



Autumn Term Newsletter 2009

Dear Parents

At the beginning of November, while browsing through the local newspaper online, I came across a poll seeking opinions as to whether or not readers considered it was too early to begin shopping for Christmas. It has always seemed to me that effective shopping for presents is dependent on an advantageous combination of economy, supply and demand – timing is not really of an essence. When successfully applied this means that the period of time between a targeted birthday and Christmas accords with effective Christmas shopping, and the time between Christmas and the targeted birthday makes for effective birthday shopping. I am not in the habit of responding to online polls, but as I was feeling seasonally supportive of the local newspaper I registered a ‘No’ vote, which was to say I did not consider that it was too early to shop for Christmas. (I was interested to note that my opinion raised the ‘No’ vote by one whole percent, and so opened up a two percent gap between those ‘for’ and ‘against’ the proposal. . . thus the power of the individual to influence what appears in the press.)

While timing may not be of the essence in shopping for gifts, it is useful in communicating news while it is still necessarily informative – all of which has led me to rethink the concept of the *End of Term Newsletter*. The latter has traditionally found its way into the end-of-term mailing and acted as a summary of the term’s events, items of interest, details of staff changes and a preview of important diary entries for the term ahead. Given the build-up of activities at the end of any term, it is often the case that the bulk of the *End of Term Newsletter* is drafted before the onset of the frenzied final two weeks before the holidays; and it is also the case that some of the news – details of members of staff who are leaving and the arrival of new staff, for example – would be welcomed by parents as soon as arrangements are in place. Accordingly – and always noting the problem that parents of younger children can drown in the amount of paper disseminated by their schools, letters that are always deserving of attention until they are lost – I have decided that the *End of Term Newsletter* will become the *Termly Newsletter*, which will be posted on the website as soon as it is expedient to do so. A paper copy will, of course, continue to be included in the end-of-term mailing; but the earlier appearance should prove helpful in keeping parents in touch with what is happening well before the holidays begin.

Thank you to all parents who attended our Informal Parents’ Evenings at No. 21, which are, I believe, a very worthwhile way in which to begin the school year. This was our fourth September of such events, and, once more, we were exceptionally lucky with the weather on most occasions – so much so that we managed to defy up-to-date local weather forecasts and create our own pocket of micro-climate on two such evenings.

This term’s *Durston House Six-a-Side Football Tournaments* were played on Sunday 4th October (Under 13) and Sunday 15th November (Under 11). Once again, we were extremely lucky with the weather on both occasions. The change in format, which was introduced last year and proved a great success, saw both eight-team tournaments decided by a league system, with every team playing the same number of matches. Arnold House triumphed in the Under 13 Tournament, and Quanton Hall won the Under 11 Tournament. Durston House teams finished in creditable mid-table positions in both tournaments. Next term we look forward to the Under 13 and Under 11 Rugby ‘Sevens’ Tournaments, and I am sure both will prove as enjoyable as their football counterparts.



Our inaugural *Anti-Bullying Week* in November 2008 was so successful in examining potential issues at school level and beyond that we were very keen to repeat the exercise this year as part of our continuing work to develop pastoral awareness throughout the school; and so *Anti-Bullying Week 2009* began on Monday 16 November. The rather stark label ‘anti-bullying’ does not really do justice to the opportunities provided to consider how we interact with each other in a fuller sense. Tact, diplomacy, simple helpfulness to others were featured at one end of the scale – the control of cyber-bullying was the latest danger to the well-being of children (and adults) at the far end. This year we welcomed *The Caboodle Arts Company* to Durston House for a series of workshops. PSHME and thematic work in English also examined the issues raised throughout the week.

In September we distributed to parents the new *Durston House Anti-Bullying Policy* booklet, which is also available on the *Secure Area* of the website. This is very much a procedural document, the purpose of which is to identify how and where bullying might take place at school, and then to explain how the school will seek to deal effectively with any such problems. During the second week of November, as a precursor to *Anti-Bullying Week*, we distributed a very useful booklet – *Say no to bullying* – which was designed with parents in mind, as a ‘support’ publication, to look at the subject of ‘bullying’ from a home perspective. It was hoped that parents would take the time to read the booklet with a view to it forming the basis for discussion at home during the designated *Anti-Bullying Week*. More importantly, all such material will assist our thinking about how our children interact with each other and how we, as adults, can be of positive help in encouraging the social well-being of young people.

This term the *Secure Area* of the website has expanded to accommodate updated policies and other documentation. The arrival of Mr Ijaz Khan, our new ICT Assistant, at the end of November should afford us the opportunity to reorganize our external communication procedures; but we must not lose sight of the fact that such communications must co-exist with the key and important issues that crop up on a daily basis with regard to the well-being and education of our pupils.

Parents will already be aware of the departure of Mrs Potter, our longest-serving Classroom Assistant, at the end of October; and those who attended the Pre-Prep Harvest Festival can testify to the wonderful ‘send-off’ she received from the DHPA. In her place we have welcomed Miss Sarah Easton, who has considerable experience of working with young children.

It was with great sadness that I wrote to all parents in early November with the news of the departure of Mr Englefield from his post as Head of Junior School in January 2010. We shall, of course, miss him enormously, and we wish him well on his return to Christchurch, New Zealand.

Cade Englefield arrived at Durston House in September 2004 and was firmly established in the Middle School before my own arrival in January 2005. I well remember my first conversation with Cade. I had spent some time matching names to staff photographs; and, approaching Cade from behind, I was able to address him confidently as ‘Mr Phillips’.

I recall observing Cade teaching a History lesson to his form, 4E, during his second year at the school. His pupils were involved in work on the Second World War; and, during this particular lesson, were examining the ‘Blackout’. Particularly noticeable was the manner in which Cade introduced new and often quite sophisticated vocabulary into his direct teaching – always within the context of more accessible vocabulary from which it was possible to deduce the function and specific meaning of each ‘new’ word. Such oral delivery ensured an accessible learning environment for the pupils, and a mature and confident approach to discussion when the latter formed part of the analytical experience.

Always a ‘team player’ and keen to turn his attentions to new challenges, Cade became Head of Religious Studies in 2005. During Mrs Thomas’s absence in 2006, he willingly accepted responsibility for much of the day-to-day administration in the Middle School; and with the purchase of Longfield Road and the subsequent re-organisation of the school, he was a natural choice for the post of Head of the newly constituted Junior School. Cade would probably think of himself as a team leader rather than an autocrat. His dramatic productions were very much team efforts; they were also hugely enjoyable – none more so than *Bugsy Malone* (Middle School 2006) and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Junior School 2008).

It was in the latter production that we were first made aware of Mr Durham’s rock-star potential, with his unexpected guest appearance as Pharaoh, *à la* Elvis Presley. Sadly, Mr Durham is also set to leave us at the end of the present term in order to pursue his teaching career at Peterhead School in New Zealand. Our good wishes go with him, and we know that he, too, will be a huge asset to his new school.

Mrs Fox will become acting Head of Junior School for the Spring and Summer Terms in 2010; and we are indeed fortunate to be able to call on such an excellent teacher to take up the reins at this time. Parents of pupils in the Junior School have already received notification of the changes in Junior School with effect from the beginning of January. In brief, they are as outlined below.

Pupils in 4F will continue to be taught a number of subjects by Mrs Fox, who will retain her role as Form Teacher for this class. To enable Mrs Fox time to oversee general operations at Junior School, Miss Lorna McDevitt, who has taught successfully at Durston House previously, will teach 4F Mathematics and Humanities, under the direction of Mrs Fox.

Miss Sibai, who currently teaches Mathematics and Humanities to 4E, will take over the role of Form Teacher for this class. Miss Sibai will extend her teaching of this form to include English, Science and PSHME.

With the departure of Mr Durham, Mr Dan Wansell, who has been teaching at The Hall School in Hampstead, has been appointed as Form Teacher of 3N with effect from the start of next term. Mr Wansell will be visiting Junior School in the coming weeks and will spend time with 3N and Mr Durham to ensure an appropriate transition is completed.

Parents in the Pre-Prep will note that Miss Sibai’s new role as a Form Teacher in Junior School will preclude her continuing to share the teaching of 2W with Mrs Wyatt. Miss McDevitt will take up this role, combining it, as does Miss Sibai currently, with teaching in the Junior School.

We were sorry to learn of the illness of Mrs Smith, our Learning Support Teacher in the Pre-Prep. Mrs Smith hopes to return at the beginning of Spring Term; and, in the meantime, we send her our best wishes. We have been grateful to Ms Walus – a regular visitor to Pre-Prep since September – who has been assisting us during Mrs Smith’s absence.

Earlier in the term I informed all parents that we shall be changing our uniform supplier with effect from the start of the Spring Term. We have been using *Juniper* at Pitshanger Lane for a number of years; but we now feel that we can provide our parents with a better service with the appointment of *Perry Uniform*, a major school uniform supplier, who also provide an on-line ordering facility. I should remind parents to purchase from *Juniper* before 17th December 2009 any items of uniform that will be needed for the term ahead. Full details of how we shall operate with *Perry Uniform* are being prepared and will appear as a separate mailing and on the website. My wife, Elaine, has organised a coffee morning from 10.00 am to 12.00 pm on Wednesday 10th February at Castlebar, which will be an opportunity to meet Mrs Caroline Bunting, Managing Director *Perry Uniform*, and another representative of the company.

We learned recently that there is a growing expectancy for charities to consider environmental sustainability as part of their public benefit remit. Miss Bath, who teaches in Junior School, is keen to spearhead a Durston House initiative to become an 'Eco School'. We would put together a team made up of a teacher representative (Miss Bath), the Bursar, a parent representative and boys. The school could then work towards the gaining of recognized awards – the last of which is 'green flag status', which would allow us to fly a green flag on the premises and use the 'Eco Schools' logo on the school website. We shall take the opportunity to introduce the idea to our pupils during the first assembly of the Spring Term.

Readers of *The Sunday Times* on 15th November will have noticed that the 'Parent Power' supplement placed Durston House in the 'Top 50 Prep Schools', based on Key Stage 2 results for 2006-8, at No 32. This made us fourth in the 'boys only' schools, behind Haberdashers' Aske's, Lanesborough (Guildford) and Nottingham High Junior School. Organisations, such as the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools, do not encourage such quantification of school performance; but the Key Stage 2 results are in the public domain and *The Sunday Times* is perfectly at liberty to publish accurate information in this way. . . and we did feel proud to be quite possibly the only one of the top four boys schools to be non-selective at our initial entry stage.

Spring Term is the traditional season for Parents' Evenings, and such forthcoming occasions for Junior, Middle and Upper Schools will take place at Haven Green Church Hall on the following dates:

Wednesday 20 th January: Year 5 (1)	Thursday 21 st January: Year 5 (2)
Thursday 4 th February: Year 6 (5.00 pm to 8.00 pm)	
Wednesday 10 th February: Year 3 (1)	Thursday 11 th February: Year 3 (2)
Wednesday 24 th February: Year 4 (1)	Thursday 25 th February: Year 4 (2)
Wednesday 3 rd March: Year 7 (1)	Thursday 4 th March: Year 7 (2)

As usual, full details of the organization of each evening, which will be conducted between 5.00 pm and 7.00 pm, unless otherwise stated, will be sent to parents early in the Spring Term.

Pre-Prep Parents' Evenings in the Spring Term will take place in the Pre-Prep (Middleton's), between 5.00 pm and 6.30 pm, on the following dates:

Tuesday 26 th January: Year 1 (1)	Thursday 28 th January: Year 1 (2)
Tuesday 2 nd February: Year 2 (1)	Thursday 4 th February: Year 2 (2)
Tuesday 9 th February: Reception (1)	Thursday 11 th February: Reception (2)

Parents who are considering the registration of their sons for entry to St Paul's are currently required to do so during Year 4, usually by 5.00 pm on a Friday in mid-May. For this reason, during the last three years I have held Year 4 parental interviews during the Spring Term to consider the subject of future schools. Two years ago, when we asked you to complete a detailed *School Questionnaire*, the subject of advice on future schools was raised by the parents of our younger pupils – that is, those in Reception and Years 1 to 3 – who were unaware of how we organised this aspect of our operations. (A significant value of such a questionnaire is that it can alert us to any gaps in our information to parents that we should otherwise take for granted.) Accordingly, for the last two years we have published a *Durston House Future Schools Guide for Parents*, initially in hard copy, but last year also in the *Secure Area* of the school website. The latest version is at proof stage and will appear on the website at the beginning of Spring Term 2010.

Before we introduced the Year 4 parental interviews, Mr Turner and I used to address all Year 4 parents at a Future Schools Meeting in Haven Green Church Hall. In Spring Term 2010 we have decided to combine the two approaches – that is, there will be a *Year 4 Future Schools Evening* from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm at Haven Green Church Hall on Wednesday 27th January; and I shall follow this up with a series of optional Year 4 parental interviews to discuss future schools, specifically for those parents who feel that they would like a one-to-one (more likely a two-to-one) discussion of the procedures and protocols of senior school entry.

At this time of year I usually alert those of our parents who are Old Durstonians to the Annual Old Durstonian Dinner, which has traditionally been held in early January. This year the timing is set to change to a date later in the year. In the New Year we are hoping to set up an Old Durstonian portal on the school website, so Old Durstonians will be able to access their news as it happens.

During the last full week of November, Mr Murphy wrote to all parents with regard to the arrangements for Final Assembly for this term only. I should remind you that, owing to exterior and interior work being carried out on the church itself, it will not be possible to run Final Assembly, as usual, this term. Instead, it will be necessary to hold the event (17th December) in Haven Green Baptist Church Hall, and restrict it only to boys, staff and the parents of the few performers and instrumentalists taking part. These particular parents will be directly invited to attend. At the end of the Spring Term we should be back in the church itself and able to accommodate all who wish to attend. I should also remind you that Final Assembly will finish at approximately 12.00 pm and the boys will be escorted back to their respective sections of the school.

Other highlights of a busy end of term are:

Pre-Prep Christmas Production at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th December in Haven Green Church Hall.

Middle and Upper School Carol Service at 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday 16th December in St Peter's Church.

I shall look forward to seeing many of you at one or more of the above events; and by the time this letter is in your hands as a hard copy in the end-of-term mailing, they should all have taken place, hopefully very successfully. Now, it only remains for me to wish you all an enjoyable and successful run-up to Christmas and the New Year. I do hope that you will all have a restful holiday. . . yet again, we shall have another very busy term ahead!

Yours sincerely



Ian Kendrick
Headmaster

STOP PRESS! Congratulations to Mr Gary Barak and his team for a hugely successful DHPA Christmas Glitter Ball at Pinewoods Studios on 28th November. . . they just get better and better!