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Dear Old Sulian,

Another year draws to a close and we prepare to release the boys into the care of their very enthusiastic parents for five weeks of sun....

Much has been achieved over the last few months, allowing the School to move closer to its goal of providing the very best 'rounded education' for boys. The Governing Body of Beechen Cliff have reiterated the intention to create depth and range in the provision offered; both in terms of the curriculum and extra-curricular life. In addition, there is a significant aspiration to develop stronger links with those in the community who are associated with the school, utilising their talents to provide 'services' to the school for short projects. This support may well include the support to additional rugby, football and cricket teams or even helping the school with professional issues to help complete a project required. It will be interesting to see how this particular area develops over the next year.

The summer has been busy – the School became an Academy over the Easter break and we have headed off into the "Independent School" world full of hope for the immediate future. The start of the era has seen a number of building projects being developed; the Music Centre will be ready for occupation in September and will provide some much needed inspirational accommodation for our musicians. We anticipate an official opening some point in September – hopefully supported by a musician who will be known to the boys. I had not heard of any of the names put forward – so they must be perfect.

During the same month we will open the new 'astro turf' and 3G surfaces. These will be exceptionally popular facilities and allow us to alleviate the wear on the upper field pitches. They really are magnificent to behold and I extend a general invitation to you to wander up and have a look during August – I'm sure they will look at their best prior to the boys being 'unleashed' upon them!

We anticipate a further build project being undertaken over the next few months, allowing us to remove the RS Centre (a very dilapidated hut) and to replace it with a building housing six new classrooms. The old rugby pitch will be transformed. You will be heartened to know that we have no intention to update any element of the Main School building; rather the opposite, in fact, as we start to try and 'strip back' the horrors of 1960s additions to move towards a look which is slightly more faithful to the 1930s building. I was disappointed to be over-ruled on the subject of wooden floors on both corridors – teachers complained that it would be too noisy when one thousand boys walked along them. For my part I really couldn't see the problem

Future aspirations include a large pavilion to replace the temporary building which greets you as you enter the site, and a large changing area/clubhouse near the old redgra site. If you know anyone with three quarters of a million pounds to spare, please feel free to point them in my direction. You can rest assured that all the changes we make are always planned around ensuring we can maintain the ethos and

sense of tradition which is fundamental to the success of your school. I very much doubt we would ever be seen as one of the soulless glass and aluminium ‘palaces’ which have been erected to alleviate the ills of modern education.

The Chef continues to inspire our young charges, his foray into animal husbandry having provided eggs for the masses and pork for the hungry schoolboy diner. Our first two pigs departed in early July and returned to us a week later. They were very well received. When Ofsted came to visit in February they were very taken with the quality of Tim Fletcher’s work, particularly his ability to inspire the boys, many of whom have decided they would like to pursue a career in food. In October Tim will be running a ‘game week’, allowing the pupils to sample the joys of pheasant, partridge, pigeon, venison, duck and rabbit. The week is sponsored by BASCL and a generous parent, determined to give children a chance to find out what is available beyond the ‘everyday’ fare.

A long summer of sport has seen our cricketers achieve success in a range of matches. The Under 12A team made it to the semi final of the Bristol and Bath Cup, falling to a very strong Bristol Grammar School team. On a tour of South Devon the boys won two matches but were defeated by Exeter School and a strong Under 13 Paignton Cricket Club team. The Under 13, 14, 15 and 16 teams all had mixed fortunes although the Under 14A team won all but one match – unfortunately the defeat was to Kingswood in the third round of the cup. The 1st XI defeated the MCC and the Forty Club, showing their usual high level of sportsmanship, gathering further admirers of the school. Tom Weaver of our Lower Sixth received a special MCC award as an outstanding young cricketer. Tom’s batting and wicketkeeping contribution has been quite exceptional. It is clear that the young talent coming through the school will continue to form wonderful sportsmen – hopefully able to become the team members of local adult clubs, bringing on youngsters of their own and aware of the work that Beechen Cliff undertook in making them the men they became.

We have seen success in local athletics meetings, the Under 15 boys winning the Somerset competition in June. Michael Gardner, 15, is undoubtedly a significant talent at high jump and will be a name to look out for in the future. Given the ditch and puddle-covered fields on which they train, it is remarkable that the boys achieve at the level they do.

Visits to Barbados (supposedly for cricket), Moscow Space Centre, Normandy, Spain and Morocco (Duke of Edinburgh) are significant features of the summer enrichment programme and have been very much enjoyed by all those pupils participating. A series of arduous challenges have now passed – most particularly Ten Tors, sixteen boys acting as wonderful ambassadors for us in the rugged wilds of Devonshire. Some of these boys then put themselves forward amongst the fifty-three who volunteered for the Centurion Challenge. The one hundred miles were completed, in the allotted time scale, by thirty-one of our boys. Footsore, mentally shattered and not wanting to see a canal footpath again, they pushed themselves to the absolute limit.

Beechen Cliff continues to send the boys out to challenge themselves to be more than they first thought possible – something which clearly was a feature of City of Bath Boys’ School. Let us hope it will continue to be an area which thrives and develops. “Dives in Omnia” might mean more than we first imagined!

The Annual Arts Exhibition gave our young artists an opportunity to show off the fruits of their labours and this year was no exception to the rule of excellent annual outcomes. If you were able to visit, you will, I am sure, agree with me that the output is very impressive.

Visits from Old Boys of the school continue to be a feature of life in the summer term. Very often we find gentlemen, generally accompanied by a grandchild, wandering around reception and requesting the 'freedom of the building'. We are happy to oblige, although, unlike the visit of Raymond Leppard, the visitor is not taken out for dinner after the tour of the site.

The general situation in the Bath secondary schools continues to be one of 'flux'. The new administration appears to have decided upon maintaining Culverhay School, reversing the decision from the consultation which took place over the last five years. My assumption is that there will have to be another school earmarked for closure as there clearly are not enough children in the city to fill the schools in existence. At post-16 level the same problem is being engineered. The proposed new Sixth Form at St Gregory's, together with the provision of other Bath schools and within the City of Bath College will mean that we will probably have half-empty Sixth Forms in the next five years. Possibly I am wrong and will be happy to stand corrected if the decisions being made at a local level will really lead to better overall provision. I have my doubts.

You will have had enough of this newsletter by this time, understandably, so I will draw to a close. May I thank you for your long-standing support of our school and wish you a very positive summer.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Davies
Headmaster