

14th February, 2008

To Christ's Hospital Parents:

Dear Parent,

As I write, it is the evening of St. Valentine's Day and there is a happy buzz around the campus. It has been a delightful day, with some interesting customs that have evolved to make this one of the highlights of the school calendar.

In the run-up to St. Valentine's Day, the Monitors have been busy organising "Love Lines" (anonymous statements of affection published on the house notice boards), the sale of individual flowers and roses for delivery to the object of one's fancy and "Snuggles", which are hugs delivered to particular pupils by carefully selected Monitors and Grecians.

St. Valentine's Day is one of the very few days in the school year when pupils are allowed to wear their own clothes and how different and grown up they all look. Lunch is the main focus of the day, with the Dining Hall brightly decorated and some of our best jazz musicians keeping the diners entertained. Over lunch, groups of Monitors and Grecians seek out the lucky recipients to deliver their "snuggle" while the other Monitors work feverishly to distribute the flowers and roses. It's all good fun and a good sum of money is raised for a worthy charity.

The Half Term in Review. Much has been happening over the first half of the Lent Term. Highlights have included a range of sporting successes, the splendid Bluecoat Concert in St. John's Smith's Square ten days ago and the charity concert last week organised by one of our pupils, Nick Pritchard, for the St. Stephen's Aids Trust. With Half Term almost on us, spirits are high, buoyed by a week of bright weather with glorious sunny days and cold, clear, frosty nights. What we need now though is some wet, miserable weather to encourage those pupils with exams in the summer to get down to some serious revision over the Half Term break.

New Deputy Head. When Mrs Ireland left, we all knew that she was going to be a very difficult act to follow, but I am happy to report that her successor, Mr Ben Vessey, has already shown himself to be an excellent addition to our staff. Cheerful, hard-working and enormously capable, he has already won the respect of staff and pupils alike.

Conservation. We live in a wasteful society and our generation's profligacy and that of past generations is now coming back to haunt us, with global warming, rising fuel prices and overflowing land-fill sites. My intention is to raise awareness of these issues amongst our pupils through the classroom and by setting up a Pupil Conservation Committee to investigate ways in which we might reduce the school's energy consumption and recycle more of the waste products that we generate each year.

Drugs Policy. Worryingly, we also live in a society where illicit drugs are readily available and where our children are often under considerable pressure to experiment with tobacco, alcohol and drugs. The school addresses these issues in three ways:

- Firstly, we inform our pupils of the dangers associated with the use and abuse of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs;
- Secondly, we attempt to instil in our pupils sufficient self-confidence to be able to say no when they find themselves under pressure to try illegal substances; and
- Thirdly, we have a sanctions system designed to deter our pupils from using tobacco, alcohol and drugs while they are enrolled at CH.

On that final point, I would like to clarify the school rules on drug use so that there is no misunderstanding:

- Anyone found to be supplying drugs or to be involved in any way with Class A drugs will be expelled and the Police will be informed;
- With Cannabis, pupils effectively get a second chance. What this means is that anyone found to be in possession of or using cannabis, either at school or off campus:
 - Is suspended for up to one week;
 - Is then allowed to return to school on the understanding that:
 - He/she will undergo random testing for the remainder of his/her time at CH; and
 - A subsequent positive test will automatically result in expulsion.

If the school suspects that a pupil is using drugs, that pupil will be required to undergo a urine test. As far as possible, parents will be contacted as a courtesy before the test is carried out, but the school's contract with parents gives us permission to test pupils when we believe there are reasonable grounds for suspicion. Refusal to undergo a test will be deemed as an admission of guilt.

If a pupil is tested on suspicion and returns a positive test for cannabis, he/she will then be placed on the testing programme as outlined above. If he/she returns positive for a Class A drug, he/she will be expelled and the Police will be informed. **Once a pupil has been placed on the testing programme, the school will then carry out random tests up to twice each term without notifying parents beforehand.**

The purpose of this policy is to deter pupils from using drugs, rather than to catch them out and force them to leave the school. Ironically, those parents whose children have been placed on the testing programme are usually very grateful, because they know that for the duration of their child's time at CH, he/she is not using drugs.

Second Form. On Field Day later this term (13th March), the Second Form will take part in an Arts Extravaganza with every student contributing to a short production of 'Jason and the Argonauts'. This will culminate in a performance in the Octagon at 2.00 pm that afternoon.

The whole event will be put together on the day and will involve drama, music, art and poetry. All parents of the Second Form are welcome to attend this short production should they be available that Thursday afternoon!

Finally. With Easter falling so early this year, the second half of this term is only three and a half weeks in length. Pupils will need to catch up on their rest over Half Term so that they are fresh and ready for the challenges that lie ahead, but if they do have exams in the summer, they should also be getting on with some sensible revision.

With kind regards and best wishes,

John Franklin,
Head Master.