



From the Head's Desk

My Annual Report on Friends and Families Day gave students, staff, Governors and guests plenty of information about the successes and activities of the School; more, I suspect, than many of you might have wanted! But no report, however detailed, can encapsulate the 'flavour' of a school and the impact the atmosphere has on those who are part of the community. Sometimes it takes an enlightened visitor to help us hold a mirror up to ourselves, and we had one such visitor in the Spring Term. Brenna Daldorph (age 17) joined the Sixth Form for a day whilst visiting from Kansas, USA, and wrote to me last month.

I found her letter one of the most powerful pieces I have ever seen written about the School, and thought I would take this opportunity to share a little of it with you. Brenna talks about how the curriculum, classrooms, grounds and food were all so different for her, and she was impressed by all of these aspects. But what struck her most forcefully were the people she came across during the day. Brenna says "I was so impressed by how much they (the students) all seem to care about each other. Nice people spoke to me in the halls, and asked me how I was doing. I never saw one mean act. I know that nothing is perfect – however, I was to witness this caring spirit over and over again. When I went to the school music night – which was great – even the less polished of performances got genuine, resounding applause. At Friends' people care, and in that environment, kids can succeed."

Perhaps we don't always see what is right in front of us; Brenna's letter highlighted all that is good about Friends' and for that I am deeply grateful to her. I hope you will all have a wonderful holiday, and I look forward to enjoying this marvellous spirit, so intangible yet so clearly felt by Brenna, when we meet again in September.



Current pupils and former scholars unite for the choral concert

Praise for performing

Sue Freestone, Head of The King's School, Ely, spoke about the value of the performing arts in education to some 750 parents and pupils at Friends and Families Day in May.

Sue said that though many subjects and skills are learned in school, we must remember the importance of communication and expressing ourselves through the arts and other media. She said that we all needed to find the courage to perform, to discover and test our limits.



Sue then embarked on what she called a "high risk strategy", performing a piece on the piano with Year 7 saxophonist Jack Richardson, whom she had only met that morning. "I didn't ask him the usual 'headlike questions' but simply practised with him," she said. "We could communicate because of our love of music."

Their duet was a great success and was warmly applauded. Sue said it showed how the performing arts are a form of communication; she urged pupils to: "Try, and you might really surprise yourself. Jack was very, very brave to stand up and perform – and he probably really surprised himself."

Sue Freestone concluded that Friends' was "committed to fanning the flame of talent so that every child's uniqueness and light within will be given the chance to shine".

Highlights of the day included a Junior School concert in the Sports Hall and a choral concert by current pupils and former scholars, including works by Brahms, Handel and Malcolm Rubbra. It was organised by Mary Mileson, this year's president of the Old Scholars' Association, who also taught piano for 50 years at FSSW.



The Avenue Summer 2005

Friendships in Germany

Visits to the VW headquarters in Wolfsburg, the local newspaper, the sea life zoo, the German Polar Research Institute and Bremen were among the highlights when Year 9 and 10 pupils visited their Exchange partners in Bremerhaven for a week. Accompanied by Peter Fasching, they were guests of their partner students from the city's Lloydgymnasium.

The pupils said afterwards that the most important aspect of the trip was the close relationship that developed between them and their German partners. "For the teachers, it is always worthwhile when you witness friendships developing and communication in the target language becoming more effective," says Peter. "We celebrated the final evening with a party and a football match and there were lots of tears the next morning when we said goodbye to our friends."



Bournemouth break

"After an early start, we arrived in Bournemouth sleepy and hungry, unpacked quickly and went to the town centre," writes Reggie Chong, Year 9, about the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) weekend trip in April.

"Then we went to a Chinese 'eat as much as you can' buffet. I ate the most dishes – seven! Do you think you can beat me? It was a good job the sea was calm when we went on our boat trip. Then we shopped and shopped before the cinema."

"A lovely traditional English breakfast appeared in front of us the next morning. We went to Portsmouth for an introduction to some British naval history, then to Gunwharf Quays near the harbour, shopping again and again! Then we had the most exciting and professional Friends' bowling championship.



Amazingly, Charlize beat all the boys and became the champion."

"Another lovely breakfast on Monday morning, then we went to Christchurch, where our ESOL teacher Mrs Gillmore was born. Our final shopping trip and our last day. In the afternoon we played football. I tried to save the goals but they were too good. Anyway, I still enjoyed it. Before we left, we gave a painting to Mrs Gillmore to express our gratitude. Then we came back to School."

Documentary discourse

"An honest witness cannot be neutral" was one of the many thought-provoking remarks by documentary cinematographer Chris Cox when he spoke to the Sixth Form about the art of the documentary cinematographer.

He spoke of the importance of honesty and integrity in filming, using clips from his films on topics such as hunting, American lawyers and GI brides to illustrate how even the smallest visual details can tell the story.

Chris Cox also shared his regret that observational documentaries were a "dying genre", overtaken by reality TV and makeover shows. The talk was followed by lively questions from the students, many of whom are taking Film Studies at A Level.



Pond-dipping and looking for mammals were two popular activities when Year 5 went to the Pelham Environmental Centre for a day of "fun" science to complement their work in School in life cycles. They even caught four fish!

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Take a bow

Year 11 pupil Yu Kimura is celebrating after passing her Grade 8 Violin exam with Distinction. Says Head of Music Ian Rowe: "Getting a Distinction at Grade 8 is in itself a real achievement, but Yu also got full marks in one of her pieces, which is almost unheard of at that level!" Yu will be studying music at A-Level in the Sixth Form at Friends' and also working towards her Diploma.



And another bow...

Helen Tucker of the Catering Department was one of nine Scolarest employees across the country to reach the finals of the company's "Be a Star" Employee of the Term award. Helen, who has worked here for seven years, won praise for her strengths in five areas including Embracing Diversity, Sharing Success and having a "Can Do" Attitude. She was treated to a luxury lunch at a ceremony in London.

Further praise for the whole Catering Department came from two Junior School parents, who were treated to lunch in the Dining Hall to answer some of their queries about school lunches.

They wrote afterwards to say: "We found the presentation and choice excellent. There seems to be an emphasis on well balanced, freshly cooked meals, which includes steaming and baking rather than boiling or deep frying."

"We tried food from the hot buffet as well as the salad bar and found the quality fresh, well cooked and delicious. We were very impressed and both Andrew Holmes and Catering Manager Gary Oakshott were very gracious hosts indeed."

Out and About with Year 5

Buddhism and pizza may seem an unlikely combination but they both featured in Year 5's trip to Cambridge, entitled "Body and Soul" as it incorporated two areas of the curriculum: food technology and religious studies. The day began with a visit to Pizza Express, where the children met the chef and tastings were obligatory. Chillies proved surprisingly popular.

The afternoon was more reflective in tone, as Year 5 walked to the Buddhist Centre where they were introduced to Pandarah, who ministers at the centre. They learned three types of meditation, the different hand gestures of the Buddha and also the five main precepts for living. "It made me feel relaxed and peaceful" and "I felt very calm inside" were some of their comments.

Funds for athletes

Friends' School presented Jane Young of the British Paralympic Association with a cheque for £4,000, raised at the School's Olympic Ball last September. Jane gave a video presentation in Assembly to show the achievements of Britain's disabled athletes at Athens last year, pointing out that "it's not what you can't do, it's what you can, that matters." She is pictured here with members of the Ball Committee and Andy Waters.



Tales from the Tsunami

Junior School pupils heard first-hand experiences of news reporting from the area hit by the tsunami when Channel Four News reporter Alex Thomson visited the school. He showed a video of the reports he had compiled and gave a fascinating insight into what it was like to report on such a huge human tragedy. It helped pupils and staff make the connection between giving money to this cause and the real impact it might make.



Listening role

The value of listening was stressed when Colin McCall from the Cambridge branch of The Samaritans talked to Year 9. Pupils learnt that The Samaritans is a confidential, 24-hour service, available to people of any age and situation.

The students asked about Colin's experiences as a phone listener and discussed how The Samaritans would respond to a difficult or controversial problem. Colin said that the most important thing a person can do for someone in distress is to listen: giving advice is not always as helpful as many people think. Just knowing that we are not alone and that another person understands can make a huge difference to someone who is feeling lonely or worried.



The Avenue Summer 2005

Senior School Sports Day

Sports Day was a huge success, with more races than in previous years: the pupils loved the fun of the day. Among the many top performances, Pearce Staples, Jimmy Hall, James Bailie, Jack Richardson and Ben Porch were the pick of the year 7 and 8 runners while Sam Richardson produced the run of the day, just a few seconds short of breaking the School's 800 metres record. Pearce Staples and Adam King won the long jump in their respective year groups, while George Dorrington won the cricket ball throw and Samir Asadov won the Year 9/10 shotput.



The Year 7 and 8 girls' short sprints were dominated by Laura Flynn, Alice Neve and Sienna Smithson; Sienna narrowly missed breaking the School's long jump record in an extremely exciting event, achieving 4.46m. Bethan Waters won the 800 metres in the same age group.

Charlotte Jeffrey, Louise McCall and Kenya Brading ran well in the short sprints while Domino St Clair and Charlotte Jeffrey excelled in the shot putt and long jump. The highlight of the afternoon was the relay's close finish between Domino, for Tuke, and Rebecca Hobbins, for Mennell. Tuke won by 0.4 seconds.

Junior School sports report

A highly successful season began with a 60-run win against Howe Green. Some impressive bowling and fielding held Howe Green to 186 runs, with Friends making 246 in reply.

In the first matches of the Primary Schools League, held at Saffron Walden Cricket Club, the Junior School won all three matches against Great Chesterford, RA Butler and Katherine Semar. In the match against Katherine Semar, they made their highest recorded score ever – 342 runs in answer to 186.

The winning streak continued at the League's finals day, when Friends' beat Thomas More in the semi-final and then won by 32 runs against RA Butler to end up a well-deserved top of the League.

The next event will be the annual six-a-side tournament which we host every year, inviting 12 other local schools and 100 young cricketers to the School.

Friends' Junior also reached the final of the Howe Green Rounders Tournament with a very high standard of fielding and batting, losing only narrowly at the end.

Athletics have also been a highlight, with Haydn Farrelly coming second in the Under-11 long jump at the East Anglian Prep Schools' Athletics Championships in Cambridge.



Senior School pupils gave a fashion show, supported by local shops, to raise funds for the World Challenge Expedition to Kyrgyzstan which some pupils will be joining in July 2006. Early indications suggest that more than £500 was raised.



Munchkins, monkeys, witches, the Wizard and Dorothy and her three friends all starred in an energetic and entertaining Senior School production of "The Wizard of Oz" which played to packed houses.