

## *Headmaster's Newsletter Christmas 2011*

Dear Parents,

For the second year running, St. Anthony's Christmas term has involved an inspection: last year we were evaluated by the *Independent Schools' Inspectorate*, this November, we have been inspected by the Westminster Diocese. Archbishop Vincent Nichols' representative was Deacon Anthony Clarke. A copy of the findings is enclosed. I hope that you will share our delight in the remarkably positive outcomes. I am especially pleased that the report gives due credit to my incredibly supportive Pastoral Board and the work they have done with the Governors to ensure that St. Anthony's moves forward in a creative way, and also in a manner true to the school's great heritage.

I was so proud of the boys and staff; inspections can be nerve racking; good colleagues become unduly self-critical and boys fear that they will say something disloyal. One high spot for me was my own lesson observation! I misquoted a biblical passage; the mistake was spotted by a sharp year 8, who pounced and made the head look like one of Simon Cowell's victims. Deacon Anthony was delighted by the fact that the pupil knew I was wrong, and *pointed out the mistake with such good humour*. Another rewarding aspect was his celebration of the remarkable and sustained work of our Charity Committee under the unflaggingly energetic leadership of Gronia. Once again, we have collected substantial sums for our designated charities. In a time of such extreme economic conditions, all charities are facing enormous pressures. The representatives of *The Cardinal Hume Centre* and *The Children's Society* have asked me to thank you for your great generosity this term. I would also like to thank Debra Osborne for allowing us to preview *Tinker Tailor* and *Johnny English Returns*. This enabled us to give further support to the CWS school in Nepal. I think we will all want to congratulate Debra on the continuing success of *Senna and Tinker Tailor*, which are still receiving plaudits and awards.

Deacon Anthony also comments very positively on the musical life of the school. I have quipped with Karl, our new Head of Music, that he is the only interviewee to get more than he was promised at interview. Our new music school **was** completed over the summer and has provided fascinating new opportunities for the boys to develop their musical talents. We all want to thank Karl and Joe for their tremendous work in that area of the school. Crispin also has a new rehearsal space and we feel that music and drama have been given a boost.



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Summer Works



*The New Music Room*

The other very significant initiative this term, and over the Summer, was the introduction of a Reception class. This involved a complete refurbishment of the key rooms and an enormous amount of preparation. It is invidious to single out staff but we would be wrong not to celebrate the amazingly creative work of Dana, Olivia and Alex which has culminated in such a joyous and vibrant first term in Reception. There were very few dry eyes after the Reception Christmas show which summed up beautifully what an enriching educational experience has been provided. Indeed, all the end-of-year shows in the Junior House were a delight. Each form produced something individual and fun. I am also touched by the way staff, pupils and parents thanked each other. The sense of what I call a 'community of learning' is very evident and the generous spirit of mutual respect so essential for schools to function.



Summer Works



The New Reception

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The New Reception

The Senior House **GAW** was equally impressive. I would happily offer an Oscar and BAFTA to Philip and Vincent for their extraordinarily witty animated shorts. The musicians distinguished themselves and it once again rounded off the term in a characteristically eccentric, bold, fun and enthusiastic St. Anthony's style. The Senior House has had a significant refurbishment over the Summer and the work continues: the playground has been successfully resurfaced, boys have a new changing room, new lockers and, by January, the lavatory facilities will have been significantly upgraded. The Governors have also been very supportive in my requests for improved lighting across the campus. In some ways such aspects might seem banal, but I am convinced that we must do all we can to enhance the learning environment and eliminate negative distractions.

In terms of human and academic resources, next term we will welcome Simon Detre as the new Deputy Head. Simon was educated at Ampleforth and is a graduate of King's College London, in Modern Languages. He leaves his present post as Deputy at Westminster Abbey Choir School on Christmas Day! Simon will be working closely with me, and the SMT, to review our timetable and curriculum.

He will also be leading the introduction of our Learning Platform. The infrastructure, in terms of computers, IWBs and relevant software is now embedded and Nicholas Hitchen, (the Alpha Plus VLE expert) will be leading our staff INSET in January. The theme of that day is '*Learning Enrichment*'. We will be focusing on how we can collectively develop our *Teaching and Learning* strategies and how the new technologies can help our pupils, *and teachers*, develop as independent and creative

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learners. His work can be seen on the following websites and gives a foretaste of what we hope to be doing from January.

<http://celebratinglearning.tumblr.com/>

Another initiative, next term, will be the formal introduction of philosophy into the Year 5 and Year 6 curriculum. We will be working with Emma Worley from *The Philosophy Foundation*. Parents will not be surprised that I am keen to encourage such schemes and we are fortunate that these distinguished providers will be helping us.

<http://www.philosophy-foundation.org/home>

Our work with the *Trinity Laban School Of Music and Dance*, on Saturday mornings, has been very successful and Karl, and I will be exploring how we can develop this in higher year groups. It was decided to pilot our link with Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils. We are reasonably confident that we will be able to move up to higher year groups in due course; watch this space!

<http://www.alphaplustrinitylaban.co.uk/Music-Centres/>

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, we will be visited by Professor Helen Reid. Helen will hold master-classes with pupils and christen our baby grand piano appropriately! Helen is a distinguished teacher and performer, and serendipitously crossed professionally with Karl and myself in previous schools. Helen teaches at the Guildhall and Trinity Laban.

<http://www.helenreid.net/>

Lawrence Sail, the distinguished poet and critic visited the school in November. He held workshops throughout the day and treated us to an extraordinarily moving recitation and discussion in the evening. I think, for many parents, this was one of the most moving experiences of the term. Lawrence inspired the boys as well and is keen to return on National Poetry Day next year.

<http://literature.britishcouncil.org/lawrence-sail>

This term, Mgr. Phelim Rowland has been on sabbatical: providentially, he was replaced by Father Vincent Docherty; we thanked him at our Carol Service for his generosity and guidance. We wish him the best for his ministry in Africa. He has been a great friend to St. Anthony's. Our Carol Service was again very moving and thought provoking. We thank Father Gerry for allowing us to use St. Thomas More and all the pupils and parents for making it an uplifting occasion. Christmas is a time for celebration and I would like to end by wishing the whole community best wishes for the holidays. It has been a fulfilling term and the staff appreciate the great support you give the school.

Paul