



January 2010

Dear Parents

I write to you some two weeks into the term following a fresh dose of snow on Wednesday late week at a time when we were 'recovering' from a lengthy spell with several inches on the ground. Despite the challenge presented by the weather, I was delighted that the academic and pastoral aspects of Malvern College continued with so little disruption over the first portion of the term. Our grounds staff and others worked particularly hard to ensure that the roads around the school were cleared as efficiently as possible and it was primarily matches against other schools which were cancelled or postponed. It was a particular boon to have our Sports Complex in operation; as you can imagine, it has been extremely busy. There were very few pupils who were not able to reach us in time for a slick start to the term, contrasting with several other schools, and I do wish to thank parents for making the appropriate arrangements.

Academic Matters

You will probably have seen the DCSF academic tables for 2009 published on 13 January. Inevitably there is tedious comment in the newspapers as to the value of such tables and I do not wish to bore those who are well versed in the matter further. A brief explanation of the GCSE (Key Stage 4) results and our showing of supposedly 31% of our candidates achieving 5 A*-C grades is that a large number of our pupils are stretched and challenged by taking iGCSE courses, as opposed to GCSE courses in some subjects. In Mathematics, for example, about 70% of our candidates follow the iGCSE programme, whilst in the Sciences and Geography all of our candidates do so. The iGCSE is not recognised in the DCSF tables, nor is any recognition given to those candidates who take an exam out of their year cohort: for example, a few candidates may write a GCSE subject a year early, but no credit is given in the government tables. In fact, 99% of those writing English and 98% of those taking Mathematics at Malvern achieved A*-C grade passes and 29% of all grades achieved were at A*, our best ever performance. Several similarly renowned independent schools only follow an iGCSE programme in Mathematics and, in that event, their candidates would score 0% on the DCSF tables.

In terms of A Level (Key Stage 5) and IB examinations, these are essentially measured by the DCSF by combining A Level and IB results according to a certain formula. In essence, this formula favours IB candidates where the average points per *student* is calculated, but favours A Level entrants where the average points per *examination* entry is calculated. In a year in which one may have more IB students than A Level students, this is likely to benefit the first score as opposed to the second. In terms of the first (the average points score per student), Malvern was placed above competitors such as Wellington College, Rugby, Haileybury, Cheltenham College, Dean Close, King's (Worcester), RGS (Worcester), Shrewsbury and Bromsgrove, though below Sevenoaks and

Cheltenham Ladies' College. In terms of the second calculation (the average points score per examination entry), we scored below all of those schools because of our high proportion of IB students in that year and the mechanism for the measurement of results. I think this discrepancy underlines how little value can be attached to league tables, particularly where a hybrid system is evaluated.

'Value added tables' are based on pupils taking Key Stage 2 tests before moving on to us. In the majority of cases, our feeder prep schools are unwilling to have their pupils write yet another exam/test and, despite the significant potential value of this measure, it is not practical to institute such tables at most independent senior schools with a 13+ entry point. Most parents are aware that we accept a broad range of pupils at Malvern: there are those who achieve the highest possible marks in the Common Entrance or similar tests and there are those who achieve the cut-off of 50%. Despite significantly increased interest in Malvern, and thus a greater number of applicants for future years, it is not our intention to raise the hurdle to, let us say, 60% because, in doing so, we would be turning away those who could contribute to the school in a host of different ways and have so much to gain from a Malvern education. We are, however, anxious to stretch and challenge particularly those who are at the top end of the academic spectrum and Mr Dominic Oliver (a former English Admissions Tutor at St Peter's College, Oxford) who is our Head of English and also the Academic Development Co-ordinator, is entrusted with that very role.

In short, striking the right balance between academic pursuits in which *all* pupils are challenged and the broader enjoyment of life at school through the plethora of activities on offer is what is of fundamental importance to us.

Report Cards and Reports

New arrangements for the issuing of report cards and reports will be introduced this term for those year groups not sitting public examinations at the end of the academic year. This follows an extensive review of our reporting system and consultation with parents by means of the Parents' Forum. In recent years, report cards have been issued at half term and full reports at the end of each term for all year groups. This has entailed some duplication during the shorter (ten or eleven week) Lent Term, during which some subject reports have been written only two weeks after report cards had been issued and parents' meetings had been held. Therefore, in line with many independent schools and, in order to allow teaching staff to spend more time on teaching, preparation and marking, it has been decided that for those year groups (the Foundation Year, Remove and Lower Sixth IB pupils) who do not have public examinations at the end of the academic year, there will be two end of term reports during the academic year and an expanded report card during the Lent Term. The revised report card, sent to parents at the end of last term, will include brief comments from subject teachers, tutors and Housemasters/mistresses. For the Foundation Year, Remove and Lower Sixth (IB), there will be no mid-term report card in the Lent Term whilst report cards and end of term reports will remain unchanged for those year groups in the Autumn and Summer Terms.

The report card and end of term report system will continue as it is currently for the Hundred, Lower Sixth AS and Upper Sixth pupils.

Music

At the start of the term, we were able to congratulate the following on their results in the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music examinations: Nicole Wong (*Grade 8 Flute with merit*), Rebecca Flynn (*Grade 7 Singing with merit*), Alice Makin (*Grade 6 Singing*), Rebecca Raby-Smith (*Grade 6 Flute with distinction*), Dominika Dovgialo (*Grade 5 Singing with merit*), Mavila Miller (*Grade 5 Practical Musicianship with distinction*), Hannah

Niemeyer (*Grade 5 Piano*), Anna Ross (*Grade 5 Alto Saxophone with distinction*), Ayush Bhandari (*Grade 5 Alto Saxophone with merit*), Josh Penrice (*Grade 4 Alto Saxophone with merit*), Karolina Dvgialo (*Grade 4 Singing with merit*), Kathryn Nolan (*Grade 4 Singing*) and Augusta Wakeford (*Grade 4 Singing*).

Sport

Rackets: In the main event of the year at The Queen's Club before Christmas, Will Vanston reached the semi-final of the Incedon Webber U 16 Cup, losing to the third seed in a tight match. Arthur Wakeley reached the last sixteen of the Renny Trophy, whilst Matt Saxton also reached the last sixteen – in this case, of the Incedon Webber Cup. Mark Jefferson and Will Wright both advanced past the first round.

Football: The first squad tour to Spain was a great success. The squad trained hard at the Villareal ground every day under professional tuition and played two matches under floodlights. In the first of these, our 1st XI beat the Villareal U 17s 2-1, a result which somewhat surprised the coaching staff of the professional club which had been instrumental in training our boys! However, we lost the last game at Onda 0-3.

Fives: Our 1st Fives team playing the Jesters lost 92-97, but James Killick and Jack Metherell won all four of their games.

Cricket: Our 1st XI are in training for their half-term tour to Cape Town in South Africa where a most exciting programme awaits them not only in terms of the matches played, but also in such opportunities as a visit to Robben Island.

IT Review

I announced to the school at the first Assembly that we are currently conducting a thorough and sophisticated review of our IT services in the College. It so happens that our Head of IT Services, Mr Stewart Johnson, will be leaving Malvern at Easter and, at a time when we are due to make a major appointment for the future, it is appropriate that we are advised by the best possible source as to the current provision and future directions.

To this end, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC) who, apart from other strengths, also analyse IT services in many different organisations, have been retained to assist with this review. Interviews are being held with some staff, the IT User Group in the school and some pupils and a report will reach me before the end of January. This is, naturally, a critically important area for the school and pupils have been encouraged to transmit their views through the pupil representatives on the IT User Group.


Gap Year Opportunities

Some funding for gap year students who have been to Malvern is available through the HMC Bulkeley-Evans Scholarship Trust and also through the Leslie & Ivy Pountney Memorial Bursary. The Bulkeley-Evans awards are primarily for those who contribute to a major project in a developing country, whilst the Leslie & Ivy Pountney Memorial Bursary usually awards smaller amounts to a range of different projects, including those contemplated by gap year students abroad. We need to move very rapidly should your son or daughter be interested in applying for either or both of these.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this term, I tried to impress upon our boys and girls the importance of two things for the weeks ahead: firstly, I challenged them to make every day count and to use the most of their opportunities here and, secondly, I suggested that nothing great can ever be achieved without a keen sense of discipline. These are simple messages, but I believe them to be important. If you are able to discuss these with your sons or daughters at a convenient stage, such as over the leave-out weekend. I am sure that it would be most beneficial to them.

With my best wishes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Antony Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, horizontal blue line that extends to the right.

Antony Clark
Headmaster