

Dear parent,

It is my pleasure to write to parents of pupils in all three schools which make up the Highgate Foundation and to extend a warm welcome to those families joining Highgate School this term. Parents of pupils in the Pre-Preparatory and Junior Schools will receive newsletters from the Principals, Mrs Sarah Kennedy and Mr Mark James, respectively, and there will be a number of items in my letter which will be only of interest to pupils' parents in the Senior School. However, I hope you will bear with me: some news will be of relevance to all readers and I am always keen to ensure that Foundation news reaches you all.

Public examination results and applications to university

The new A*

August brought the annual A level and GCSE results as well as the outcomes of applications to university through UCAS, the University Central Application System. 'The Class of 2010', if we may call the 2010 leavers thus, turned in record results for Highgate. In 2008 we saw a sharp uplift in the overall percentage of A and B grades from 85% to 90.3%: this year, with 91% of all exams receiving these top grades, Highgate equalled its own record and, crucially, sustained last year's level of A grades at the 70%-mark. More good news came in the shape of Highgate's A* count: one in four grades was an A*, the new measurement aimed to recognise the achievements of the most able and eighteen pupils secured a full house of three A* grades, of whom eight picked up four or more A*. 71 pupils were rewarded with at least one A*. Getting an A* means that candidates have to concentrate on the harder, synoptic papers which form the basis of the work in Year 13 in order to score an average mark of 90%. I welcome the A* as a useful reform and sensible development of the A level and am glad to see the motivating effect it has had on all pupils, whatever their abilities. We must always recognise that an exam does not provide teachers with a vision for their teaching, but achievement at this level should give all parents confidence that their children will thrive rather than merely survive at university.

UCAS, 2010

Our eyes were firmly on the news from UCAS given the well-documented rise in applications and the fall in places, and most of what follows will be primarily of interest to parents of Year 12 and 13 pupils. It was indeed tougher this year. The majority (68%) of our pupils met the conditions of their first-choice offers (2009, 77%) and a further 12% were able to make use of their second-choice or 'insurance offer'. While many admissions offices were unable to show much flexibility, there was some, with 15 applicants or 9% of those holding offers accepted despite narrowly missing the terms of their offers, and two pupils gained places at leading universities through 'clearing'. So 90% of applicants secured a place at a first- or insurance-choice university; the top destinations were Oxford, Bristol, Leeds and Nottingham universities, all competitive Russell Group institutions. However, it is clear that more universities outside the top five are now in a position to demand grades which will require sixth formers to prioritise their academic work and to have experienced some pressure in preparation for life at university. This echoes our drive in recent years to make the sixth form a place for scholarship and learning so that our pupils reach higher education with skills and understanding which will outlast the shelf-life of their schooldays. It is also

similarly clear that all university applicants need to be well informed and some need to be realistic about their chances and to include in their choices a university likely to make an offer at the lower range of their A2 predictions. The UCAS team, headed up by the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Simon Brunskill, and the Head of Higher Education, Miss Debbie Picton, will be on the case with pupils in Year 13.

GCSE results

Our last generation of pupils to pass through the Middle School as an all-boy year group smashed all previous records at GCSE and are clearly ready for their sixth-form experience. 61% of all grades were at A*, a major advance on the 2005 record of 45%. 37 pupils had nine A* or more, of whom 22 had a full house of 10 A*. Nationally, the percentage of top grades achieved by boys has risen by 54% since 2001; at Highgate, our above-inflation improvement over the same period measures 134%, so this generation and all its teachers have much to be proud of.

Provisional details of the results at GCSE and A level have been posted on the School's website; you will also find that most other schools now put information about their results in the public domain. League tables have also been published and will give parents further information about Highgate's fortunes; I recommend *The Financial Times* version (and not only because we do well in it!) which will emerge in the new year because of its helpful and detailed contextual detail. I am always happy to give further explanation if you have questions but, for the moment, would conclude by saying that the Highgate parents of exam candidates in 2010 have every reason to be proud of their children. I too am proud of the pupils' achievements and very grateful to the staff who were so decisive in helping all pupils along the way.

Chrysalis summer schools

I am keen for parents to know about the ways in which the School seeks to form partnerships with local schools. Dr John Lewis writes about the summer schools which were run and hosted by Highgate School as follows:

'The third Chrysalis Summer School took place at the School during the last week of August. Chrysalis is a project run by Highgate School as part of the government's Independent and State Schools Partnership (ISSP). 134 students from 19 state schools, largely in the London Boroughs of Haringey and Camden, participated in the event with two students travelling from Havelock Academy, a Highgate partner school in Grimsby.

'The 74 Year 12 students followed a programme of academic extension tutorials in their chosen field of study from a list of: English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Politics, Economics, Philosophy, French and Art. This was complemented with a series of workshops and training sessions created specifically to advise students about applying to Oxbridge and the Russell Group universities. Aimed at students who had just completed their AS-Levels, the Chrysalis Summer School featured intensive subject specific learning along with interview and application advice. It was free to all participants and is designed to raise the aspirations of the most talented 17-year olds to ensure that they receive quality information and guidance about applying to Oxford, Cambridge and other top universities.

'60 Year 10 students also participated in a two day Chrysalis Summer School that took place at the same time. Students attended academic lessons that were designed to stretch their potential but the main emphasis was on a series of workshops that were planned to raise aspirations and expectations with a view to university applications in 2012.

'At the beginning of the holidays, Highgate Junior and Senior Schools laid on a four-day enrichment programme for sixty Year 4 pupils in Haringey and Camden primary schools, focusing on mathematics, science, technology, music and a foreign language. This was run jointly with University College School.'

I am delighted by the success of these initiatives, and am pleased that a number of Highgate pupils, past and present, were able to contribute as helpers and mentors.

Capital developments

I have written before about our plans to convert Big School into a library and I was delighted that the School won on appeal its application for planning permission last term. In the long interim between making the initial planning application and winning this on appeal, Governors took the decision to press on with another key planning application to build a new classroom building adjacent to the Garner Building on North Road on a site owned by the School. That process is now underway and you may have seen the positive coverage in the *Ham and High* of the first of three open evenings which the School has hosted for local residents. The scheme involves the demolition of the one-storey building (currently an ICT laboratory) and a two-storey house (office space and a flat), the construction of new classrooms, the conversion of the pitched roof of the Garner Building to house three classrooms with a flat roof and the change of use of No 28 North Road (also owned by the School) to a medical centre. If we are able to go ahead with this exciting scheme, we will make not only the new building but also its neighbouring building, the Garner Building, accessible to those with limited mobility (pupils, staff and visitors) – it is virtually impossible for disabled pupils to access the full curriculum currently; the new building will also contain a visitors' entrance, reception and meeting areas, a second entrance and exit for pupils as well as up to thirteen teaching rooms. The scheme aims also to create a new internal route from the current entrance to the Science and Garner Quads and to improve circulation on the island site. Some teaching which is on the Southwood Lane site (i.e. Dyne House) will be relocated to the new building, returning that site to its original intended use for music, drama and the sixth form; journey times between the Senior School site and Bishopswood Road will be reduced; the 'zoned' approach to year groups, in particular, Years 7 and 8 will be maintained. This new development aims to cater for the current numbers in the school and does not presage any increase in the senior school population.

Planning permission is being submitted and the School has been consulting with local organisations and residents. If the application is successful, we would begin some demolition works in the Easter holidays of 2011 and set about building works in the summer holidays of the same year, with the intention of opening the new building in autumn 2012. While a project of this kind will involve some disruption, it will be mitigated by the fact that few lessons will need relocating from their current areas and that the contractors' compound and their access to the site will be external to the Garner Quad. Highgate School has good recent experience of managing major projects which have included the construction of the Science Block roof classrooms (2006), the restoration of Central Hall and its classrooms (2008) and the refurbishment of the Dyne House Auditorium which will be in service from the beginning of this term. 2012 would then see the début of the conversion of Big School

into a library and the restoration works on that building and the Chapel. Details of this scheme, which shares the rationale of the New Garner Building (to concentrate teaching resources on the island site and make it accessible to disabled users), will be published shortly.

If the application is successful, we will make plans, including computer-generated images of the new building, available on our website, together with the curriculum rationale for the development. Please cross your fingers for a successful and speedy outcome to the planning application!

New staff in the Senior School

Joining the English Department are Miss Jennifer McLoughlin (during Mrs Claire Heindl's maternity leave) and Mr William Knowland, replacing Mr Gabriel Triger who has retired after 36 years' distinguished service. Mr Henry Shepherd and Miss Juliet Cowen join the Classics Department following the departure to a new career in international development of Ms Charlotte Nussey and Ms Verity Smith's absence on maternity leave. Dr Matt Edwards, who took up a post at Sevenoaks School and Dr Fleur Helble, who has relocated to Germany, of the Biology Department, are succeeded by Miss Helen Wong and Dr Patrick Johnston. The RE and Philosophy department has expanded to welcome Miss Elizabeth Shipp who will oversee the department's new course in critical thinking called *Critical Method*. The Physics Department welcomes Miss Stephanie Taylor who occupies a new post to cover the expansion of physics teaching; she will also take on Mrs Jauncey's teaching during the latter's absence on maternity leave. Mrs Marina Nimmo succeeds Mr Gordon Tweedale as Director of Art following the latter's second retirement from a very distinguished spell in that post, and Mr Edward Hume-Smith replaces Mrs Shepherd during her absence on maternity leave. Mr John Humphry takes over from Mr Nick Starbrook, who has taken up a promoted post at the International School in Jakarta, as Head of Football; Miss Pride succeeds him as Head of PE while Miss Sian Binns succeeds Miss Maxine Thompson who returned to her native Australia in August. Mr Dan Jones is joined by Mrs Sue Bambrough in the Learning Support Department. Miss Pei-shu Lin replaces Ms Jia during the latter's absence on maternity leave. Mr Vesty of the Drama and Theatre Studies Department, who left Highgate to pursue his career in creative workshops beyond the school, is replaced by Mr Tim Hyam.

I wish all of you and your children every happiness and success this year. Please do always keep in touch: we like to hear from you! You will see from the arrangements diary and the website that this term will be full of cultural, sporting and musical events which will, I believe, help pupils and parents new to the school integrate quickly. I will be encouraging your children to take to heart the messages at the centre of our aims: to be a place for scholarship and learning; to be a reflective community; and to be an exemplar for the healthy life. I look forward to meeting many of you over the coming weeks on the touch line or in the audience and sharing with you something of our intentions and hearing how, from your perspective, things are going.

Until then, all good wishes to you and your family,

Yours sincerely,

A S Pettitt
Head Master