



Head's Message



Theme for next week: British Values

Dear Parents,

Simon Detre's article in Conference Common Room Magazine states that he does not consider tutoring to be an academic panacea (a solution for all difficulties). This is a sentiment I wholeheartedly agree with.

The tutoring industry is worth an estimated £2 billion. By tutoring, I do not mean help given to a pupil who has difficulty with a particular aspect of their schoolwork. I am referring to the preparation of pupils for exams which are in addition to, and often distanced from, their schoolwork. Children should be given opportunities to develop all aspects of their personalities, whilst developing a skill set which enables them to deal with the range of situations they will meet throughout their life. It is no secret that some of our children are tutored from Reception to prepare them for 7+.

I understand that parents want their children to pass exams for selective schools. However, it should not be at the expense of their wellbeing and happiness. The reality is that secondary schools would rather accept children who have not been tutored. These schools are aware that this can have a negative effect on outcomes at GCSE and Sixth Form, as this early pressure may lead to burnout later on in their school careers.

A secondary issue is one of accountability. If a child passes a test, is it thanks to the tutor, or would they have passed anyway? There are tutors who pre-assess children before accepting them, presumably to guarantee their own success rates. What happens when tutoring conflicts with schoolwork? Tutors may use different methodologies which conflict with what has been taught in school. Rather than developing confidence, this confusion can damage a child's self-esteem further.

I often discourage parents from entering their children for tests just to "have a go" or because everyone else is sitting. This is not a "one size fits all" system and our children have different needs and abilities. I also take the view that 13+ can be a better transition point, although I understand that the options for this are limited in our area. Those who have the chance to remain in a Prep School environment for Years 7 and 8 may benefit from the secure pastoral structure provided, as well as opportunities to develop leadership skills.

There are times when it may be appropriate to employ a tutor. If you choose to do this, always ask the appropriate questions and seek evidence to support the answers. This should include whether the tutor has a criminal record. Are they barred from working with children? Are they a qualified teacher? What experience do they have of teaching children of the age of your child?

The final and most important point to consider is the impact tutoring has on the wellbeing of your child. Children already have a full day at school, homework to complete and often take part in sport and music. Tutoring is a further time commitment and may have a marked effect on their levels of fatigue.

I know of a North London Consortium who abolished entrance tests. Children now complete a bespoke cognitive ability test. This is in response to over tutoring and preparation for their entrance tests. I will continue to pester the Heads of our local schools. I believe some of them are open to change but this is a process that takes time. In the meantime, our children are the ones who are suffering.

Enjoy your weekend - I hope to see some of you at the quiz this evening. Hopefully, the teachers will retain their crown!

Sincerely,

Leonard Blom

This week, Year 1 have created a colour wheel using paint. They have been learning about primary and secondary colours. The children enjoyed making light and dark tones.



We are delighted to announce that, thanks to the Eco-Committee, St Aubyn's have been



awarded the Eco Schools Bronze Award. This week in assembly, the Eco-Committee also announced the start of Switch Off fortnight, encouraging everyone in our school community to turn off lights and appliances that are not in use both at home and school.



Year 7 pupils have been forming and shaping prototypes for snack bars in Product Design this week.



This week, Year 6 have made periscopes as part of their light topic. They had to make sure the mirrors were angled very carefully so that they worked properly.



Last week, Year 8 visited Epping Forest Field Centre to collect data for their fieldwork projects. They were not put off by the cold and occasional wet weather and enjoyed the practical and hands-on nature of the day. This allowed them to create and test their own hypotheses about depth, velocity and erosion.



This week Middle and Senior School took part in a number of House Cross Country races. The races instil a sense of team-



work, personal accomplishment and require self-discipline and bravery to finish. Set over roughly a mile course there have been fantastic performances from all the children regardless of their final finishing place. Well done to everyone



for finishing the race and congratulations to School as overall winners! Pupils can continue their running involvement either through attending the Mile-a-Time sessions at school, joining their local

running club or taking part in the local Park Run events which are also a great way of running together as a family.



In Art this week, Year 2 have continued to develop their observational drawing and painting skills. They focused on creating tone and texture using water colours. Their paintings of apples looked brilliant!



Year 4 enjoyed some delicious ice cream today that they made themselves. This week, they have been exploring the topic of changes of state in science.



Adam (6HE) and Etta (3NL) spoke on behalf of our Eco-Committee in this week's assembly. They outlined what their priorities are for the coming year and what we can all do to help.



Congratulations to Etienne, Hayaan and Caelan, all in Year 3, who have earned their Times Table Ambassador badges this week.



Congratulations to these pupils who received their ABRSM certificates in assembly on Monday morning. Very well done to them all.



Our newly appointed Reading Ambassadors had their first meeting on Thursday. They have brand new books to read and review before they are put into our School Library.