



NEWSLETTER No. 27
27 August 2009

Dear parents, staff and boys

It is really great to be back after my long leave! I have had such an amazing time while I have been away and I have learned a great deal that I hope will be of benefit to the school and the boys.

Before telling you about what I did and where I went, I want to take some time to thank those who assisted in running the school in my absence. Firstly, a huge thank you must be extended to Mark Whitelaw who has done an amazing job while I have been away. He has had to deal with some very challenging situations and he has done superbly well. I have no doubt that WHPS are exceptionally lucky to be getting a man like Mark as their next Headmaster.

I would also like to thank Pixie van Heerden and Ross Strachan who covered my lessons in my absence. It was good to know that the boys were being ably taught by excellent teachers.

In terms of my long leave I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Board for allowing me this time off and also giving me the opportunity to attend such an inspirational conference in Birmingham. Jane Elsworth is to be thanked for all she has done for me in arranging the trip and then keeping me in contact with all that has been happening at Cordies.

I now have enough information to share with you that I could be doing the newsletters for the rest of the term! In this letter I am going to limit my comments to the nine Prep schools I visited and these comments will be of a general nature.

The one overarching thing that struck me when seeing the nine different schools was how well resourced the schools were. Two of them had 9 hole golf courses (Port Regis and Millfield), one had a fully equipped gymnasium as it is the school that produces many of the children for the British gymnastics team (Port Regis), the facilities and equipment for Design and Technology were outstanding in all the schools, the music facilities were most impressive, all the schools had interactive boards in all the classrooms (this was even the case in the three government schools I visited), most of the schools have an Astroturf which was used for hockey and for tennis, some of the schools had extensive grounds (Port Regis and Millfield), the boarding houses were generally very well equipped and looked after, all of them had at least one indoor multipurpose centre and they nearly all boasted excellent computer facilities.

All the schools tried to ensure a breadth of experience for the children by offering a multitude of sports and hobbies as well as many different subjects. Latin and Greek is still offered in these schools and the children can choose to do many different modern languages as well as being exposed to electronics, robotics, design technology, physics, chemistry, biology, religious studies, music, history, geography, art, maths and drama. The schools were proactive in taking their children on outings and trips and many of them spent some time on the continent with the children on cultural tours.

On the sporting front, many of the schools offered an array of different sports like karate, skiing, dancing, judo, rowing, sailing, riding, squash, badminton, golf and the like. The whole idea of this was to create a situation where each child at the school could find their niche.

The independent schools I visited had excellent teacher : pupil ratios these all being between 6 and 8 to 1. This meant that they had very good pastoral care systems with the teachers being tutors to only 6 pupils. They saw the children generally for an hour a week as a group and spent some time with each child in a one-on-one meetings each week. Through this process the children and the teachers build relationships of trust and understanding. Problems that the children may be experiencing are picked up quickly and the tutor is seen as the main point of contact between the school and the family.

Generally, the classes in these schools were very small. The average number of pupils per class seemed to be about 15 with 20 being the maximum and 12 being the minimum.

In the stand alone Prep Schools there was a great emphasis on scholarships and on common entrance examinations. The schools tended to stream the children from an early age to ensure the scholarship pupils could be given the best. The common entrance was much like a mini matric with candidates' acceptances at high schools being at stake dependent on their results. This emphasis on exams made the teaching very much targeted to those exams and there seemed to be very little time to do more exciting teaching and learning.

All of this obviously comes at a price. The day scholar fees of the schools I visited ranged between £11 000 and £16 500 a year with the average at £14 500 (R188 500). The boarding at these schools was between £18 000 and £22 000 with an average of £20 000 (R260 000). There is no doubt that all this exposure and the care offered by these schools costs a great deal of money.

What of some negative aspects of the schooling that I saw in these schools? Firstly, it was very clear that "health and safety" has become an all consuming aspect for the schools in the UK. The teachers could do very little without having to fill in many forms and ensuring that all precautions had been taken to avoid any accident. It would seem that there is no such thing as an accident in the UK as someone will be held to account for anything that goes wrong. Consequently, many of the teachers feel restricted in their teaching, afraid of being brought before the law. Hugging a child is even seen as being inappropriate and can result in consequences for the teacher. The question is has a system that was designed to protect children gone so far that it is now detrimental and limiting? Due to these limitations, the children are not being exposed to the full range of experiences and opportunities that they could be.

Generally the manners and the etiquette of the children in the UK was not as good as what we are used to in South Africa. Very few children greeted me in the schools I visited. The children did not seem to wear their uniforms with the same pride as many of their South African counterparts. The sport in the UK schools was not taken as seriously as we take it in our country with the English referring to sport as 'games' in many schools.

All in all I was most impressed with the schools that I saw and there are many things that we in this country could learn from them. However, what was most gratifying was that it was clear from what I could see that we can stand tall in what we have to offer our boys at Cordwalles with the resources that we have. We have dedicated and excellent teachers who go the extra mile for the boys and we have adequate facilities to ensure the boys are exposed to a wide range of activities that then provide them with the foundation that they require for life.

What I really learned from the visits to these excellent schools is that we must never become complacent at Cordwalles and instead we need to learn and grow so that we continue to deliver the best for our boys. There is a great deal that we can develop in the next few years as we move to our centenary in 2012. I am very excited about being part of this continued drive for excellence and for providing our boys with the best we can give them.

Simon Weaver
Headmaster

Birthdays

The following boys and staff will be celebrating their birthday this week:

Mr Strachan	27 August
Kelby Blunt	31 August
Mitchell Francis, James Lalor, Mrs Forder	01 September
Sven Appelt	02 September
Keanu Chetty, Jonathan Crossman, Jason Fell, Mrs Elsworth	03 September

We wish each of you a wonderful day and year ahead.

Cordwalles Family

Our condolences go to the Sarah Fogden and her family on the passing away of her father (Peter's grandfather). Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time.

Website

We are in the process of updating our website. If anyone would like to advertise their business for R500 with a weblink on our website, please contact Ruth Forder.

Outreach

The Pre-Primary and Junior Primary boys are raising money for Feed the Babies Fund. The return date for the forms and money is Monday 7th September. I hope the boys have been working hard around their homes helping with various extra chores to raise funds for this very worthwhile cause. Di Maclaren and her team will be giving the boys a show on Tuesday 8th September at the early morning assembly to thank all them for their efforts. Please encourage your boys to raise as much money as they can.

The Senior Primary boys focus this term is the PMB SPCA. Could **EVERY** boy please bring a packet of dog or cat food, blankets, animal toys, bowls etc suitable for animals. These donations may be left with Mrs Clark or Mrs Elsworth at reception. Our collection will be handed to the SPCA during the last week of term. Thank you for your generous participation in this drive.

St George Certificates

The following boys were awarded St George Certificates this term:

Brett Fourie

The grade 1's were moving the apparatus needed for their sports day. Two little boys were struggling to carry a heavy bench. Brett Fourie noticed them and took charge. He organised for another senior boy to help him carry the bench for these Grade 1 boys without being asked. In doing this Brett showed the admirable qualities of empathy, thoughtfulness and caring. These qualities are greatly admired by our Cordwalles community and all boys should aspire to be more like this in their dealings with others. Well done, Brett.

Michael Dedekind was awarded a St George Certificate for his spontaneous encouragement of the younger boys during sports matches and the initiative he shows in helping others.

Sanele Ntuli

Sanele has been awarded a St George for his outstanding perseverance and his reliability. He always participates in all sporting activities and can be relied on to be at every practice doing his very best. He remembers his various extra-mural activities without constant reminders and is a well organised pupil. Quiet and unassuming, he is a solid, honest and reliable pupil of Cordwalles.

Well done Sanele and keep it up!

Ross Talmage was awarded a St George Certificate for his spontaneous encouragement of the younger boys during sports matches and the initiative he shows in helping others.

FROM THE SPORTS DESK - Lance Veenstra

Hockey Results

Wednesday 26 August 2009

Team	Opponents	Result
1 st	Thomas More	Cordwalles won 5 – 1
2 nd	Thomas More	Cordwalles won 2 - 0
4 th	Thomas More 3 rd XI	Cordwalles won 7 - 0
U11A	Thomas More U11A	Cordwalles won 3 – 0
U11B	Thomas More U11A	Match Drawn 1 - 1
U11C	Thomas More U11B	Cordwalles won 2 – 0
U11D	Thomas More U11C	Match Drawn 0 - 0
U10A	Thomas More U10A	Cordwalles won 6 - 1
U10B	Thomas More U10A	Thomas More won 4 - 3
U10C	Thomas More U10B	Cordwalles won 6 - 1
U10D	Thomas More U10C	Cordwalles won 3 – 0
U9A	Thomas More U9A	Cordwalles won 8 - 0
U9B	Thomas More U9A	Match drawn 3 – 3
U9C	Thomas More U9B	Cordwalles won 7 - 0