

Headmaster's Newsletter Summer 2011

Dear Parents,

Tomorrow evening, I will, *Deo volente*, be in Bolsena; this is a beautiful Italian town beside a freshwater volcanic lake. I intend to swim, read, eat lots of pasta, drink grappa, play with my increasingly voluble son and, perhaps, even see my unbelievably patient wife. This term has been extraordinarily full and St. Anthony's has been very demanding and very exciting. On my return from my iconic and idyllic Italian hideaway, I am pretty sure that the school will look rather different.



A significant number of building and enhancement projects have already begun. *'Boys out on Friday; builders in on Monday!'* The hallway of the Junior House is crammed with boxes and new furniture for the Reception Class of September 2011; the Senior House playground betrays signs of refurbishment and renewal. Old grey filing cabinets stand lonely on the tarmac, like tired and bedraggled soldiers of a different era. *The Changing Hut* has disappeared and diggers are already being used to lay the foundations for our new Music and Drama rooms. I have hinted that we had interesting plans for our music provision, but had not anticipated that they would come to fruition so quickly. We were very fortunate to obtain planning consent in June. Thus, by September, there should be a new Music Room and Drama Room. Our old Music Room has been gutted; it will be rebuilt as a proper changing room facility for the pupils and this will connect to the swimming pool.



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We are also fortunate that both playgrounds will be resurfaced over the Summer; this will make them safer for the pupils, but also increase their utility. I have threatened to offer a Basketball hobby once the Senior House playground is complete. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governors, and my colleagues, for **daring** to re-imagine the site, and in such a way that we can improve what we offer, but without destroying the sense of space and quirkiness, which make the school such fun for all in it. In addition to the building work, I am also delighted that we will be getting a baby Grand Piano for the Hall and two other pianos. One of my witty colleagues has suggested that we start the new academic year with *Handel's Water Music*; we would hold a procession from the swimming pool to the Music Room.

Some of you will have already met our new Head of Music, Mr Karl Leutfield. Karl will be joining us from his present post as Deputy Head of Music at Nottingham High School for Boys, in September. I am delighted to also announce that we will be keeping Joe Burgess, at least until January 2012. Joe has been a wonderful *acting* Director of Music and will be working with Karl next term to ensure that our musical provision is outstanding. Thank you to all those colleagues and parents who made our June musical evening so uplifting. Bene't's lovely performance of Finzi, Ruth's stunning Elgar and Amanda's operatic flourishes, made for an impressive confirmation of what is possible here. The pupils provided a whole day of musical excitement and we had the chance to hear Breda and Stefan demonstrate their musical prowess too.

We say goodbye to Stefan this term; he assumes the Headship of the Junior School of King's Murcia and we wish Stefan and his family all the best in their exciting life in Spain. Our new Deputy Headmaster will be Mr Simon Detre: Simon will be joining us in January. He is at present Deputy Head of Westminster Abbey Cathedral School. Simon was at Ampelforth and then read Modern Languages at King's College, London. After a career in I.T. at Reuters, he became a teacher and has been Deputy Head at Westminster for three years.

We also say goodbye this term to Paula. Dana spoke movingly at our farewell lunch of Paula's impact on the pupils and we wish her well in her new life in Canada. Lenka will be on maternity leave next year and she will be covered by Ms. Pooja Gaglani. Pooja graduated in Economics at *Queen Mary & Westfield* and after a career in insurance, retrained as a teacher. She has been working at St. Christopher's and we are delighted that she is able to join us. We will also be welcoming Marc Monatgue as a new teaching assistant. Mark studied Film at Sussex before deciding to try his vocation in teaching. He has worked here before, and we are pleased to be able to secure his services. Two colleagues in the school will also be undergoing a key change of state over the Summer; we extend our congratulations to Kate and Olivia, and their future husbands, Jake and Tom and wish them well for their marriages and honeymoons over the holidays.

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The *Antonians* provide a rich sense of the cultural life of the school and as I reflect on the year, I am again struck by what I have called the strange alchemy here. Pupils seem to be inspired to be daring, whether on stage, in the classroom, or simply in their conversations. I am also touched by the courtesy and sensitivity which are so much part of the web of life here. It is moving to see staff and pupils working together to iron out differences, resolve problems and listen to each other; these are life skills as vital as academic success.

The academic richness of the school is also something of which we are rightly proud; in addition to the expected success at Common Entrance, it is lovely to see pupils getting their certificates in Mandarin and Arabic; looking into the Art Room and watching the mad balloon-breaking devices at work; watching Crispin's daring production of *'The Tempest'*; hearing a splendid *'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat'*....the list goes on! I love the tradition here of *Form Performances*, which with The GAW, do make every end of term so much fun. Impressive too, is the fact that so many of our pupils have the chance to perform. The *Year 6 Poetry Recitation* is as good as any I have seen, not least, because it was not restricted to the naturally performing pupils. Moreover, the manner in which the pupils supported each other, was another example of the spirit of community here. I do want to thank Crispin again for his extraordinary generosity of time with the pupils. At the risk of offending parents in the acting profession, I have to say that Crispin has a passion for acting without any of the histrionics and preciousness that can sometimes temper a Head's joy in his drama colleagues!

Jonathan's P.E. team gave us two splendid Sports Days and it is reassuring to see that it isn't just in the mythical world of Midsomer that Sack Races and Egg and Spoon Races happen! We had another triumph at the Mill Hill Tennis Tournament. I can also report that several of my new fellow Heads have congratulated the pupils here on their sportsmanship and courtesy at fixtures.



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Another aspect of the school of which we can all be proud, is the amazing Charity work. *The Parents' Charity Committee* inspired the school: this year almost £16,500 pounds has been raised. Shun's 'Cranes' raised £1500.



Perhaps I might end by thanking Msgr. Phelim Rowland for his inspiring address to our Leavers. He encapsulated beautifully, and movingly, the gratitude we feel to be in such a caring school, with such loving parents and such delightful pupils. Just before the Leavers' Buffet, I bumped into two ex-colleagues. One of them said: '*You have no right to look so happy at the end of a term!*' She was absolutely right. All the people at St. Anthony's are to blame!

This has been a thrilling year and I am confident that next year will be one of fascinating change too. We will welcome our Reception Class and the harmonies in the playground will have new notes.

Best wishes for the Summer.

Paul

