



The
CHATHAM & CLARENDON
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Federation

NEWSLETTER: September 2010

Improving communication

We are going to the expense of posting this newsletter and various enclosures home after concerns expressed by some parents that other methods – ‘pupil post’ and direct e-mail have apparently proved fallible. Copies of the June & July Federation Newsletters, which contained important information about Academy status, the end of BSF and our ‘Plan B’ the “Urban Campus”, are available on request and are also accessible on the website (www.forgs.kent.sch.uk). As this mailing includes a formal element of the Academy consultation process, we can reclaim the postage costs from the additional Academy conversion grant. Looking a little further ahead we have also commissioned a commercial website design team to redesign & completely overhaul the existing separate school websites, setting up a unified Chatham & Clarendon website which will be more user-friendly. This will be launched and go live to coincide, we hope, with Academy status from January 2011.

Academy Consultation (leaflet/questionnaire enclosed)

We have just received the Academy Order, Consent in Principle from the Secretary of State, and governors will take a final vote on whether to proceed at their meeting on 29th November. In the meantime the necessary preliminary legal work is going ahead, including resolution of land ownership for the two federation schools, details of the Academy funding agreement (which will be one annual grant from central government for both partner schools), alignment of admissions policies etc. Our Academy conversion consultants, Appleyards-TPP Law, are managing the formal process of consultation which will follow the timeline below. As the enclosed flyer explains, throughout the consultation period responses can be made online at a dedicated conversion consultation website.

Academy Consultation - Key dates:-

- ~ Questionnaire out to stakeholders: parents, feeder primaries & partner secondary schools, Federation staff: Monday 27th September
- ~ Meeting with Chatham & Clarendon Staff: Wednesday 6th October
- ~ Public Meeting for parents & community stakeholders: Thursday 7th October, Chatham School Hall - 7.00 pm.
- ~ End of Formal consultation Period: Friday 22nd October
- ~ Appleyards Report on results of consultation sent to Governors: Monday 22nd November
- ~ Full Board of Governors Meeting to make final decision: Monday 29th November
- ~ Start date as Academy Federation (if governors approve): 1st January 2011.

Summer 2010 Exam Results (leaflet enclosed)

As enclosed results booklet shows, there were many individual success stories beneath the headlines of the summer 2010 GCSE & A-level results. Congratulations to the students on their grades, and thanks to all those who contributed to their success, in particular their teachers, family & friends who supported /nagged them when the going got tough! We are very pleased that, despite the intense competition & pressure for university places this year, almost all of our Sixth Form leavers secured their first choice or second choice institution. There were some very strong subject performances in both federation partner schools, however we must also acknowledge that there are areas where we do need to improve. This

year a new working party of Heads of Subject across both schools has been established (the Extended Leadership Team), to focus on what we are calling our “G2O/”Good To Outstanding” programme. One of the main reasons for establishing the Federation in the first place was to help raise standards, building on the considerable strengths to be found in the most effective subject teams at Chatham and Clarendon. To support our efforts, this term an experienced Ofsted inspector will be working as a consultant with our subject leaders & their teams on “what makes an outstanding lesson”, the skills of lesson observation, and how to spread best practice.

Welcome for new students & new staff

There is always an air of excitement and nervous anticipation at the start of a new school year, especially for those joining the school for the first time. A warm welcome to the Year 7s, to Year 12 students new to our Sixth Form, and to new staff: Mr Adelsberg - ICT; Mr Burson-Thomas - Science; Mr Richford – PE; Mr Wakefield – PE; Miss Morgan - Music; Mr Rishman - Science; Mrs Wood - Science; Miss Bolder - LSA; Mr Garlick - Midday Play Supervisor; Miss Higgs - Cover Assistant; Mr Hill - Cover Assistant; Rita Gower – Exams Officer and Mrs Richardson - Sixth Form Support Coordinator. After a few weeks they have already started to find their feet and settle in.

As an essential ingredient of working as one, from this September we are operating the same computer management system (“SIMS”) across both schools. As with any new system there have been some early teething problems to overcome. It has been a mammoth task to timetable post-16 lessons across both schools as one cohesive timetable for the new joint Sixth Form. My thanks go to the timetabling team, in particular Mr McFarlane and Mr Tebbutt, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes during the summer holiday. Also Mr Moody and the CCVI leadership team, for grace under pressure, as everyone adjusted to the new arrangements. Initial technical glitches have now largely been resolved, and my thanks go to the students & staff for their patience and forbearance whilst we have worked our way through it. Adjustment to a three sessional day in 2011, with a longer mid-morning break, will finally ease the logistic pressures of inter-site movement for some staff and Sixth Form students.

Senior Prize Giving (leaflet enclosed)

The first joint Senior Prize Giving for Years 11 to 13 (of 2009-10) was held at the Winter Gardens on 16th September, with Laura Sandys MP as our Guest of Honour. To quote from her letter of thanks....

“...it was a really uplifting evening, so inspiring and just a great feeling to be with so many high achieving young people. ...Please congratulate all the students again and thank you for asking me to take part in such a great event. “(Laura Sandys, MP for South Thanet).

On behalf of the staff and the governors; congratulations to everyone who collected certificates and prizes – it was a long evening but that reflects the impressive numbers of students whose efforts were recognised and deserved to be rewarded. The full list of prize winners is enclosed with this newsletter.

Buildings Update

We are still awaiting news from the Chancellor’s Autumn Spending Review in mid-October, which will confirm finally whether the BSF Wave 4 schemes for Thanet are cancelled or if they can continue in some different & presumably reduced form. KCC’s appeal – which highlights the unfairness of rebuilding some Thanet schools in Wave 3 but disadvantaging those in Wave 4 whose schemes were stopped in June - is now being considered by a special advisory committee to the DfE. Meantime we have pressed on with our commitment to make the best of the buildings and facilities we already have, a ‘Plan B’ which depends upon operating the Chatham and Clarendon sites as elements of an “Urban Campus”. A significant

amount of building improvement work was undertaken this summer, at both Chatham & Clarendon.

- Developed a new CCVI Internet Café Common Room in the Cavendish Building – a tangible statement of intent about the importance of our joint Sixth Form and how federation-merger will improve the learning environment. Also ‘modelling’ something similar for Years 10 & 11 at Clarendon Main building as part of the “Urban Campus” reorganisation in 2011
- Re-roofed & refurbished Chatham School Hall as the main venue for assemblies & large school events
- Refurbishment of the Chatham House listed building, including Phase 1 of concentrating all music facilities there – new Recording Studio completed this September and planning to base all music teaching & practice rooms there from next September
- Redecorated parts of Redman Wing (Science) & Toilets
- Redecorated B Wing & some of Maths mobiles at Clarendon
- Created new ITC Room and additional classroom at Clarendon

Our intentions for “Son of BSF” will be:- At Chatham (Lower School) site build a new full-size multi-purpose Sports Hall + changing rooms & pavilion, replace all huts with a new Maths, Science & Tech block, a Food Tech facility, improve kitchen/dining centre, improve toilet facilities, develop new Entrance/Reception/Admin & Staff facilities.... At Clarendon (Upper School): replace all huts with new Maths & Computing block, improve toilet facilities, new Internet Café style common-room & Library/Study centre, new outdoor football/basketball/netball court, conversion of Library to Art & Textiles Centre, re-model Hall as a Lecture/Drama Theatre, new Entrance/Reception/Staff facility... At Cavendish (CCVI Centre), consolidation of Social Studies Faculty in 1st/2nd floor classrooms, conversion of Drama studios to Baccalaureate Study Centre.

Feedback from the Open Evenings, Admissions News & Future “Question Time” Events

It is hugely frustrating for everyone that the limbo of BSF is *still* unresolved - and it will be at least another month before we do get a final (!) decision about rebuilding Chatham & Clarendon. So much as I and my colleagues would like to, we cannot yet give parents a definitive picture of what the future holds for their children – students already here at Chatham & Clarendon, and children whose parents are considering whether to choose our school for their son or daughter.

The two prospective parents Open Nights were held on Monday 20th & Tuesday 21st September at the Chatham House site. For once the weather was kind and over the two evenings around 500 families visited the school and enjoyed the many displays of work. In addition over a hundred family groups looked around the school at work during the day during three sessions on the Tuesday. We won't have any indication about how much of that interest is translated into definite applications for & allocation of places until KCC publishes the lists in March 2011. For the Sept 2011 intake we are restricted by admission arrangements and PAN student intake limits which were published by KCC back in April, when BSF was still supposed to be happening, i.e. 90 boys, 90 girls. In practice when the admissions process concluded this year, late appeals skewed the numbers, so for this September we are operating two full forms of entry for Year 7 at Clarendon (47 first choice selective girls + 13 successful appellants), and four smaller forms of entry for Year 7 at Chatham (90 first choice selective boys + 10 successful appellants). The resulting combined intake of 160 boys & girls was therefore manageable, *just*, although a number of selective boys whose parents chose Chatham first preference were actually allocated places elsewhere, underlining the extent of the gender imbalance and limitations of ‘the system’. That we were 20 students short of the target intake of 180, has a significant financial implication for the school – a funding gap of approximately £62,000 per year (equivalent to about two teachers). It underlines why it is so important to use Academy status to get a better grip on Admissions, and operate a mixed PAN. It underlines why, with so many parents of selective girls expressing a preference for a

co-ed environment, we have to move forward with our “Urban Campus” reorganisation, offering both boys and girls the advantages of the Chatham site, and the combination of a co-ed school with a core of single-sex teaching. Our aspiration is that as many selective boys and girls, whose parents want our school are offered places, and that we enrol a federal PAN of 180 boys and girls/six forms of entry for September 2011.

We are looking to introduce a different approach to the Open Day next year, offering a ‘customised’ service. Rather than a mass invasion on one day which is very disruptive to the school and inevitably limits real dialogue, we will offer regular Open Morning/Afternoon tours by appointment, probably once a month throughout the year, for smaller groups of visitors.

My grateful thanks go to the staff who put on displays and stayed at school well beyond the normal working day: their evident enthusiasm & commitment made a positive impression on our many visitors. And, of course, we could not do it without the help of hundreds of students from Chatham & Clarendon who served as guides, subject display helpers or assisted in umpteen other ways – as always they were ambassadors for the school.

Visiting parents and Year 6 students were given as full and clear an explanation of the various changes we anticipate for 2011-12 as it was possible to do at this stage. Given the limitations of the newsletter as a means of communication we need to give existing Chatham & Clarendon parents the same opportunity. *When* the outcome of Academisation is known, *when* we know what is/is not happening with BSF-successor funding, *when* we have an agreed timetable for the statutory public consultation which is required by DfE as the pre-requisite for formal merger, and *when* our operational planning for the co-ed “urban campus” has progressed, then we will be in a position to give meaningful answers to the questions which many parents have about the big issues. And when will that be?! In Term 3, as soon as the School Hall is clear of exam desks, in early February, we will stage three “Question Time” sessions for existing Chatham & Clarendon parents. The events are intended to explain what is happening and why, to give parents the chance to put their questions and to offer, as far as possible, the reassurance which people are hoping to hear. On these evenings to manage the numbers, to allow some inter-action, and to make proceedings relevant to each child we are planning a Lower School event for parents of boys & girls presently in Year 7, 8; an Upper School event for parents of boys & girls presently in Years 9 and 10, and a Sixth Form briefing for the parents of boys and girls presently in Years 11 and 12. Myself and colleagues from the Leadership Group and the Governing Body will be in the ‘hot seat’, the format will be informal and as far as practicable allow for some dialogue. No doubt it won’t be possible to please all of the people on all of the issues – but we will make a reasoned case why the changes planned for Chatham & Clarendon are necessary and will be to the benefit of the students.

D J Smart
Executive Headteacher