

Fife Education Authority

MADRAS COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS

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D.D. GALLOWAY, Rector.

J.L. HODGE, Depute Rector.



Dear Parent,

Newsletter - October, 1987

After the first week of session with its inevitable upsurge of activity, the run-up to the October holiday is usually one of the quietest times in the school year. However, I know that this year, for whatever reason, staff have found the last eight weeks unusually stressful and the October break will be more than welcome. To some extent the wounds of the last two years, although patched up, are not fully healed especially as a number of issues remain unclear or unresolved. In spite of simplified assessment procedures and, supposedly, an increase in the amount of help from regional and national sources, the burden of Standard Grade development in the three Phase I subjects and the seven in Phase II still falls heavily on the class-room teacher. The Forsyth proposals on school management, exploding unexpectedly into an already tense atmosphere, created further shock waves with the realisation that conflict between the government and the profession was by no means over. Fortunately parents have been quick to spot the flaws in the government's case and the sensible and constructive response which appears to be emerging on the parents' side will do much to prevent, if anything can, the foisting of an unacceptable scheme on an unwilling profession. In Madras College it has always been policy to involve parents as fully as possible in the life of the school and in decisions affecting their children. That involvement is so clearly of benefit to the school that there could be no grounds for objecting to any reasonable proposals to extend it. I would merely emphasise the point by taking this opportunity to acknowledge the support which parents already give the school in so many ways.

This is perhaps an appropriate place to mention PTA activities. Thanks to a vigorous recruiting campaign, and possibly also to Mr. Forsyth, membership is larger than ever before. A well attended first meeting heard Mr. Lindsay (English), Dr. Kinnley (Science) and Dr. Waterston (Maths) describe, with a wealth of reassuring detail, Standard Grade developments in their respective subjects. A special meeting on Thursday of this week is being held to obtain parents' views on the Forsyth proposals. On Monday 23rd November pupils will regale parents with lively and stimulating accounts of various extra-curricular activities in which they have taken part. The Summer Blazer sales, which now encompass a wide range of other school clothing, were extremely successful. The proceeds are very generously being given to the school to provide frames for the display of pupils' Art work. This practical support for the school is very much appreciated.

Staff changes have been few. Mrs. Aitken joined us from the primary sector to provide extra help for two first year pupils who have special problems. Mrs. Bletcher has returned to Learning Support in place of Mrs. Gourley who is attending the one year Diploma in Learning Difficulties course at Moray House College. Another appointment to what is at present a part time post in Learning Support is pending. This extra post, which we expect will become full time and permanent, was sanctioned by the Region specifically to enable more help to be given to pupils whose general ability to do well is impaired by severe difficulties in language. Mr. Reilly who/

2.

was the mainspring of the school's success in the Young Scientist of the Year Competition in 1979 is retiring from his post as Principal Teacher of Physics because of the health problems which have increasingly over the last few years prevented him from playing as full a part in the life and work of the school as he would have wished. It is to be hoped that the change to a more leisurely existence will produce the desired improvement in his health. His service to the school goes back to 1972. We thank him for a contribution which was not just limited to the teaching of Physics and we wish him well in his retirement. Mr. Pardoe moves from Assistant Principal to Principal Teacher of Computer Education. We congratulate him on his well deserved promotion and look forward to the continued success of his efforts to extend the range and scope of computer studies and facilities within the school.

We also extend a warm welcome to our two foreign language assistants, Mile. Andrieu from France and Herr. Debrunner from Switzerland.

The services of supply teachers have been more in demand than usual so early in the session - a sure sign of the increased pressure under which staff now have to work. In the French department Mrs. Tait has been covering for Mrs. Boag to whom we send our good wishes for an improvement in her health. Mr. Watson joins the Physics department to fill the gap created by Mr. Reilly's departure and we can count ourselves exceptionally lucky to obtain the services of a qualified physicist at short notice. We are grateful to them and to all those others who have provided help on a shorter scale.

I am glad to say that extra-curricular activities are with us once more and in a big way. A total of 39 appear on the most recent list ranging from Adventure Games to Squash. Badminton, Bridge and Chess, to name but a few, are all active on the indoor scene. Even Maths has its own appropriately named Madrats Club. Although it is too early in the session for Music to have a high profile in terms of public performance, the school was host to a woodwind master class when 150 pupils from Fife schools, including 20 from Madras, benefited from the instruction given by visiting experts from London. Forthcoming events include a Carol Concert on Monday 14th December and looking further ahead a projected production of 'The Boy Friend' in the Summer term.

Sporting activities are up and running or perhaps, quoting the St. Andrews 'Citizen', I should say 'alive and kicking'. Rugby, football and hockey have quite literally returned to the field on a Saturday morning. Rugby, which so far does not extend beyond the first three years has had mixed fortunes in the two inter-school games that have been played. However, with games almost every Saturday until Christmas, there will be no lack of opportunity to gain match experience and this will be supplemented by coaching sessions at Cupar and Murrayfield, at both of which large attendances from Madras are expected. Football has been successful and well supported, although there are no cup competitions as yet. Madras did well against Dunfermline and a number of other friendly games against neighbouring schools are in prospect. Several Madras pupils have also distinguished themselves by their selection for Regional teams. Craig Donaldson, Guy Devereux and Michael Gray are in the Fife Schools under 18 pool, while Simon Kerr (under 16) and Gary Thomson (under 15) are both in Fife, Perth and Kinross teams playing in Scottish Schools trials.

The start of the Hockey season has brought both success and defeat and there is no lack of eagerness and enthusiasm in the four teams. Congratulations to Susan Morris and Kandy Mitchell on gaining places in the under 16 Midlands District Team.

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In the Golf Foundation Team Championship at Alloa, Martin Hastie, Michael Braidwood and Philip Lawrie won the team championship for Madras by 16 strokes. Martin Hastie's score of 72 won the individual award. The final will be played over the Old Course next year.

The Hill Walking Club have had six outings this term ranging from a wind-blasted struggle in Glen Clova to a thick mist navigation exercise in Glen Lyon. Before the weather makes conditions unsafe, the final walk of the term will be along the Tarmachan ridge near Killin. Their winter programme will consist of slide and video shows and practising the techniques of rope work. Another event was revived at the October weekend when the Classics Department enjoyed fine weather to explore Hadrian's Wall with a large party of enthusiastic young archaeologists.

Last week a very successful Careers Convention in the Kilrymont Road Building attracted widespread interest from parents and pupils. Over 50 consultants, representing a great variety of occupations, took part and at times they seemed almost in danger of being submerged by the weight of questions directed at them. We are indebted to the Rotary Club of St Andrews and to Fife Careers Service for the major part they played in organising and arranging this interesting and worthwhile evening.

The first Inter House competition of the year, for the Rotary Club Debating Trophy, took place this week. The new rules, and the topical motions, produced a closely fought contest and a high standard of speaking from all three teams. Castle, represented by Anna Poole, Craig Buchanan, Andrew Hammond, Camillo Fracassini and Joanna Gascoigne, emerged as winners for the second year in succession.

This week also sees the school's third Challenge of Industry Conference for 6th Year pupils. Over two days, a team of visiting industrialists will talk to them about the way industry works and involve them in a series of practical exercises. As a further development in the school's Links with Industry programme, we hope to set up a work shadowing programme for 5th Year pupils. On two of the days when the school is closed for in-service training, pupils would observe an adult in a work situation with a view to finding out from practical experience what a particular career might involve. Letters have already gone out to parents of 5th Year pupils, but we would be very glad to hear from any other parents who might be able to help us by providing suitable placements in their business or profession.

In case the impression is being given that work is not important, I am glad to say that the results of the year's SCE examinations show that the school's usual high standard of academic excellence was successfully maintained. Since parents have an important part to play in that achievement by ensuring that pupils devote sufficient time to studying at home, I thought it might be helpful to indicate what the year's examination arrangements are. SI tests are all conducted in class with Report Cards issued at the beginning of March followed by a Parents' Night on Wednesday, 9th March. In S2 most of the testing will again take place in class time, although several departments still prefer set exams. These will take place during the week beginning 2nd November. There will be a Parents' Night on Tuesday, 1st December with a follow-up to discuss course guidance on Monday, 8th February. There are two sets of exams in S3. The first of these begins on 25th January and the second on 9th May. The S3 Parents' Night has been arranged for Monday, 25th April.

The vitally important preliminary examinations for pupils in S4/S5/S6 begin on Monday, 16th November although the tests in some practical subjects are held over until the beginning of January. The Parents' Nights are Tuesday, 26th January for S5/6 and Thursday, 18th February for S4.

May I also remind you that because staff in-service training will be taking place on Tuesday, 27th October and on Wednesday, 2nd December, the school will be closed to pupils on these days.

4.

Finally, I hope that the forthcoming holiday week will provide all concerned with some much needed rest and relaxation before the onset of winter.

Yours sincerely,



Rector.

School Holidays

The school re-opens for pupils on Monday, 26th October.

Christmas Holiday Monday, 21st December, 1987 - Monday, 4th January, 1988
(All dates are inclusive)

In-Service Dates Tuesday, 27th October, 1987
Wednesday, 2nd December, 1987

PTA Meeting Monday, 23rd November, 1987