

Senior Boys

Merchant Taylors' Schools
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**MERCHANT
TAYLORS'
SCHOOLS**

For Boys and Girls
aged 4 to 18 years

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

This week has seen boys at the school with their heads down and scribbling away as they have been undertaking exams. For most, these are now over; for some, particularly in the older years, there is still a way to go. Much work has been done helping to prepare the boys to perform as well as they can in these exams, with teachers holding lunchtime clinics and revision sessions to help the boys improve their conceptual understanding and examination technique. For many, the fruits of their labours will be known shortly after half term. Inevitably, there will be areas in which boys can improve, so they should listen carefully to the feedback they receive from their teachers. Where they have got something wrong, they should not panic, but rather view this as another learning opportunity. We want to remove the notion of "I can't do this" and replace it with the far better mantra of "I can't do this.....YET." And, of course, where they have got things correct, they should congratulate themselves!

A number of individual have enjoyed intellectual success this term. We had a strong showing in the Physics Olympiad from our older boys with a number achieving awards of distinction, including the Gold Award. While younger students have also been doing well. Two of our Year 8 boys have competed tremendously well in the Maths in Motion Competition and have won through to the International Final to be held later this term. We wish them every success. One of our Year 7 boys entered a short story competition organised by *Young Writers*. The judges were very impressed by his work and have included it in *Bewitched – a collection of Ghost Stories* to be published later this year.

Despite this being the examination season, there has been plenty going on outside of the classroom. The cricket season is well underway. Despite the occasional cancellation due to the weather, all sides have managed to play fixtures. I have seen a number of B team fixtures being played, often against other schools' A teams. Our boys have risen to the challenge and have competed well, though not always victoriously; but more important is the opportunity that they have been afforded to represent the school. It says a great deal that, at Merchant Taylors, we are able to put out so many sides. Of course, the standard also remains high, with most of our A teams progressing through to the later stages of Cup competitions and many boys representing their districts and some their county. If the boys are not playing cricket, then they can be seen running, jumping and throwing at Athletic Competitions or straining hard at their oars.

The Music Department has remained busy. Before the exams started in earnest, they held a small concert entitled 'Musical Inspirations'. We were thrilled to learn that SaxPac had been chosen to play in the National Final of "Music for Youth" to be held in Birmingham Symphony Hall as a result of their tremendous performance in the regional rounds earlier in the year. They will be joined by the Combined Concert Band. This is such great news, particularly as it is the first time the school has entered this competition. Later this term we are looking forward to the Summer Concert, which will also be the last one for our distinguished Director of Music, Mr Holroyd, as he retires at the end of this term. We are also looking forward to the Lower School performances of "School of Rock" in July.

The importance of Mental Health has been very much on the agenda recently. Last week was Mental Health Awareness Week and at Merchant Taylors' the boys were involved in looking at different topics each day of the week in form time. Today, we have been hosting a conference called *Talking Minds: A Mental Health Symposium for Educators*, largely organised by Mr Yates. Representatives from schools in the local area have come to hear from distinguished speakers such as Natasha Devon MBE and Jonny Benjamin MBE; they have attended workshops about Mindfulness, about the work of ChildLine as well as discovering the latest research on Mental Health from academics from the University of Liverpool. It has been a salient reminder of the challenges that many people, especially teenagers, face in the world today; yet the fact that so many people attended the conference is an indication of the seriousness with which teachers take their role in helping support the students in their care.

One of the things that we learnt about today was the importance of rest and relaxation and spending quality time with the people whom you love. I hope that you all have an opportunity to do that over the half term break.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D Wickes', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

D Wickes
Headmaster