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# ROYAL ALEXANDRA & ALBERT SCHOOL

April 2014



Dear Parents

Last Summer our Upper Sixth pupils achieved really pleasing A level results with 39.8% of all grades being at grade B or above. 44 of the 55 Upper Sixth progressed on to university with two going on to read medicine, including one at Bristol University, and all the rest finding employment, places on vocational courses or applying for university places following a Gap Year. We look forward to the A level results being even better this Summer.

Pupils in the current Upper Sixth have been offered one place at Oxford and a large number of places at Russell Group universities including, in particular, University College London (UCL). I wonder if it is a coincidence that Mr Brackpool, one of our two Deputy Heads of Sixth Form, was a student there? Mrs Kemp-Gee, our other Deputy Head of Sixth Form will be spending the 2014-15 year on a Masters course in Cognitive Science, looking particularly at how Sixth Form pupils learn best. There has been much research on how younger pupils learn, but much less on how older pupils work. I hope that her research will lead to greater understanding of what constitutes effective teaching in the Sixth Form. I also wish to congratulate Mr Matthew Pawson, Head of Sixth Form, who has been promoted to the post of Deputy Head at Battle Abbey School. We benefit from excellent, ambitious teaching staff who support our Sixth Form and I look forward to announcing the appointment of a new Head of Sixth Form for September.

The demand for Sixth Form boarding spaces has proved so great that we are building a Sixth Form Boarding Annexe onto the current Elizabeth House and this Summer Elizabeth and Cornwall Houses will be swapping buildings, meaning that in September Cornwall becomes a 13-18 house. It was not possible to build an Annexe onto the existing Cornwall House because of the plane tree which stands on the Cornwall lawn.

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Sports News: The Fitness Centre was officially opened by Mark Lewis-Francis, Olympic Gold Medallist in 2004. We played (*and, sadly, lost*) the first *Duchess of Gloucester Cup* Netball match against Gordon's School but the Year 7 Rugby team got to the Final of the Surrey County Plate and the Year 10 Rugby team won the Surrey County Cup competition. Basketball has been a fast developing sport with the boys in each year group winning their district leagues and Y7 and Y10 winning their district competitions.

Netball continues to be a strength with our first team winning the Surrey Schools "emerging schools" competition and the Y9 and Y11 teams coming in runners up in their district league competitions. Year 9 have also been selected to represent the district in the county finals. The Year 7 boys won the district Sports Hall Athletics competition earlier in the term at Reigate College, along with an unbeaten KS3 girls and boys swimming team.

We recently hosted a British Horse Society dressage competition and an excellent Show Jumping Competition as well as having riders compete in a number of events. Numbers taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme are high and a large number of pupils were awarded their Bronze and Silver medals by two medallists of the London Paralympics.

The Music Department has benefited both from significant work to improve the practice rooms and to soundproof the main classroom as well as a most generous grant from the H R Traylor Charitable Trust which has financed the installation of AppleMac computers with industry-standard music software. All of this will help with the Music A level course which begins this September. There was not only a magnificent Spring Concert in Chapel but also an excellent and amusing production of "Alice 13" by the Drama Department and an exciting two hour show entitled "*Gatton's got Talent*", which certainly lived up to its name.

GCSE, AS and A level Mock exam results were handed out to pupils in sealed envelopes following assemblies for the relevant year groups rather than teachers simply telling pupils their results in

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class. This formal approach served to highlight that there are no longer lots of module or unit exams that can be retaken if the results achieved first time are disappointing. Proper preparation for exams and the importance of good revision strategies have also been emphasised in talks both to pupils and to their parents at a recent meeting.

The Easter holidays are quite short compared to some previous years, as we are trying to maximise the number of teaching days before GCSE and A level exams begin, but the result of this is an early end to the Summer term !

With my best wishes

Paul D Spencer Ellis  
Headmaster