



THE DOWNS SCHOOL

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Dear Parents / Carers,

The examinations have just finished. As I'm sure you know the results are out on March 10th. I hope all the students have given their all and that the results are what they are hoping for.

As ever in the Sixth Form things move quickly and we now turn our attention to the next set of exams. Students doing coursework will have a deadline in the next few weeks ready to be marked at Easter. The AS exams will begin on May 16th and run through to around June 10th. The A2 exams will begin on June 10th and run through to roughly June 27th. Please note Year 12 students are due back in school on June 13th to begin their A2 courses and will finish for summer on July 22nd. Details of this summer's provisional exam timetable can be found at <http://www.modernisationonline.org.uk/comptimetable/>

After the exams the Year 13s will be having their prom. For this year they have booked the Vineyard at Stockcross. This is truly a prestigious venue and the students' decision to choose this location says so much about them as young people.

So many of the students have outstanding offers in Year 13 in what is a hugely competitive year for applications as students try to get into higher education before the tuition fees increase. I am delighted to say that Katy got into Pembroke College, Oxford to read French. Katy thoroughly deserved her place and she has never wavered in her levels of application and determination throughout her seven years at The Downs.

I attach a document from the Student Loans company regarding the dates for the applications for student finance details are also available on:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm>.

I have advised the students to wait until after March 10th when they receive their latest results before making a decision regarding which final place to accept. In many cases, by this point the student will now have completed 75% of their A-Level and they will be able to make a stronger prediction regarding their overall final grade.

Year 12 are beginning to look at university places and have had a general talk about university life from Oxford Brookes University in November. This term is the annual Berkshire Higher Education Fair at Reading University on March 29th which is a great chance to find out more. There will also be a chance to complete the 'Centigrade' questionnaire which provides a detailed analysis of what each student is suited to study. Details of both these opportunities are with students now.

There will also be a West Berkshire meeting for any students interested in Oxbridge on February 14th at St Bart's School. Details of this have been sent home via a letter. All students and parents are welcome and representatives of both Oxford and Cambridge Universities will be present.

University is just one of a number of possible career paths after Sixth Form and therefore I am in the process of agreeing a work experience programme for those students who have decided that they would prefer this route. This will give them a chance to gain work skills and hopefully gain contacts in an area of employment that they are interested in. It is intended that this will take place in the October of Year 13 for those students currently in Year 12.

We will soon be inviting applications for Head Boy and Head Girl. These prestigious posts require certain levels of responsibility and self confidence. However so many of our Sixth Formers have these qualities in abundance that I am sure our new intake of post holders will be as incredible as ever. Details of the application process will be released in mid-March.

The students have become very au fait with the world of celebrities in the last couple of weeks. They have had talks from Matthew Syed and Jonny Saunders. Matthew is a former Olympian, British table tennis number one for over 10 years, Times columnist author of the best selling book Bounce. I include some notes from his talk which was all about achievement and what makes success happen. His talk was designed to motivate and inspire the students and I hope they all took something from his talk. Jonny Saunders of the Chris Evans Breakfast Show on Radio 2 is a friend of the school and his talk in some ways had a similar theme to that of Mr Syed. He spoke about careers in the media and how to get access to any career; by asking for opportunities, volunteering, making sacrifices, and generally going the extra mile to realise your dreams.

The students in Year 13 also recently had a question and answer session with our local MP, Richard Benyon. Mr Benyon spoke to the students for around an hour about many topics including the credit crunch, global warming, fox hunting and student loans. He was challenged by the students on a number of issues and as ever left saying how impressed he was by the scope and range of political understanding of our students.

Two of our Year 13 students are visiting Auschwitz in March as part of the Holocaust Education Trust's programme to inform young people of the horrors of the Holocaust. Stephanie and Daisy will be flying to Gdansk in Poland with students from across the region on what is sure to be an incredible day.

I am really proud of the First XV who won the County Cup on February 2nd with a 32-3 victory over Maiden Erleigh School at Newbury Rugby Club. On a very windy evening the boys took the lead early in the game and despite having to defend for long periods as they played with the wind in their faces they did not concede a try. George's two tries either side of half time along with a turbo charged finish from Oscar gave them an unassailable advantage. The boys showed determination and strong discipline throughout the game and, having beaten last year's winners Piggott School, in the semi final, they were worthy champions.

Finally, as we are in the middle of a crucial term may I ask that you ensure that attendance is as good as possible.

There are only 49 days in school for Year 12 and 59 for Year 13 from Monday 7th February. Five days off at this stage is 10% of the remainder of the course and this could be the difference between grades or even pass or fail.

I hope everyone has a good half-term.

A Hartley

Andrew Hartley
Head of Sixth Form