



St Margaret's *News*

Principal's Diary, 28th April to 10th May

Friday 28th April

Junior Assembly

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Comparison is the thief of joy".

Miss Treagus' assembly was about the folly of tying one's worth to comparisons with other people, launching oneself on the endless hamster wheel of external validation. In her example, a person who has 7 pencils feels less satisfied, pencil wise, when they find out that someone else has 12, however unlikely those five extra pencils are to bring notably greater satisfaction for the pencil replete person, than that enjoyed by the pencil bereft person. Accepting that pencil distribution may be arbitrary, with no particular reference to fairness or pencil need, is an early stepping stone on the road to maturity, wisdom and being comfortable in one's own skin. This was one of the teachings of the great sage Maharishi Maydhitup, probably.

This doesn't mean it's unhelpful in life to be ambitious. Great exam results yield more choices. But it is unhelpful for one's personal dissatisfaction to stem from a perception that someone else has it all, just because they have five more pencils.

Thursday 4th May

Multiple parents contacted me last week to forward a warning sent around various other schools, concerning a Netflix series, "13 Reasons Why", and a sinister website, "The Blue Whale Game". 13 Reasons Why describes, in her own words, the path that led to a young person taking her life, while The Blue Whale Game encourages followers to pursue ever more dangerous acts which culminate in the same.

There is always a balance to be maintained between bringing controversial or sensitive issues into

the open and enabling them to be discussed, and encouraging curiosity just by virtue of mentioning them. In my experience harm tends to be abetted more readily when issues are suppressed, thus I elected to speak to the senior girls about both the website and the television series during senior assembly this morning.

Hearteningly, if body language is anything to go by, barely an eyebrow was raised. To a certain extent websites and stories like this rely on the idea that there is a vitality and romance attached to self-destruction, Romeo and Juliet being the example I used, its tale a vivid fantasy that would make a grim reality. One approach to countering this naive but alluring image is to call it out for what it is. But we also need to reflect that for some young people, it is self-worth that provides the strongest armour. It is hard to deflect a young person from satisfying their curiosity, but by valuing them and through dialogue awaken perspective, we can help them to recognise that it is a deceitful fiction to imagine there is something glamorous about choosing a path towards the abyss.

Friday 5th May

At lunchtime today, girls from Years 5, 6 and 7 took part in the last debates from the first round of our middle school competition, the final one whether children over 10 should be allowed to choose their own bedtime. The standard of the debates has been higher than I expected, which sounds like rather faint praise, but really is a reflection of the fact that the girls are still very young. They just seem to be getting better and better at articulating their challenges to received wisdom. This is obviously a worrying development.

Coming up...

Wednesday 17th May

Willows Farm Trip - Reception to Year 1

Friday 19th May

Parents' Reps' Meeting

Junior Citizenship Scheme - Year 6

Monday 22nd May

Drama Performance - Year 6

Wednesday 24th May

Drama Performance - Year 4

Morrisby Test - Year 10

Senior Theatre Club - An American in Paris

Wednesday 24th May to

Friday 26th May

PGL - Year 5 to Year 6

Thursday 25th May

Swing Dance Workshop - Year 7 to Year 9

Monday 8th May

The week began with the school's travel ambassadors describing their new initiative to the girls, to encourage as many as possible to incorporate walking into part, or all, of their journey to school. The girls petitioned Camden Council and after presenting their business model to a team of representatives, they were granted money to buy a whole school set of pedometers. Walking is a win-win for participants, and if the future of the human race depends on the aggregation of billions of such small actions, it would be good to give it a go, don't you think?



Wednesday 10th May

A while ago, a friend's daughter was due to take part in a debate at St Paul's Girls' School, proposing the motion that the school's next High Mistress (for this is what one is titled at such schools), should be... a man. Hmm...clearly men hardly need a leg up in the form of positive discrimination, and St Paul's is hardly struggling under female leadership. Did I have any ideas for arguments?

After a trawl through the dusty cobwebs of my imagination, I suggested that an argument might be adapted from Darwin, that changes in the gene pool can be advantageous, or at least that diversification can be healthy, and that perhaps a *High Master* might introduce to the lofty institution, some qualities more often associated with males; you know, a fixation with trivia and a much needed shed in the playground, for pottering, that sort of thing.

Joking aside, whether born of nature or nurture, there do seem to be some gender differences between men and women, and where upper echelons are dominated by one, to the exclusion of the other, they are the poorer for the absence of the other's perspectives.

Towards the end of last term quite a number of parents filled in the survey on gender equality in the workplace. Though only just under 2/3rds of respondents felt that 'things are improving for women in the workplace', 75% did feel able to challenge this, though 70% felt that men could do more to support this change.

Other survey findings were....

Over 50% of parents had witnessed gender inequality in the workplace and 42% had actively endeavoured to change things.

It was clear from the individual comments that in some workplaces the dinosaur mentality still exists, from bottom patting to assumptions that women are more junior. Other parents commented on the compromises that women sometimes feel obliged to make because of the unevenly adopted burden of childcare responsibilities.

45% felt that promotion is not handed out fairly, and 27% felt that women are not respected. 30% felt that women are subject to sexist attitudes or an underlying sense of being treated differently. To combat these prejudices, 82% felt there should be more senior female role models, and 73% felt that pay should be transparent. There was less support (33%) for recruitment quotas. The most emphatic recommendation was towards encouraging positive male behaviours (86%).

Beyond the statistics, some individual comments were particularly interesting, including those noting that certain industries did not attract sufficient women applicants and how important it is to encourage girls to pursue subjects they love, rather than being pressured into expectations of the role of women in society. But not everyone felt that their gender had been so influential. As one person put it "Being female is part of who I am, but not the defining point"

Mark Webster
Principal



I do rather like the fact that the culture at St Margaret's encourages a wide variety of performance contributions. This was very much in evidence on Monday night at our **summer concert**, which featured solos, group choirs, compositions, and most of all, smiling faces. I would imagine the majority of children, in many schools at least, perhaps because of greater numbers and an abundance of grade 8 performers, graduate from their institutions never having thought to themselves "even if I can't do that, I can do this" and had a go. Similarly, the willingness of multiple Year 9 girls, an age supposedly the zenith of self-consciousness, to perform songs of their own composition, is more significant than it sounds. For most of us, music is about companionship, the habits of practise and diligence, and of course, emotional response, and there was definitely plenty of that on Monday night.

Invitation to Prize Giving

All parents will shortly be receiving a formal invitation to our prize-giving evening on 11th July at 6.00pm at St Luke's Church in Kidderpore Avenue, but we mention it now so that you can put the date in your diary.

Summer Fair

The Friends of St Margaret's Summer Fair will take place on **Saturday 24th June**. Details to follow, but please make a note in your diaries.

Knex Physics Club for Years 3 to 6

After half term Mr U and some of the senior girls will be running an after-school club from 4.00pm to 4.30pm on Thursdays for girls in Years 3 to 6 on everyday Physics. It will involve experiments based on Knex equipment in which the girls explore various concepts such as gears and levers mass and velocity.

If you would like your daughter to attend, please email the school.

Unjaded Jade

Some of the Year 11s recommend a set of youtube videos featuring 'Unjaded Jade', who dispenses revision, stress and exam tips.

Singing Teacher

For the remainder of this term, Tami Tal, a local singing teacher, will be stepping in for Sylvie Gallant-Treville.

Educational tip of the week

If your daughter seems to take a long time to complete questions because of an apparent lack of focus, try using an egg timer or other countdown device and setting her time limits within which to complete a subsection of her task. If this just results in her hurrying the work, adjust the time, or break up the task into smaller sub tasks, each appropriately timed.

Senior Choir

Senior choir with Ms Jost will meet starting this coming Monday 15th May from 4.00pm to 4:40pm. Every Senior girl is welcome.

Term Time Holidays – The Law

(from the Association of College and School Leaders)

Headteachers may not grant legal leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Absences can only be authorised if they are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short and could not be reasonably scheduled outside of term time. Family holidays are, as a consequence, not considered an exceptional circumstance."

Twitter

The school now has a Twitter account. If you search for St Margaret's Hstead or @Saintmag, we hope to upload regular pictures and insights into daily life at the school.

Lifelong Learning

Parents may not be aware that the school regularly sponsors staff to attend courses and training sessions as part of their professional and also personal development. Ms Treagus, for example, recently completed a 3 year Advanced Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling, which she draws upon when working with some of our girls who need someone to talk to. It is our belief that though it is essential that the staff are continually refreshing their understanding of their curricular work through training and other means, the school as a whole also benefits from their wider learning.

Summer Holiday Camp at St. Margaret's!



Thursday 13 July - Friday 28 July 2017

We are delighted to announce that after the success of Easter Camp, Miss Mahajan and Mrs Herman will be running a Summer Camp for children from Reception to Year 4. *Siblings and even friends from other schools between 4-9 years old (even brothers) are also welcome!*

The camp will run between 8:30am and 3:20pm each day and girls will be in age-appropriate groups. The days will be filled with a wide range of different, fun activities.

The camp will run from Thursday 13 July until Friday 28 July and you can choose what days you would like to send your child/children to. Children will need to bring in a snack and a packed lunch. The cost is **£35 per day** or **£385** for all 12 days.

If you would like to book in your child/children then please fill in the attached form and send it back to school with payment. Please note that spaces are limited.

It is a fantastic holiday camp in a setting the children are familiar with but with a fun twist! Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you would like any more information.

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