

Dear Old Sulians,

I trust you are in good health and positive spirits.

My opening remarks should relate to the warm welcome I received at the Old Sulians Dinner back in the Autumn Term. My experience at the evening was one which allowed me to reinforce the view that had already been formed that the school is unique in respecting an illustrious past to define a provision for boys in Bath which allows us to destroy the myth of the “bog standard” school. The school has been able to build on the values which existed within CBBS and ensure that they are instilled and articulated in every area of our work.

The new Senior Management Team, working closely with our Governing Body is now working to develop the resources of the school to ensure that boys have access to the best possible education. The introduction of 24 interactive whiteboards and projectors will mean that not only can teachers ‘bring up on the screen’ the lessons and resources prepared at home and e-mailed to school, but that boys can bring in homework on memory sticks which can be placed in the teacher’s computer and then shown to the whole class. This has required an investment of £65,000 and I will be hoping to update you on its use and success in October.

You will have probably been aware of the ‘league tables’ for schools achievement which have been published recently. The school was recognised as the most successful state provider of A Levels and was second only to Wellsway in relation to the number of sixteen year olds achieving 5 or more high grade GCSEs. As our cohorts are made up entirely from boys, this is a great achievement – nationally only 39% of boys achieve 5 or ore good GCSE grades which include English and Maths. Our level is closer to 80% and this demonstrates the success of the school in maintaining an ethos in which success is developed and there is an assumption of achieving high academic grades.

The work of the school is not to provide “examination factory” outcomes, however. Boys should be able to leave the school and look back with pride on their achievements in a number of areas. As well as fielding the usual high number of teams in rugby, football, cricket, hockey and tennis, we have been able to build up a strong base level of interest in fencing and rowing. This sporting input has seen success in the field (U13 Somerset Cup winners) this year and in the area of debating. We have been able to ‘hold our own’ against opposition from independent and state schools, although we still want a hockey victory over Millfield – something that is proving elusive!

The school remains a part of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, an organisation which provides us with £125,000 per annum and allows us to provide equipment for the boys which would be impossible in any other situation. Whilst we have planned for some development, we still find ourselves very short of the funds needed to develop the new build which is essential for housing our growing Sixth Form (200 – 130, 2006 – 260) and to replace ‘temporary’ building which were originally earmarked for demolition two decades ago!

We have plenty to challenge us over the next few years but we know that the work we undertake is valued by the boys and their parents. Inevitably, when I ask, the boys will tell me they wanted to come to us because “Beechen Cliff School is the best, isn’t it Sir?” Who am I to disagree?

A Davies
Headmaster