

Fife Education Authority

MADRAS COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS

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DDG/JMcL

June 1987

Dear Parent,

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 1987

With so much happening it is difficult to pick out all the items that deserve to be mentioned in the newsletter. However, that in itself is a good sign, since it is an indication that the school is much more like its old self than it was a year ago or even a term ago.

In South Street certificate examinations tend to dominate the term, although it has to be said that whatever their effect on individual candidates, the month of May is perhaps the one time in the year when an atmosphere of calm seems to pervade the school. The invigilators of course have a part to play in ensuring good candidate performance and our thanks are due once again to Mrs. Gilroy and her many helpers for their efforts to provide in the Hall and the other examination rooms the correct conditions for success. If the exams created scarcely a ripple, the transition to the new timetable was much less smooth. Four weeks of examination leave is a major concession and it was disappointing to find that pupils were not returning on the due date. The argument, which I am sure some pupils use as an excuse for overstaying their leave, that there is no point in going to school, because nothing is happening merely creates a downward spiral. Nothing can happen until pupils are there in sufficient numbers to make it possible for organised class work to proceed. Although some confusion is inevitable at the end of one timetable and the start of another, it was felt this year that too much time was unnecessarily lost and some tightening-up of the exam leave system for next session will not come amiss. Nevertheless, once the new timetable did get off the ground, it seems to have succeeded in keeping heads down over books and in most cases good use has been made of the last few weeks, although it may be that the bad weather has made concentration on work easier than it usually is at this time of year.

At Kilrymont Road the emphasis was on parents' nights and this renewed contact between school and home, although somewhat hastily arranged was nevertheless most welcome. With the numbers involved, some queues at classroom doors were inevitable, but in spite of that the general impression gained from both staff and parents was that arrangements were satisfactory. With the number of meetings limited to six, it is not possible to do much to improve the present system if regular contact is to be maintained with each year group from 51 to S5. The only alternative would be to omit certain years from the programme to allow two meetings each to be devoted to the three that would remain. Staff certainly value complete continuity and that is a view which I believe most parents would share. A staff committee has been examining the problems involved in parents' nights and while some minor improvements have been suggested, its recommendations envisage a similar programme of meetings for next session.

Neither building was immune from election fever. Candidates from the Junior Debating Society fought their own mini-election in Kilrymont Road. Their meetings attracted large audiences, produced some remarkable oratory and showed a very mature appreciation of the issues. The result of the vote closely reflected the general N.E. Fife trend. At South Street senior pupils were fortunate in having all four parliamentary candidates for the N.E. Fife constituency present at a discussion afternoon organised by the Modern Studies department. Each prospective candidate gave a brief talk on their party's policies followed by a round of questions from the floor. At the end of the afternoon the pupils present were allowed an opportunity to cast their votes and again the result was very much in line with the local and national pattern. This was an enjoyable event as well as a valuable educational exercise and the pupils are to be commended for the close attention they paid to the arguments and the answers of the candidates, for their perceptive questioning and for an impressive display of impartiality that was in the best traditions of democracy.

Next/..

Next session sees the re-launch of Standard Grade in S3. Of the Phase I subjects, English will operate at all three levels, Science certainly at Foundation and General levels only and Maths probably the same, although the final decision about delaying the introduction of Credit level Maths for another year still has to be officially confirmed. Development work on the Phase II subjects is already beginning and pupils will no doubt enjoy the four single days when they are excused attendance at school to allow staff in-service training to take place. Other innovations next year include the appointment of a Library Auxiliary whose post is being funded by a Manpower Services scheme. It is hoped that this very welcome provision of permanent help in the Library will remove many of the problems which have affected this area of the school for so long. Salad bars are being provided in the dining rooms of both buildings to try to reduce dependence on chip butties and to encourage a greater number of pupils to acquire the habits of healthy eating. The dining rooms will also be open to pupils at morning interval to provide a snack bar service. Discussions are proceeding about the Community Use of the school which was approved by the Education Committee earlier this year. In the first instance, Community Use will be centred mainly on Kilrymont Road. However, since some minor alterations are required to provide office accommodation and since staff still have to be appointed, August is no longer a realistic starting date, although Christmas remains a possibility.

As usual at this time of year staff changes reach their peak. What is less usual is that because of the falling roll only those in promoted posts are being replaced, although it is some consolation that staff loss on this occasion has not involved compulsory transfer. Mrs. Swankie (Modern Languages) goes on promotion to Dundee High School, Mrs. Oliver (English) goes to Waid Academy, while at the time of writing the future of Mrs. Edgar (Physics) is still undecided. Mrs. Dick retires from the Geography Department in which she has served with distinction since 1976, although her influence through her Scripture Union activities has extended well beyond the class room. Mrs. MacLeod, who has been Principal Teacher of Special Education since 1977 is also retiring. Her work in promoting the integration of special class pupils into mainstream classes and activities, her total dedication to the small group of children in her care and her cheerful and willing involvement in all aspects of school life have made her a highly successful head of department and gained her a secure place in the affections of staff, parents and pupils. The third member of staff to retire this summer is Miss Taylor, the Assistant Rector in charge of S5/6. She came in 1979 as Assistant Rector (Guidance) having already held senior posts in two other schools. Initially, her responsibility was the coordination of Guidance. In a split-site school that is a demanding task. The effectiveness of the present Guidance system is a tribute to the success of her efforts. The Careers and Social Education programmes also bear the hall-marks of her energy and organisational skill. More recently her area of responsibility has been S5/6 where her experience and knowledge have been invaluable especially in the counselling of the UCCA candidates. Her unfailing insistence on the highest possible standards, her clear perception of problems and their solutions, the professionalism of her approach and her immense capacity for hard work have enabled her to make a unique and lasting contribution to the management of the school for which we are all greatly in her debt. The gap left by her departure will indeed be difficult to fill. On the non-teaching side Mrs. Landells, who came out of retirement to help in an honorary capacity, is now retiring for a second time. We are grateful to her for all her hard work to keep the tuck shop, and the school fund, well stocked. To all those staff who are leaving, whether to posts elsewhere or to the Elysian Fields of retirement, we extend our warm good wishes for every future happiness and thank them for the excellent work they have done for Madras College. It is also appropriate at this point to thank all those who have helped throughout the session, often at short notice, to overcome the various problems of temporary shortages caused by staff absence, secondment or unfilled vacancies. Out of a very long list, I would acknowledge the help given by three in particular, who remained with us for most of the session, namely Mrs. Pirie (Science), Mrs. Bletcher (Learning Support) and Mrs. Ritchie (Business Studies). Although the school next session will be fully staffed, there will be, as I have said, few new arrivals. However, we look forward to welcoming Dr. Gilbert, Principal Teacher of History at Bell Baxter High School, as our new Assistant Rector, Mr. Strachan, Assistant Principal Teacher at Buckhaven High School, as our new Principal Teacher of Special Education and Mrs. Macfarlane of Waid Academy who fills the APT English post, vacant since Mrs. Easingwood's departure at Easter.

There has been no shortage of activities or of pupils distinguishing themselves in a great variety of ways. It is gratifying to see the wide range of subject areas where there are noteworthy achievements to record and it is a tribute to the hard work of the staff who make them possible. The Sports, held in unexpectedly sunny conditions and organised with clockwork precision, made a welcome return to the annual calendar. For those who became bored with the serious athletics, the antics of the colourfully attired cheerleaders provided alternative entertainment and introduced to Station Park an unaccustomed/

unaccustomed element of American style razzmatazz. Another summer term activity to re-emerge has been the Hill Walking Club. A group of mainly senior pupils has climbed several mountains over 3,000 ft., including Ben Lauers and Ben Vorlich. The Club's outings for the session end on a suitably high point with a week-end camp in Glen Nev/is and an ascent of the Ben by the Carn Mor Dearg arete.

Stuart Syme won the Coca Cola Scottish Schools Golf Championship at Carnoustie with rounds of 72 and 75 and made this the second year in succession that a Madras College pupil has won the event. St. Andrews Rotary Club have again been generous in providing two scholarships for their Camp Ryla scheme and two pupils Ryan Mackie and Neil Piggott will benefit from this leadership training. Following the success of the Young Enterprise Company, Scribbles, six pupils, Cameron Bayliss, Kevin Hamilton, Kirsten Inverarity, Nark Lee, Hedley Phillips and Thomas Sykes, voluntarily sat the National Examination. All obtained certificates and Hedley Phillips had the added distinction of gaining 3rd place in Fife Region. Thanks to the support of Guardbridge Papers two Chemistry pupils Seonaid Barclay and Iain Douglas have been given the opportunity to attend short courses on the science of paper technology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. Another two pupils, Lorna Smart and Kristeen Dalrymple will attend summer courses at Heriot Watt University as a result of gaining places on the Engineering Industry Training Board's Insight programme which is aimed at attracting more girls into careers in this field. Links with Industry are likely to play an increasingly important part in the school's programme in the years ahead and plans for next session include another Challenge of Industry Conference for S6 pupils in October.

This year Madras pupils were the hosts for the 31st Kiel Exchange and our German visitors were successfully and enjoyably introduced to the Scottish way of life. The smooth operation of the arrangements is a model of international cooperation and our thanks for this are due to Mr. Macgregor and Herr. Suhr with whom it was a pleasure to renew old acquaintance.

A team of non-certificate pupils from the Home Economics Department, Theresa Kirk, Ethel Wilson and Fiona Cumming reached the finals of the SSEB Cookery Competition in Motherwell, and although not in the prize-list they were highly commended for the high standard of their cuisine in the face of very strong opposition.

Five pupils from the Quad Theatre Drama Group, Susan Philp, Lee Ingham, Kate Bowden, Penny Martin and Polly Toms, took part in auditions for the Scottish Youth Theatre and were accepted. It must be something of a record for one school to gain so many places. The Muirhead Award for the best piece of Creative Writing by a senior pupil was won by Michael Daniels, while entries by Angie Rowson, Mark Robertson and Jessica Crowe were highly commended.

The Mathematics Department continued their run of successes in the Mathematical Challenge competition. There were three senior prize-winners, Peter Craik, Thomas Richardson and Barry Shields, and three junior prize winners, Aline Hill, Andrew Priest and Martin Richardson. Kevin Bryson and Nicola Starrit were highly commended.

The annual inter-school Latin and Greek verse Speaking Competition was revived this year and pupils of the Classics Department returned from the contest, metaphorically at least, laurel-crowned. Sara Smith was 1st in Intermediate Latin, Jamie Quinault was 1st in Senior Latin and 2nd in Senior Greek, while Katie Craik and Anna Poole were 3rd in Intermediate and Senior Latin respectively. Joanna Newton and Rosalind Green were 2nd in the Junior Project. Younger pupils from the department had a rain soaked outing to the Antonine Wall which perhaps enabled them to appreciate at first hand why Scotland was such an unpopular posting for the Roman military. Other field study trips were undertaken. S3 History pupils went to New Lanark where, in addition to the school's reasons for taking them there, they were able to assist in piloting new worksheets for the Visitors' Centre. S3 Geography pupils, in the course of a crowded day, swept through Tayside as far as Pitlochry and Loch Tummel to study the impact of forestry, farming and hydro-electricity on the landscape.

The Art Department have been closely involved in the anti-litter campaign sponsored by the police and local shopkeepers and out of a large number of entries of good quality, the prize-winners finally selected by the judges were Emily Cook, David Bowie, Joanna Stewart and Angela Smith. The department also scored a major success in the Scottish Co-operative Society's School Art Competition in which Stuart Kemp won the national prize of a trophy and cheque and Sarah Scott came second.

Musically/ ..

Musically the school has been as active as ever. Following their success at the Fife Festival the junior choir took part in the Saltire Society National Finals in Stirling where they distinguished themselves by gaining second place for the singing of traditional Scots songs. For so young a choir to do so well in competition against more mature voices is particularly meritorious. The result is a tribute to the dedication of the choir and their conductor, Miss Kinnear, and we congratulate them on an achievement which must rank as one of the school's greatest successes of the session. The Wind Band took part in a concert in aid of the British Heart Foundation and more recently played in the Bow Butts bandstand under the auspices of the St. Andrews Community Council. The Brass Group provided music for a Victorian Garden Party at Balmerino Abbey. The Senior Choir formed part of the Fife Youth Choir's performance of 'Elijah' in the Younger Hall and also figured prominently in a joint concert with the University Music Department in St. Salvator's Chapel. On an individual level Jennifer Fraser has been awarded the Professor Newnham Scholarship and Fiona Paterson has gained the TSB Music Award. The Summer Concert is eagerly awaited.

Not to ignore purely academic success, four pupils, Graeme Clark, Jonathan Dredge, Paul Baughan and Walter Mouat gained places on the Aberdeen University Bursary list, three pupils, Emma Robinson, Sebastian Coxon and David Squires gained places at Oxford and out of a sixth year of 130 pupils 93 have submitted UCCA applications.

By any standards, the school's achievements this session form an impressive record. I would take this opportunity to thank staff, parents and pupils whose support makes it all possible and wish everyone a pleasant and enjoyable summer holiday.

Yours sincerely.



Rector.

School Holidays

The school re-opens for pupils on Wednesday, 19th August, 1987

October Holiday Monday, 5th October, 1987

Autumn Holiday Monday, 19th - Friday, 23rd October, 1987

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

In-Service Dates Wednesday, 16th September, 1987
Tuesday, 27th October, 1987
Wednesday, 2nd December, 1987

PTA Meetings Tuesday, 22nd September, 1987
Monday, 23rd November, 1987