



# King's College

## TAUNTON

09 September 2009

Dear Parents

The start of a new academic year is always an exciting time. Staff and pupils return well rested and ready to face the challenges that lie ahead. We meet old friends and exchange our holiday stories (mine in a nutshell: a few lovely days in Jersey, then a month or so of rain in Cornwall, improved tremendously by the arrival of a new puppy – a new venture for the Biggs family). And, of course, we welcome new faces to the community.

### **New Arrivals**

We have 92 pupils joining us in the Third, 12 in the Fourth and 24 in the Sixth Form. School numbers continue to rise, despite media doom-mongering; whatever the economic situation, independent education in general and King's College in particular remain popular and attractive options. To all new pupils and their parents we extend the warmest of King's welcomes. We wish you a long and happy association with this great school. In our first assembly of term yesterday we had to seat some pupils in the Transept and Lady Chapel to fit them all in – a great sight!

We welcome several new teachers: David Snell joins the Chemistry Department. Joanne Casely is our new Head of Modern Foreign Languages. Alastair Wood takes over as Head of Drama. Ben Bohane joins the Business Studies Department. James Bird is our new Head of Geography. Lisa Cashmore joins us full-time to run the Classics Department. Anna Forward joins the English Department and will be the resident tutor in Taylor House. Julie Arliss will teach the new A level in The Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. Josephine Barclay will take on the new post of full-time Librarian.

There have been several promotions and changes of role among existing teaching staff: Colin Albery joins the Senior Management Team as Administrative Master. Karen Cole and Anna Butler take over as Housemistresses in Carpenter and Taylor Houses respectively. Chris Hamilton will run the Chemistry Department and Rebecca Grove is our new Head of PSHE. Nick Gresswell joins Sara Similien as a Co-Director of Sport.

Leisa Lavender has joined the school as Development Officer and Nicolette Williamson has joined us as Administrator. We wish all of these men and women every success in their new roles.

I would like, too, to extend a warm welcome to Justin Chippendale, who takes up the reins as Headmaster of King's Hall School. The close association between our two schools is very much to the benefit of both and I am looking forward to a long and fruitful partnership with Justin over the coming years. We wish Justin, his wife Claire and their children Eliza, Joss and Hettie every happiness as they settle into their new surroundings.

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## **Directors of Finance and Operations**

The Governing Council took the decision last term to restructure the financial and operations management of King's Hall and King's College. Instead of two separate bursars we now have two new posts, each with responsibility for both schools. Alan Prosser is Director of Operations, responsible for the infrastructure and support services of the schools; Miles MacEacharn joins us as Director of Finance, responsible for all financial, legal and employment matters. I have no doubt that the new structures and the new personnel will serve the two schools well and play to the inherent strengths of the partnership between us.

Commander Prosser can be contacted at [ajprosser@kingshall.rmplc.co.uk](mailto:ajprosser@kingshall.rmplc.co.uk) or on 01823 285959. Mr MacEacharn can be contacted at [mcmaceacharn@kings-taunton.co.uk](mailto:mcmaceacharn@kings-taunton.co.uk) or on 01823 328100.

## **Exam Results**

We were pleased with our exam results this year. At A level 81% of subjects entered attracted A, B or C grades. Ten of our pupils gained three or more A's. Particularly strong results were recorded in English, French, German, Music, Art and Design Technology.

At GCSE 51% of entries attracted A\* or A grades and 17 pupils gained A\*'s or A's in all their subjects. I am just as pleased, though, with the achievements of those who found things a little harder: every pupil gained at least five C grades this year. Very pleasing results were recorded in Biology and Chemistry (one third of entries attracting A\* grades!), French, DT, Music, Latin and PE.

The AS results were very encouraging and point to a strong set of A level grades at the end of this year.

I congratulate the King's pupils on their efforts in achieving these results. They are particularly impressive given the wide range of other activities our boys and girls enjoy. I thank them, too, for their enthusiasm and dedication both to their studies and to everything else they do.

As before, we have opted out of the newspaper league tables. Our results are published in full on our website, however, and you can analyse them to your heart's content. League tables become less meaningful each year as more schools opt for different post-16 courses (IB, diplomas, Cambridge pre-U), as the disparity in difficulty among A level subjects becomes more obvious and as the questionable practices of some schools to improve league table places are exposed. We continue to offer hard, traditional, academic A level courses and encourage our Sixth Formers to show ambition and a genuine interest in the work they are studying.

## **AQA Baccalaureate**

We will be offering this year's 6.1 pupils the opportunity to gain the AQA Baccalaureate qualification and will be passing on more detailed information about this to them and their parents soon. The AQABAC (as we shall come to know it) credits much of what our pupils do in any case: A levels, extra-curricular involvement and community service. In addition pupils complete an AS level in Critical Thinking and a piece of extended work – an essay, work of art, a design, a music composition etc. This is a good way, I think, of recognising formally the breadth of our Sixth Form

educational experience without compromising the rigour and depth that A level courses provide. Adam Dewberry will be the AQABAC administrator at King's.

## **Developments**

During the holidays we began the construction of the all-weather hockey pitches on the main school site. We have gone for the full works – two floodlit pitches with the best carpet available. We are only weeks from completion: mid-October is certainly on the cards, so the girls will, this term, be able to use what will be a world-class facility. Not many schools can boast two identical, brand new hockey pitches and ours will be in great demand by clubs and for tournaments. I am particularly pleased that I will be able to watch hockey and rugby from the same spot!

Plans for our new library have been submitted to the local authority for approval and construction should begin soon after we receive permission.

Our maintenance department has been exceptionally busy this summer holiday. A new tutor's flat has been built on the Carpenter portico, creating more girls' accommodation inside the house and much refurbishment work has been completed in other houses and around the school. Sadly, the hoped-for dismantling of the ugly fire escape at the front of the school was not possible in the end and this work has been postponed. Not for long, I hope.

## **Evensong**

After last term's success we will hold another Choral Evensong this term. Parents, staff, pupils, friends and OAs are all welcome to join the choir. Rehearsals will be on three consecutive Monday evenings at 7:30pm, beginning on 2 November, and the service will be on Sunday 22 November at 6:30pm. Please let Chris Holmes ([ckholmes@kings-taunton.co.uk](mailto:ckholmes@kings-taunton.co.uk)) or my secretary know if you are keen to take part.

## **Musical**

This term's musical is *Les Miserables*, with performances on 2, 3, 4 and 5 December. We will be charging parents £5 per ticket to defray at least some of the cost of the production. This still, I think, represents excellent value. Tickets will be available from Reception or you can book early by completing and returning the attached form.

## **Parents' Suppers**

We have suppers for Third and Fourth Form parents this term on 25 September and 13 November respectively. These are social events; talk about children is forbidden! We start with a small concert in the Woodard Room and then have supper there or in the Dining Hall, depending on numbers. I do hope that you will come along: please complete and return the attached form.

## **Parents' Association**

The Parents' Association has completed a successful first year under the chairmanship of Robert Adcock, with the support of a very active committee. My thanks to them all for their efforts and my best wishes for the year ahead. The first PA event of this year, a hog roast last Sunday for new parents, was a great success. I know there are more events planned for the year ahead and urge you to support them and also to consider serving on the committee. Please contact PA via Reception if you are keen to get involved.

## **Batten Lecture**

The first of our Batten Lectures (named after a previous Headmaster of King's, James Batten) will be held on Friday 16 October. These talks will have a generally forward-looking theme and we hope to invite economists, scientists, writers, philosophers and politicians in future. The first speaker will be Caio Koch-Weser, Vice Chairman of Deutsche Bank and previously a deputy finance minister of Germany. He will address the issue of whether economic recovery is compatible with environmental responsibility.

## **Tours**

I am sure that an important part of the King's experience for our pupils is the chance to get out into the world on a school tour. We have two tours this term: the Choir are travelling to Barcelona at the start of the half term break and the 6.1 Academic Scholars are spending a few days in Paris later that week.

Looking further ahead, we have a cricket tour to South Africa in February and a hockey tour to India in the summer. The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award expedition next year will be in Morocco and the Biology Department will be running a trip to South Africa's Kruger Park and Madagascar. Oliver Lloyd will, once again, be taking a King's Community Action Project group to Kerala in India next summer.

## **Swine Flu**

Although it is now on the news backburner, swine flu has not gone away and it may flare up in the autumn and winter. We will continue to encourage good hygiene practices at the school. In Chapel we are taking communion in one kind (bread but not wine). If your child develops flu-like symptoms please do not send him or her to school until these have ended. Should a boarder develop flu symptoms at school we will offer anti-viral drugs and provide the usual supportive medication in the Medical Centre. We will try to get pupils home as soon as possible where this is practical. The government has recently announced the imminent arrival of a new vaccine. National policy for its use and priorities is still being formulated and the school doctors will follow the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer.

## **Contact Details**

We will be sending more and more information to you by e-mail in future – including this term's interim reports and reminders of school events. It is very important that we have your correct contact details, including an up-to-date e-mail address. If your details have changed recently, or if you suspect our records are incomplete then please contact our Administrator, Nicolette Williams, at [nmwilliams@kings-taunton.co.uk](mailto:nmwilliams@kings-taunton.co.uk) or on 01823 328200. Please let her know, too, if you would rather *not* receive reports by e-mail and would prefer hard copies instead.

## **Registration**

Our system for registering pupils was criticised in our ISI inspection earlier this year and we have, by law, to get it working properly. Pupils must be registered in houses each morning before 8:20am. If day pupils are late they should go to Reception to check in. If you know that your son or daughter is going to be late or absent on a

particular day do please let Reception or the House know in good time. Our Receptionist will be following up unexplained absences in the morning.

### **Dress**

Unless there is a good reason for them not to (such as travelling on public transport or by bicycle) all day pupils should arrive at school in full uniform in the morning. If you feel we should make an exception in the case of your child please get in touch with Karen McSwiggan.

After a rather damp summer holiday the weather has, typically, suddenly improved. Better late than never! I hope to see you at a school event or on the touchline this term.

Richard Biggs