

Dear Parent,

The first half of the term has passed quickly and quietly. The new intakes to Kilrymont Road and to South Street appear to have settled down well and staff and pupils can break for the autumn holiday week, confident in the knowledge that a great deal of steady hard work has been completed since the start of the session.

While it is appropriate to pay tribute to the skill and efficiency of the timetablers without whose efforts the advantage of a smooth start to the session would be lost, their plans could not be translated into reality without adequate staff to put them into practice. Although there were critical moments before staffing was completed, we were lucky enough to begin the session with a full complement of staff and we extend a warm welcome to the following newcomers: Mrs Jones (Art); Mrs Stockton (Home Economics); Miss Bennett (Physics); Mrs Edgar (Physics); Miss Burns (P.E.); Mr Tarvet (P.E.); Miss Keatch (Maths) and Mrs Gray (Business Studies) who by leaving almost immediately to join her husband on an unexpected overseas posting also becomes the first staff change of the session. Since Business Studies is a notoriously difficult area in which to obtain replacements, the school has again been lucky by managing to secure, at short notice, the services of Mrs Wright and Mrs Ritchie who will share the vacant timetable. Mrs Bletcher joins the Learning Support Department to replace Mrs Alexander who is one of a number of teachers from Fife released to attend the Diploma in Learning Difficulties Course at Moray House College.

Even this early, staff absence has taken its toll and we hope that the two Principal Teachers, Dr Soulsby and Mr Lindsay, who have both been absent for some time, will soon be able to rejoin us. In the meantime, to cover these and other absences, we are indebted to Mrs Tricker, Mrs McGowan, Mrs Tait, Miss Winnicka, Mrs Webster, Mrs Pirie and Mr Simpson for the help we have already received from them. We also extend our thanks to Mrs Borthwick, whose invaluable spell of temporary service in the English department comes to an end at the holiday and to Mrs MacCallum, whose assistance in the Chemistry department has been much appreciated during Mr Christie's term of office as acting Assistant Rector. This also ends when Mrs Lyn Brown, Principal Teacher of English at Queen Anne High School, who has been appointed to the permanent post, takes up her new duties after the holiday.

Staff, pupils and parents owe Mr Christie a considerable debt of gratitude for his loyal and efficient service in an acting capacity. I would take the opportunity to express our warmest thanks to him for the exemplary way he has carried out these duties in very difficult circumstances. Dr Kinnley, who has been acting Principal Teacher of Chemistry during this time, also deserves our thanks.

With a total roll of 1634 (Kilrymont Road - 952; South Street - 682) it is perhaps of some interest to comment on pupil numbers. Although our SI intake of 354 is still very large by comparison with many other schools, it is noticeably smaller than the original estimate. The decrease appears to have been caused by the natural movement of families out of the area and is not, I am glad to say, a sign of any sinister drift to the private sector. The sinister element in the decline, which is its effect on staffing, still lies in the future, but for the present it brings the short-term advantage of smaller first year classes. At the other end of the spectrum, numbers were, as expected, very large, with 234 returning to S5 and 161 to S6. However, since the start of the session there has been a dramatic drop to 201 in S5 and to 133 in S6 as pupils have left to take up college places or to go directly into employment.

This trend is in its own way a cause for satisfaction, since not only does it mean that places are available for qualified leavers, but it also tends to confirm the impression that Certificate results were not at all bad in the circumstances and, in fact, marginally better than last year. A - C passes at Higher Grade worked out at 75.9%, of the total presentation, while the equivalent figure for Ordinary Grade (Bands 1-3) was 75.4%. The outcome of the recently completed appeals procedure has also been more encouraging/

encouraging. Last year there was, I think, a feeling that anomalies had occurred. This year, although not everything we asked for was granted, and one would not expect it, since appeals were submitted in every possible case (and even in some where the evidence did not fully justify it) the end result appeared to be fairer and not ungenerous.

The long-awaited Main report has only recently appeared and since the interested parties have not yet had time to study the fine print of this very detailed document, it is difficult to predict the outcome. The Committee's findings show a clear perception of the difficulties teachers face and recognise equally clearly the justice of the teachers claim for a greater financial reward. The report covers so much ground that reactions are bound to be mixed. Since it will take time to sort out an acceptable core of proposals and obtain agreement from all sides, it will be many months yet before the present restrictions on curriculum development and extra-curricular activities are removed. However, by establishing a body of independently attested evidence, the report provides at least a basis for progress so that there is perhaps, and I would stress perhaps, the first sign of light at the end of the tunnel. Incidentally, if the report becomes history, Madras College may claim to have had a tiny part in the action, since the rapid and skillful production of summaries of the report by the school office enabled the Headteachers' Association of Scotland, meeting in St Andrews, to debate the contents within a very short time of publication.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned the question of school uniform. I would like to take this opportunity to thank parents for their wholehearted support in providing pupils with uniform for the start of session. Everyone can take justifiable pride in the excellent impression given by the generally smart appearance of Madras College pupils. Certainly, it has drawn favourable comment from a number of visitors and in any league table it would put the school, as it should be, near the top. The important thing now, especially during the winter months when tidiness is often unnecessarily sacrificed to a desire for greater warmth, is to maintain the very high standard which has been achieved.

It is with great regret that we have to record the sudden tragic death of Richard Rose of 4G as he was coming out of school at lunchtime on 3rd October. The fact that he was known to have a heart condition does nothing to diminish the sadness and the shock. He was the sort of pupil who gave of his best, who enjoyed school and was in every way a worthy representative of it. It is for these qualities that he will be missed and remembered by his teachers and by the company of his friends. To his parents in their sorrow at this time we extend our deepest sympathy.

We also record with regret the death of one of the school's benefactors, Professor Frederick Newnham of Tacoma, Washington, USA. A former pupil of the school, Professor Newnham left his native St Andrews to gain distinction as a music teacher in the United States. A few years ago he generously provided funds to establish a Music Scholarship to be awarded annually to a senior pupil of the school. At the service of interment, which was held in the Western Cemetery, the school was represented by the Rector, Mr McGeoch, Miss Kinnear and the three recipients of the scholarship David McCallum, Bridget King and David Squires, all of whom happened to be in St Andrews at the time and whose presence was much appreciated by Professor Newnham's family and friends from the USA.

The autumn holiday provides a welcome break from the usual routine. I hope the fine weather continues and allows staff, pupils and parents to enjoy the holiday to the full.

Yours sincerely,



Rector.

Term begins on Monday 27th October 1986 and ends on Friday, 19th December, 1986