



Dear Parents,

I hope that you are all keeping safe and well.

The end of term is fast approaching and hopefully, given recent developments with the vaccine rollout, we can all now look forward to a more “normal” 2021.

Many of our international boarders are returning home this weekend for the Christmas break – leaving early to ensure that COVID does not disrupt their travel plans. We wish them all a safe trip home.

Exams

Over the last week we have been able to run a full programme of Upper Fifth mock examinations and Sixth Form Progress tests. Well done to the students and staff for making this work under difficult circumstances.

This week the government announced its intention for GCSEs and A Level examinations will take place this summer and gave an outline of its approach. The key points include:

- GCSE and A-level exams will be graded as generously as they were this year to compensate for disruption to schooling
- Details of exam topics will be released to schools in January to enable teachers to make best use of limited teaching time and focus pupils’ revision
- Pupils will be able to refer to “aids” while taking exams (for example, vocabulary sheets in Modern Languages)
- Students who miss exam papers due to self-isolation will also be given a “second chance” with a series of backup exams
- School assessments may be used in “extreme cases” if a pupil has a “legitimate reason” to miss all of their exams and the backup papers

Currently, there is not much more to go on. Once the detailed guidance is released in January we will provide a comprehensive explanation of the school’s response and adapt our provision accordingly for the affected year groups.



Virtual Parent Evenings

I am aware that we have not been able to run Parents' Evenings this term.

To address this, the school has just purchased the School Cloud Software package. This will enable us to run Virtual Parents' Evenings from next term until the various COVID restrictions are lifted.



A detailed letter containing a schedule of meetings and set up instructions will follow in the next few days but an introduction to the system can be found here.

<https://www.parentseveningsystem.co.uk/>

The new Parents Evening Software has been set up and synced with PASS (our school database) so we are ready to go from January.

Documentaries

Inspired by acclaimed British documentary filmmakers Nick Broomfield and Kim Longinotto, the Lower 6th Film Studies students have embarked upon their own documentary film projects. Each student will direct and produce a short film about one aspect of their lives over the next six weeks. Although in the early stages, there are some exciting ideas in development such as a film about the impact of lockdown on family life over Christmas. Students will consider the concept of 'true fiction' in filmmaking, as they construct movies from archive footage, stills, animation and their own freshly shot material. The Film Studies department is eagerly looking forward to a first screening of the rushes in the week before Christmas. Watch this space for more news on the St Edmund's filmmakers of the future!



Drama School preparations...

Four St Edmund's students are applying to Drama School this year. This week they had the incredible opportunity of working in a masterclass with two renowned actors: Raymond Coulthard and Jenna Russell.

Rob Gain takes up the story:

"Working with Jenna and Ray was an amazing experience.

The workshop was very relaxed and great fun starting with a warm friendly chat before we then worked on our pieces. We worked on our classical pieces and our modern ones.

I feel so privileged that they came to help and advise us and am humbled that such inspiring people at the top of their profession treated us with such kindness and generosity. Moreover, they have agreed to give several master classes throughout the year. We really cannot wait!"



Former pupil Eleanor Booton also attended and added...

"The session was invaluable. It was amazing seeing such consummate professionals at work and getting to hear about their experience in the industry was fascinating."

Muddy Stilettos

The famous website Muddy Stilettos published its review of St Edmund's Senior School this week. I hope you enjoy it...!

<https://kent.muddystilettos.co.uk/kids/st-edmunds-senior-school/>



Contemporary Music Masterclasses

I am delighted to announce that we have also organised for a series of contemporary music masterclasses for our Sixth Form musicians and singers. They will be working with Tom Twyman, lead and founder of Coco and the Butterfields. The band have already been in to school to deliver a presentation in the Theatre to Sixth Form about careers in the music industry (below). From January, Tom will also be helping a small group of St Edmund's pupils on aspects of performance, song writing and musicianship.



COCO
AND THE
BUTTERFIELDS

Wagner

Wagner Middle Fifth enjoyed decorating some Christmas biscuits with Mr Barnes this week. Aimee Rose was a worthy winner of the prize onion. Sixth Form Wagner students also roasted marshmallows in the tepee. I am told that much fun was had!



DT Update

Our Middle Fifth pupils have been pewter casting in Design & Technology. Pupils created their own moulds using the laser cutter and then cast their creations in pewter using the casting machine.



Sports

Mrs Millard reports on a busy week...

"Firstly, hats off to the stalwarts who stayed outside in the horrendous weather for senior mixed hockey, football and the Chelsea football session. A determined attitude is necessary to succeed in sport and that was on display in abundance!

Well done to all the M5 pupils who took part in the inter house cross-country event last week. After the traditional 'Do this, Do that' warm up with Mr Millard, the pupils set off at top speed around the 1.3k course, down past the pond and around the tennis courts before a lap of the sheep field. Then, onto the cricket pitch and a sprint to the finish on the far side of the astro turf. Congratulations to Theo Bawtree and Zoe Rogers who were the winners of the individual races with some outstanding running. Mixed team relays followed with Baker romping home with this win.

The overall house competition was won by Baker. Wagner were 2nd, Warneford 3rd and Watson 4th. A well-deserved hot chocolate and flapjack came at the end and some chocolate prizes!



The Sixth Form completed their indoor futsal inter-house tournament yesterday lunchtime. Some superb skill and competitive drive on show led to a well-deserved win to Baker. Warneford came in 2nd, Watson 3rd and Wagner 4th.

Weather permitting, the L5 will take part in their inter-house cross country on Tuesday which has a Christmas theme. Santa hats and Christmas jumpers are encouraged as we help the Pre Prep children reach a 145 mile target for their journey to Santa's house in northern Lapland."

Poetry Competition

Mr Whitman has asked me to remind pupils to consider writing an entry for the following poetry award...

Students aged 16-18 years are invited to enter The Christopher Tower Poetry Competition 2021. Entry, which is free, could not be simpler:

- write a poem of up to 48 lines on the theme of 'The Key';
- submit your poem before noon, 1st March, 2021;
- further details can be found at www.chch.ox.ac.uk/towerpoetry-enter.

First prize is £3000, second £1500 and third £500. Three runners-up will be awarded £250.

The following Ted Hughes piece "The Thought Fox" (a poem about writing a poem) might serve as inspiration...



THE THOUGHT-FOX

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
 Something else is alive
 Beside the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move.
 Through the window I see no star:
 Something more near
 Though deeper within darkness
 Is entering the loneliness:
 Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
 A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now
 And again now, and now, and now
 Sets neat prints into the snow
 Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
 Of a body that is bold to come
 Across clearings, an eye,
 A widening deepening greenness,
 Brilliantly, concentratedly,
 Coming about its own business
Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
 It enters the dark hole of the head.
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,
 The page is printed.

Have a great weekend!

Edward O'Connor
Head