



From the Headmaster
B J Wignall, MA, FRSA, MCMI

Ellesmere

A 7-18 Co-educational School

May 2010

To: Parents of all Lower Sixth pupils

Dear Parents,

Introduction

I am writing on three subjects, one which is specific only to parents of A level candidates, one to parents of IB candidates, and one which is relevant to parents of all Lower Sixth students.

Progression from AS to A2 courses

The successful completion of AS level examinations is a necessary pre-cursor to progress on to the A2 (second year of the A level course). It makes sense to regard a Grade E at AS as the minimum basis for progression from the AS to the more demanding A2 part of the course.

There will, of course, be unusual circumstances that warrant very occasional exceptions to this rule but – generally speaking – failure to achieve a pass grade at AS should lead to the giving up of the course concerned. In extreme circumstances this may leave a pupil with insufficient courses to progress into the Upper Sixth. In those circumstances a repeat of AS courses (those already studied or new ones) in the Lower Sixth is the only realistic option. Obviously, in such circumstances this would lead to a 3-year stay in the Sixth Form.

The alternative to redoing the Lower Sixth year would be for a decision to be made that the student concerned was not best suited to A level courses at Ellesmere and to leave. If such a decision were arrived at as a result of poor grades at AS (i.e. below grade E), then in such circumstances the contractual requirement of a term's notice would not apply.

You will appreciate that one has to get the technicalities of all these procedures out of the way in a letter, but I hope – of course – that all our Lower Sixth students perform to their abilities and work hard in preparation for these examinations. If they do then there should be no-one in the position for which we have made provision in this letter.

International Baccalaureate Students

International Baccalaureate students are not burdened with formal examinations in the way that the A Level students are at the end of their Lower Sixth year. However, all our IB students will have in-College summer exams and these are still important as they will provide the evidence for teachers who are required to make predictions about final outcomes of the IB for University applications. Even more importantly, the summer holiday period is a very important one for IB students: detailed research and preparation for the extended essay is an absolute must if this important part of course is to be completed satisfactorily. All students should have a clear work plan relating to their

extended essay and need to spend a significant amount of time on working through that plan during the summer break.

Academic awards on transfer from Lower Sixth to Upper Sixth

Up to two awards, usually to a value of 10% of the fees, may be awarded at the end of the Lower Sixth year to pupils not currently in receipt of awards or financial support from the College. Typically these will tend to go to pupils who arrived new in the Lower Sixth and who did not have a chance to prove themselves at that stage, although occasionally they can go to students who took their GCSEs at the College but have shown significant development in their Lower Sixth year. The awards will be based upon end of year examination performance and an assessment of performance throughout the year.

Prefect selection

I thought it might be helpful to explain to you the process by which we will choose prefects from the group currently in the Lower Sixth as they move into the Upper Sixth in September. I feel it is particularly important to write to you as almost every year I have conversations with Sixth Formers (and occasionally their parents), regarding their disappointment at not being made prefects. I hope that by writing in advance of any decisions being taken you will be in a good position to understand how we arrive at our decision. I will be speaking to members of the Lower Sixth about this, also.

During this term members of the Lower Sixth will be given various responsibilities in various parts of the school. How effectively they carry out these duties will be monitored. Soundings are taken from the current prefects; all teachers are requested to offer comments on all members of the Lower Sixth on which they have a view; the Housemasters and Housemistresses Committee also has a meeting and discusses the candidates under the guidance of Mr Sampson, who has responsibility for managing the prefects. At some stage in the last few weeks of term a Leadership training day takes place, and as a result of that training day we receive a written report on every member of the Lower Sixth from the independent company that run our training day.

Having taken all these factors into account, Mr Sampson and I meet and I come to a decision regarding the appointment of prefects.

As I have already suggested, each year there are people who are disappointed that they have not been made prefects. I always go out of my way to make it clear to members of the Sixth Form that being a prefect is a responsibility rather than a reward, although I quite accept that it is seen as both. Each year we have thoroughly sound individuals who have been disappointed not to be prefects and who ask "what have I done wrong"? The answer to that question is, frequently, "you have done nothing at all wrong". In addition to the vitally necessary attributes of integrity, honesty and trustworthiness – which I hope the vast majority of the Sixth Form possess – the ability to work in a team is vital. The ability to take on quite significant responsibility, which includes the ability to direct the younger pupils and support the discipline of the school without at any time making misjudgements which exceed authority or make other students unhappy, is also something which is taken into account.

I hope that all our pupils leave here with significant leadership qualities, and not being appointed as a prefect does not mean that somebody will not be given responsibility or be trusted during their time in the Sixth Form.

If a good candidate is not made a prefect it is not because he or she has been overlooked, but because we feel that – given the process described above – he or she is not ready to take on the responsibility of a prefect or there are other people who are more ready.

Looking towards the end of term it may be helpful for me to remind you that term ends on *Saturday 3rd July*. Pupils are expected to be in College in the morning and it is hoped that in many cases that they will be joined by their parents at lunchtime for the annual drinks party on the College terraces – weather permitting. Further information regarding the arrangements for the Saturday of the end of term will come to you nearer the time, but I thought an advance warning/reminder might be useful.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



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