



# ST PAUL'S ACADEMY



## Dear Parents and Carers

*At last we have moved to our new building. As you can imagine, the last few weeks have been hugely exciting but incredibly nerve wracking. Not only have we had to orchestrate the physical move of over a thousand people and their possessions, we have also had to rely on external providers to put all the final touches in place. At times, it has been very frustrating as there are so many systems to get working properly and a number of different companies with responsibility for the ICT infrastructure; when it works technology is fantastic and it is impossible to think that we ever lived without it, but not everyone understands the urgency and importance of having appropriate, functioning systems in schools and, as a result of this, many staff had a great deal of extra pressure over the first few weeks. I now hope that all members of the school community will have a restful half term break.*

*Principal: Patrick Winston*

# Newsletter

Number 27 • February 2010

## A New Beginning

The proposal to create St Paul's Academy was made in November 2002, when I was invited to Riverside House to meet the then Director of Education in Greenwich, George Gyte. In essence, it was made clear that St. Paul's School could not continue as it was; a secondary school with under five hundred students was simply not going to be able to provide the best possible twenty first century education. It was acknowledged that St Paul's was a successful school and there was no suggestion that it would close. However, it was made very plain that the only way forward was to accept Academy status and the offer of a brand new building whilst retaining the Catholic ethos of St. Paul's School.

### What followed

The lengthy negotiations and objections which led to the proposal being taken to the adjudicator and the very last minute decision to go ahead with the plans, leaving us only eighteen weeks for transition. The changes were monumental: the curriculum was radically extended; the pastoral and academic structures were reorganised; the school day was lengthened and a temporary, four storey building was erected in the playground. We were promised a new building which would be available from September 2007 and in expectation of this move we started to increase numbers from 120 in a year group to 180. Again, most of you will remember very clearly what happened. One delay followed another and at times it looked as if the project would never come to fruition; the Wickham Lane site became more and more crowded and extra temporary accommodation was put in the playground creating an even smaller playing area for a rapidly increasing number of students.

And then, of course, there was the weather! Most moves take place over the summer holidays when it is reasonable to expect, not sunshine, then at least a certain amount of dry days. Snow at the end of last term was unlucky, but to be faced with heavier snow and freezing conditions in January was extremely unfortunate. However, in spite of very difficult circumstances the induction programme continued and the excitement of our students was palpable as they toured the building for the first time.

### A new school to be proud of

Yes, of course, there have been the problems and irritations inevitable in any change of environment as people become accustomed to new ways and routines but the overwhelming feeling is one of light and space; students are also finding that it is much harder to evade staff as the stream lined structure and purpose-built nature of the new building mean that it is far harder to hide!



*Overleaf you will find photographs showing our new school and some of the twenty first century facilities*



**Welcome to our New School..**





Graphics computer suite



Music practice rooms



Spacious grounds

# .. with facilities to impress

Without doubt, we now have the best building and learning environment for many miles and it is only as we have started to work in the building that we have come to fully realise what a fantastic piece of architecture it is.



Multi purpose sports hall



Gymnasium for all to enjoy





Architecture to inspire



Food technology



# Keeping students motivated . . .

The building has huge expanses of glass and large sweeping curves which are modern and inviting. Both staff and students are finding that the building, as well as being functional, is a very pleasant place to work.



Spacious restaurant



Science laboratories





.. through stimulation and exercise





### **Our own chef - see his menus on our website**

We were very aware over the last few years that the Wickham Lane site was hugely inadequate but it was not until we actually moved that we realised how poor the conditions had been. The most obvious example of this is the meals that on our former site we imported from Plumstead Manor; certainly, these were an improvement on the food provided for St. Paul's Catholic School, but they were far from nutritionally balanced. Now, I am delighted to tell you we have our own chef who is cooking the sort of meals you would happily pay for in a decent restaurant. We have cut down a great deal on snacks and sandwiches, and we are encouraging students and indeed staff, to sit down and eat a healthy meal. Every day, soup, a main course, jacket potatoes, a dessert and fruit are available and a combination of two of any of these costs £2. I would strongly urge parents and carers to encourage their sons and daughters to eat school meals because we are all now very aware of the importance of eating during the day rather than relying on a large meal, which is not properly digested, at night.

### **Free school meals**

I would also ask any parent or carer who thinks that their child may be entitled to free school meals to contact Mrs Archer at the Academy. We are quite certain that there are many families who are not claiming this entitlement and there are also those who forget that the form has to be resubmitted every year. This is not a difficult process but should you require help or further information please do not hesitate to contact us. The swipe card system will continue to operate as before and students are able to put money on their cards at reception during periods one and four; again, I would reiterate that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, £10 is the minimum amount that should be added to the swipe card each time it is topped up.

### **Swipe Cards**

We very much hope that in the near future, you will be able to top up your child's swipe card, electronically, from home. This system works very successfully in many schools and means that students never have to carry money on them as not only can meals be paid for but also any extras such as school journeys. Having a 'cashless' institution means not only a lot less work for the office staff but a much safer school where 'lost' money and the anxiety that goes with it are things of the past. Before this and hopefully before the end of term, we are going to adopt a system called 'Parent Mail' which some of you may be familiar with.

### **'Parent Mail'**

Sending messages home with students has always been a rather hit and miss affair and using the post is expensive and often slow. 'ParentMail' means that messages go directly to any email addresses or mobile phone numbers that you want to give us so you can access information wherever you are. This system is ideal for relaying urgent messages such as updates about conditions during the recent bad weather and it is also a very environmentally friendly way of sending out documents such as this newsletter. You have recently been asked to forward to the Academy the email addresses and mobile phone numbers you wish us to use; if you have not already sent these in it would be very helpful if you would do so as soon as possible. If you have not received this form or have mislaid it, please contact the school for a replacement.

### **Toilets**

Another small but hugely significant change has been the toilet facilities both for adults and students. Gone completely is the traditional notion of dark, shabby school toilets on the far side of the playground where the truants go to smoke. We have modern, light toilets in each zone, as well as two disabled toilets; any smoker would quickly be identified.

### **Cycle to school**

We can now allow students to cycle to school. At Wickham Lane we simply didn't have the space to accommodate students' bikes during the day and it was very frustrating that we couldn't allow students to engage in such a healthy means of travelling. Now we have purpose-built cycle racks for over 200 bikes and we look forward to students taking full advantage of this facility. However, it is of paramount importance that all students are properly trained to ride on roads which can at times be hazardous and also that their bikes are roadworthy. To this end, our Police Schools' Liaison Officer is running a series of courses for any student interested in cycling to school and no student will be allowed to cycle until they have successfully completed one of these sessions. A prerequisite for cycling to school is a suitable cycling helmet, which students can keep during the day in their lockers. Students have been told that if they wish to take part in one of these sessions, they should give their name to their form tutor and there are still plenty of spaces available.

## Lockers for all

On our new site there are enough lockers for every student to be able to have one and this is a vast improvement as far as the security of students' possessions is concerned. As you will know from my letter, a deposit of £10 is required for the use of a locker and students need to be aware that replacing the keys is difficult. Hopefully their pride in our new building will encourage them to take great care of these keys and I would encourage students to fasten them to their lanyards along with their swipe cards.

## Responsibility

Working in the new building is a fantastic experience for everyone, staff and students alike, but, as I said in the last newsletter, with the building comes huge responsibility, again, for both staff and students. We are absolutely determined that the building will be maintained to the highest possible standard and to this end there will be clear consequences for any student who in any way damages the fabric of the building or any of the fixtures or fittings. Eating and drinking are now only allowed in the Restaurant and this has resulted in a litter free environment and a noticeably increased number of students and staff eating school meals. Obviously, students may have bottles of plain water, but any other food or drink will be confiscated. It is particularly important that students are aware of the consequences of chewing gum; this is an extremely anti-social habit which can quickly cause the deterioration of any environment. Any student found chewing gum will help the Premises Staff for an hour after school.

## Sports fields to follow

Although we have one all-weather 3G (third generation) pitch already in use, we are of course still awaiting the completion of the rest of our sports fields. However, even here the progress is visible; the ground is almost levelled and drainage systems are being put in place and in anticipation of these fields being available, our newly formed Rugby team is going from strength to strength. Year 7 and 8 boys have been training every Wednesday after school with a team of coaches and we now have an official school club link agreement with Charlton Park RFC. The team is now preparing to compete against other schools and we wish them every success.

## Examinations

In spite of the huge upheaval, we have been determined that it will be business as usual particularly for those students taking public examinations. Whereas most schools have taken two weeks at least to move, we had under a week without students. Given that we work a considerably longer day than most schools and that we have done so since the Academy opened, all our students still have a considerable advantage over many of their contemporaries. As at Wickham Lane the school will be open to students from 7.30am in the morning to 5.30pm in the evening. Obviously, we expect that those students on site will be engaged in productive activity which may be an organised activity or independent study, however students simply hanging around will be asked to leave.

In line with teaching and learning policies which have been in place since the establishment of the Academy, students in years 9, 10 and 11 have recently taken Mathematics and Science Module Tests and we have all appreciated how all candidates can now be accommodated in the hall. We have also recently received the results of Mathematics and Science Module Tests taken in the Autumn Term and I am pleased to be able to inform you that many students achieved notable success. Particularly significant were the group of students who were entered for GCSE Mathematics and who achieved a C; these students now have more time to concentrate on other subjects in the knowledge that their Mathematics is secure. This is a very good way of easing anxiety for students who may be borderline.

## PE Department


Of course, no newsletter is complete without a mention of our achievements in sports and this has been a wonderful half-term for the PE Department. At last, they have the state of the art facilities that they had been promised for so long. The enormous sports hall accommodates a large number of sports, including Basketball, Cricket and Netball, as well as providing space for activities such as Trampolining, which is proving particularly popular. The Fitness Suite is also proving to be a huge success with both staff and students making very good use of the amazing equipment, which, I am reliably informed, cannot be equalled in any local gym.

### We Do Rugby!


You may not know about it but Rugby Union is now very much part of the sports departments programme of activities. Since October, a mixture of boys from both year 7 & 8 have been training every Wednesday after school with a team of coaches. The coaching team consists of Mr Morgan, Mr McCusker, Mr Murtagh, Mr Northover, Mr Reilly and Mr Donnelly. In addition to the coaching team, Bert Duffus of Charlton Park RFC has been heavily involved in the development. St Paul's Academy and Charlton Park RFC now have an official school-club link agreement which will no doubt facilitate further development. Although the sport has been up-and-running since October, the team do not play their first game until Saturday, 6th February where they will compete against Mr Donnelly's former school, Danes Hill Preparatory in Surrey. Good luck to all those involved!



All-weather sports area



GAA  
Cumann Lúthchleas Gael




ST PAUL'S ACADEMY  
*in partnership with*  
**Dulwich Harps**  
GAELIC FOOTBALL CLUB

**ARE HOLDING TRIALS FOR THE  
UNDER 12 (Born in 1998 – 2000)  
& UNDER 14 TEAMS (Born in 1996 & 1997)  
Commencing Saturday, 13th March 2010  
and every Saturday thereafter**

**AT ST PAUL'S ACADEMY, FINCHALE ROAD,  
ABBEY WOOD, LONDON, SE2 9PX  
at 9.30am - 11.30am**

**YOU WILL NEED A FULL SPORTS KIT INCLUDING TRACKSUIT,  
FOOTBALL BOOTS/TRAINERS & GLOVES**

**For further information, please contact  
Michael Donnelly @ St Paul's Academy 0208 311 3868 x155**

[www.stpaulsacademy.org.uk](http://www.stpaulsacademy.org.uk)  [www.dulwich-harps.com](http://www.dulwich-harps.com)

## Charity donations

As everyone knows, fundamental to our ethos is our commitment to those less fortunate than ourselves and it is with great pride that I can inform you that since the establishment of the Academy we have collected a total of £38,500 for charity. Pictures of the victims of the earthquake in Haiti moved everybody and both staff and students were quick to raise funds for those affected by this tragedy. Some people donated money, while others organised activities which included film viewings, raffles and reading poetry.

## Ofsted visit

Finally, I was at first very taken aback to receive a call from Ofsted to say that we had an English subject inspection at the end of January. We know that Ofsted can call at any time and are fully expecting a full inspection in the Autumn Term but, in the process of the move, it was the last thing on anybody's mind. However, it will come as no surprise to you that the outcome was fantastic and the visit confirmed what we knew already; our English department is outstanding! Although we are delighted with the outcome, these visits inevitably generate a huge amount of stress and I would like

to thank the English team for the tremendous amount of effort they put into the visit.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Newsletter, which has been extended in order to include a collection of pictures of our new school. I think these photographs speak for themselves and I look forward to welcoming you in person to our new building.

## Patrick Winston

Principal

### IMPORTANT DATES

Wednesday, 24th February
Year 8 Options Evening at 3pm
Tuesday, 2nd March
Mathematics Module Tests
Wednesday, 3rd March
Science Module Tests
Thursday, 4th March
Enrichment Day for Years 7, 8 and 10
Wednesday, 10th March
Year 10 Consultation Evening at 3pm
Wednesday, 31st March
GCSE Drama Examination
Thursday, 1st April
GCSE Drama and PE Examinations
Monday, 15th February – Friday, 19th February: Half Term Holiday



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### TERM & HOLIDAY DATES 2009/10

#### Spring Term

Monday 4th January 2010

Wednesday 31st March 2010

#### Spring Half Term

Monday 15th February 2010

Friday 19th February 2010

#### Easter Holidays

Thursday 1st April 2010

Friday 16th April 2010

#### Summer Term

Monday 19th April 2010

Friday 23rd July 2010

#### May Day Holiday

Monday 3rd May 2010

#### Summer Half Term

Monday 31st May 2010

Friday 4th June 2010

