape*) afforded an opportunity for pupils to not only act, but reflect on what acting entails in terms of every one of our senses. The audience too, especially in *The Lights* where we were blindfolded, once again felt viscerally the magic of theatre. Paul Cheetham summed up our feelings about what we had seen when he noted that Crispin seems to achieve so much in drama, without the drama! From an educational point of view, it is deeply rewarding to witness a whole year work together, *think* together, yet avoid the preciousness which often accompanies excellence in this field. There was splendid external vindication of the work done in drama with our first set of LAMDA results. We were especially fortunate that Crispin persuaded the distinguished producer, director and writer, Bernard Kricheski to prepare our pupils.

<http://www.lamda.org.uk/examinations/all-examinations/performance-examinations/acting>

Twelve pupils achieved *merits* and four, *distinctions*!

Another area of success has been in the newly formed Robotics club.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/News/Y8-Robotics-competition-preparations/>



As someone brought up on the mythology of *2001 A Space Odyssey* and the *Terminator* films, I am not sure whether to congratulate or expel our prizewinning robotics teams. It has been rewarding to watch them as they work cooperatively with each other and other schools. There is an unusual combination of technical, academic and social skills required in this new discipline and the boys have done us and themselves proud.





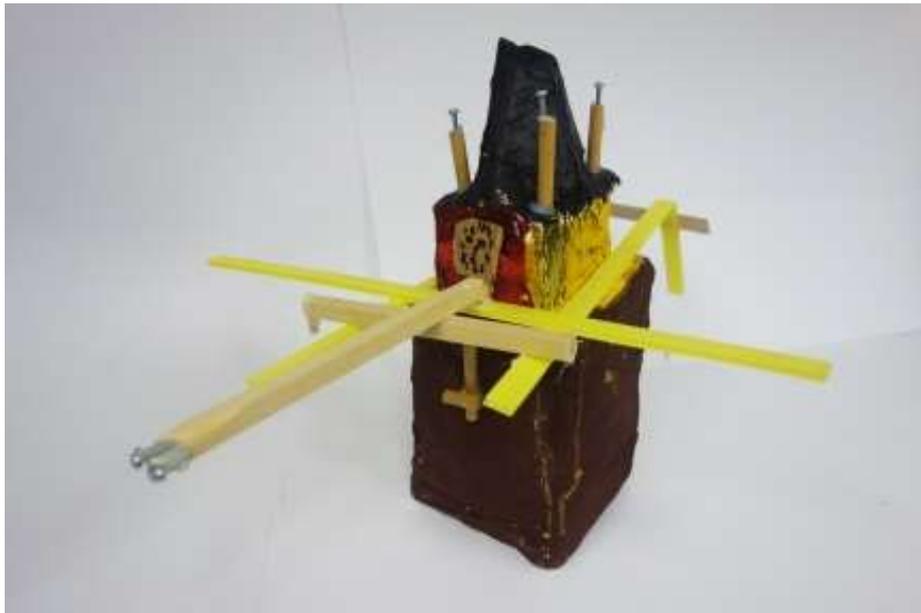
We continue to gather other plaudits: Oliver and Claire inspire our pupils to find their artistic metier. Among this term's highlights were:

- *Junior house artists cutting out city skylines and studying the chromatic intricacies of flowers with a breath-taking freshness;*
- *Year 4 students fabricating cubist guitars which would certainly have put a smile on the face of Braque or Picasso;*
- *Year 5 students concocting fiendishly challenging boards games for their friends to play;*
- *Year 6 students entering conceptually thought provoking and technically accomplished works of art into the Saatchi Gallery Schools' competition.*



A special mention must go to Nicholas Charlier and Rohan Gallagher, in Year 6, whose sculpture *Weaponised Big Ben* was one of 44 of 1800 entries which received a prize in the *Fourth Plinth Schools' Competition*.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/News/Nicholas-Charlier-and-Rohan-Gallagher-win-Art-priz/>



The work has been collected and professionally photographed for an exhibition at City Hall on the 30th of April to which the boys and their parents have been invited.

### **Easter Term Sports Report (with thanks to Andrew and his team.)**

As the sun sets on the Easter term at St. Anthony's, it brings to a close the Rugby and Hockey season. Once again, the term has been action packed with competitive fixtures across London and the Home Counties; including Cross Country races and Swimming Galas.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/Curriculum/Sport/>

Former Scotland Rugby International, Eric Peters, gave the Senior Rugby squad a memorable master-class at Brondesbury; leaving the boys with a wonderful penalty play to put into action! On reflection, there has not been one Senior House assembly on a Friday morning where sporting success, both on an individual and team level

has not been celebrated. Indeed, the local supplier of sports medals and trophies has been kept rather busy by the boys of St. Anthony's this term!

Having 'dipped their toe' in competitive sport during the Christmas term, the Year 4 boys were eager to take to the field of play once again. This term the year group known as *The History Makers* participated in their first ever Rugby fixture in St. Anthony's colours. Again, St. Anthony's were hosted by the ever-accommodating Arnold House School, where there is always good competition and great sportsmanship on display by both teams. The boys played a series of 'Touch Rugby' games in their distinguished *Broncos*, *Bears*, *Dolphins* and *Falcons* teams, with the overall outcome of the afternoon as honours shared and sport as the victor. The boys will be delighted to know that in the coming Summer term they will play Cricket fixtures versus Wetherby Prep and Arnold House. Both the Colts Rugby and Hockey teams had very pleasing seasons, each having the opportunity to compete in established tournaments.

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February, the Year 6 Rugby team took to the hallowed turf at Merchant Taylors' School, competing in their annual *Scrummers' Cup*. The boys competed with real spirit and determination, but came up against strong opposition; many of the schools were in their second term of rugby. At the conclusion of the competition and in recognition for their tenacity, the boys received participation medals and autographs from *Saracens* and Namibian International Jacques Burger.



*Year 6 Rugby Team with Jacques Burger at Merchant Taylors' Scrummers' Cup*

The Colts Hockey team took part in both the IAPS tournament hosted at Haileybury School and the *University College School Tournament*. The Colts team, consisting mainly of Year 6s were strengthened by the inclusion of Max and Ben from Year 5. In both competitions, the boys played extremely well against tough, established opposition. However, the highlight to their season has to be winning the Cup competition at UCS, against the host themselves. The final was tightly contested, with a scoreless first half. However, the continual pressure in intricate phase play between Fletcher and Josh saw a saved shot from Josh followed up by Nicky to score the winning goal.



*Colts Hockey team with the U.C.S. Cup!*

At the top of the school, senior sport at St. Anthony's continues to demonstrate its growth and calibre; both in Wednesday afternoon fixtures and tournaments. On the Rugby field, the teams enjoyed competitive fixtures, with victories over Northbridge House and Keble. The derby game *versus* The Hall was always going to be a tough physical game. The 1<sup>st</sup> team lost 38-10 to a very powerful team, but won the second half 10-5. The boys showed their unfaltering commitment to one another as a team and were commended by The Hall staff.

The highlight of the season was the annual *St. Martin's 7s Tournament*. Sevens is not a game to be taken lightly as it requires speed, strength and an immense amount of cardiovascular fitness: there is no place to hide! In the group stages, the team faced strong opposition, including the eventual shield winners – Merchant Taylors'

School. The team progressed through the group stages and plate semi-final, beating Orley Farm: 29-28. Never had a James Evans' conversion been so important! In the plate final, St. Anthony's faced York House. The boys gave their all, but were beaten 28-5 by a speedy opposition. A special mention must be made of Paddy Green who scored four tries in the tournament.



*St. Martin's School 7s – Plate Runners Up*

On the Hockey pitch, the senior teams had a very successful season. The teams won the majority of their fixtures on Wednesday afternoons and showed great industry in tournaments hosted by the IAPS at Bishop Stortford School, Aldenham School and Arnold House. At the Arnold House tournament, St. Anthony's entered two teams. The As were silver medallists in their competition and the Bs won their respective competition.



*Arnold House Hockey*

The senior Hockey Team has a great deal of strength in depth, as highlighted by the B team's undefeated performance at the Arnold House Tournament. The A team has played some brilliant expansive hockey this term, particularly on the counter attack.

In addition to Rugby and Hockey this term, boys in the Senior House have completed in Swimming Galas and Cross Country races. The boys have continued to show progression and their ability to really compete against other, larger schools. Some highlights from the Cross Country season include the U11B and U13A teams coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in their respective competitions in the St. Martin's Road Relay. The U13's team coming 2<sup>nd</sup> in the recent Hereward House race on Hampstead Heath, with Vasco coming 2<sup>nd</sup> overall – a very tenacious run! A real test for the boys was the annual York House Biathlon, consisting of a swim followed by a run. All boys involved really gave their utmost and it was pleasing to see Juan in Year 8 receiving a medal for his efforts.

This has been a term of tremendous effort making parents and staff very proud! So, as our focus is directed to the new term with Cricket, Tennis and Athletics on the horizon, the final task for the staff is to decide on the recipients of awards for their endeavours this term. Thank you to the parents for their great support at fixtures

The Easter term was an eventful one for the music department. The start of term was christened with the excellent news that Lewis Johnston had secured a top scholarship to Harrow. We welcomed Nicholas Morrell as our new classroom music teacher as Joe Burgess took over from Karl as Director of Music.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/Curriculum/Music/>

The St. Anthony's Chamber Choir was particularly busy and was involved in an exciting project with boys from Wetherby Prep School, culminating in a performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* at Guilford Cathedral with a full adult choir. The boys from the chamber choir also enjoyed trips into central London to see Mozart's *Requiem* and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. Boys from Year 7 also had the opportunity to experience world class musicians performing live at the Barbican. The London Symphony Orchestra performed a special educational rendition of Shostakovich's 5th Symphony. The life of Shostakovich was acted out in front of our eyes during the symphony and brought this fantastic work to life.

<http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/Curriculum/Programmes/index.asp>



The Senior House concert took place on 10th February and the standard of playing was, as ever, extremely high. The Junior House concert on 19th March was also extremely well attended with over 30 performances from beginners and more experienced musicians. The future of the music at St. Anthony's is certainly looking bright!

[http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/Music/Junior\\_House\\_Concert\\_2\\_-\\_Programme\\_Spring\\_2015.pdf](http://www.stanthonysprep.org.uk/Music/Junior_House_Concert_2_-_Programme_Spring_2015.pdf)

The Senior and Junior choirs were in good voice at the two masses this term, performing works by Faure (*Tantum Ergo*) and Gulio Caccini (*Ave Maria*). For the first time, the Year 2s were also given the chance to sing at Mass and performed the Kyrie from Terry's *Short Mass in C*. Congratulations to the boys on another rewarding and challenging term of music!

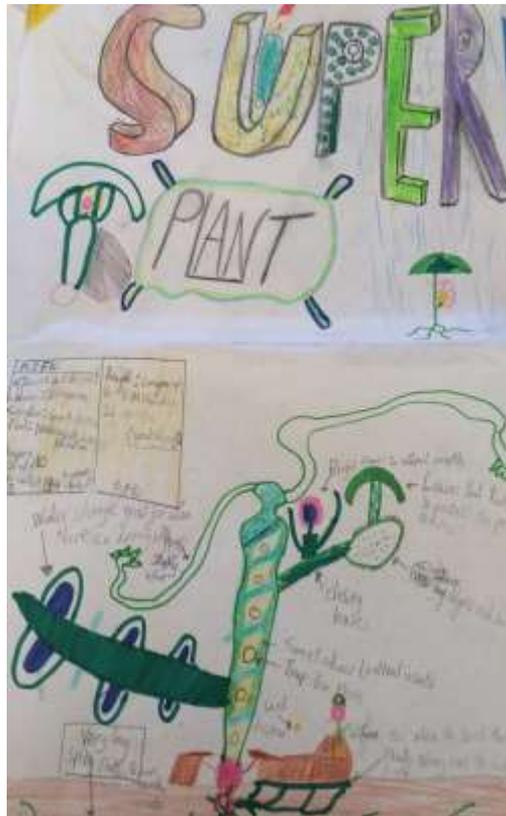
The School Council has been busy this term, with a new team voted in just before the Christmas holidays. The Council comprises one representative from each class and a permanent leadership group from Year 8. Suggestions and topics for discussions are brought to the weekly meetings by the form representatives and via the suggestion box. Decisions and feedback are then presented in our Friday morning assemblies. Subjects for discussions this term have ranged from: Leavers' Hoodies (these have been sourced and will be available!), to promoting basic British Values in our School; to the need for thicker trousers in winter! A considerable amount of charity work has also come via the School Council:

- £660 raised for Mary's Meals (£400 through Janet's Cookbook);
- £345 for the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone from Mufti Day;
- £300 collected for Marie Curie Hospice, Hampstead.

Voting for the next School Council will be during the first week back in the Summer

Term. We are delighted that the council is evolving so well and giving the boys a chance to develop leadership and mentoring skills. Congratulations and thanks are also due to the senior house boys who have so generously and imaginatively worked with Olivia in her mentoring initiative.

This term, Year 5s discovered that plants are not simply the pretty inanimate objects they once thought. Inspired by some extreme adaptations of real plants, they designed amazing Super Plants! They had a variety of features from razor sharp leaves, acid jets and exploding seed guns.



Year 4's work on Newtonian physics culminated in an egg parachute competition. They used all their knowledge from the term to design the parachute with the most air resistance: the winners had not a single crack on their egg. Congratulations!



Next term, the much anticipated Science Club returns. Voting is already up on Frog for next term's activities.

Highlights in the Junior House included a splendid *Book Week* with some very imaginative costumes



There were some excellent responses to the extreme reading challenge. Quine's claim that, '*philosophy chases truth up the tree of grammar*' was interpreted imaginatively by Asger.



Dan Roro entertained the Junior House in French with a delightfully eccentric performance. Dan's performance included, mime, French music, singing, ventriloquism, uni-cycling, juggling, balancing!



At the beginning of this letter, I mentioned the pressure pupils and parents are under. It is good to report that all our Year 7s have secured places at excellent senior schools; our Year 8s enter the final furlong with confidence and having been the guinea pigs in the new entry examination cycle, can be proud of also securing excellent offers at their chosen schools too. In addition to the Harrow scholarship, pupils also secured three scholarship offers to City and one to Haberdashers' Aske's in the Year 6 first cycle of examinations. I think boys, parents and staff should take pride in the way they have weathered the increasingly difficult pressures created by the new examination culture.

The task of balancing academic aspirations with the enriching vision fitting to any proper school is a difficult one. I feel that the amazingly rich term evidenced in what is reported here is some evidence that we are managing it reasonably well! There are never grounds for complacency, but the joyful final mass of the term, the vibrant dance shows and witty presentations in the end of term GAW are suggestive of a school with a strong heart and soul.

I would like to end with a quotation from an Easter sermon delivered last year by the Bishop of Aberdeen, Hugh Gilbert. His Benedictine Community at Pluscarden prays for St. Anthony's every day. His moving words not only sum up the spirit of Easter, but also something of the holistic vision for our children. At a time when we can barely dare to let our children hear or watch the news, and we enter a period of slogans and sound bites in the pursuit of political power, it is salutary to balance the din which started yesterday with the spirit of Eastertide:

*'And the Gospel of Easter, the good news of Easter, the glory around it, is that there is a goal. We are made, each and all of us, for goodness, beauty and truth. We're made for friendship and love. We're made for meaning and delight. And we're never happy till we find these things. They're what give us life, a full life, a real life. But are they there? Do they exist? Can they resist the corrosion of cynicism and cruelty and death? The Gospel of Easter, the glory of Easter, is that they can. They do.'*

Hoping you have a rejuvenating, peaceful and fun holiday.

*Best wishes*

*Paul*

