

Fife Education Authority

MADRAS COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS

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D.D. GALLOWAY, Rector.

J.L. HODGE, Depute Rector.



March, 1988

Dear Parent,

In an era when glossy school magazines no longer appear because they are too expensive and when Rectors no longer keep log-books, although the entries in those secret diaries were seldom revealed, the newsletter is not just a convenient means of conveying necessary information. It is now the only official record of the school's activities and achievements and so, with the end of another term, it is time to add another chapter to this chronicle which, as an experiment, is appearing in a slightly changed format.

Staff Notes

We congratulate Mr Robert Hunter, Depute Principal Teacher of History, on his very well deserved promotion to Principal Teacher of History at Bell Baxter High School and wish him every success in his new post.

Mrs Audrey Braid, Assistant Principal Teacher of Guidance since 1976 and a member of the P.E. Department since 1972, retires at Easter. We wish her every future happiness and thank her not only for her outstanding qualities of cheerfulness but for her wide ranging contribution to the teaching of her subject, to extracurricular activities especially those of a sporting kind and to the work of the Guidance Team.

With the appointment of Mr Andrew Herd from Waid Academy as the new Head of Community Use, the school moves into a completely new dimension. We welcome Mr Herd and hope that many different sections of the community will soon benefit from the improved access to school facilities which his arrival will provide.

Even though everyone greatly enjoyed the first February mid-term for many years, it still could not entirely overcome the problem of staff absence, and the resumption of in-service training, though welcome for other reasons, has meant that the services of supply teachers are more than ever in demand. Whether they are old campaigners or new recruits, they seem to come in increasing numbers and in a rapidly changing sequence, but we thank them all most sincerely for the invaluable help they give in maintaining the necessary continuity of the teaching.

Inspection

The main event of the term has been the visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. Over the last few weeks they have carried out a very detailed survey of the work of the school in all its aspects for eventual publication in an official report. Although it is no part of their intention to do so, their visit has inevitably increased the strain and the work-load for heads of department and other senior staff, especially as a considerable amount of statistical and other information had to be provided prior to their arrival. At the moment, like any examination candidate awaiting the results, we are at a nail-biting stage of wondering just how well we have coped with some of the trickier questions.

Moderator

On Tuesday, 16th March, the school was honoured to receive a visit from the Moderator of the General Assembly for the Church of Scotland, the Right Reverend Dr Duncan Shaw. His morning began in Kilrymont Road where he spoke to S1 pupils at Assembly. He then visited other groups of pupils in Maths and Home Economics classes. After his transfer to South Street he met S6 pupils and members of the newly reconstituted Pupil Council in the Library and answered the questions they put to him on a variety of issues. From there he went to the Business Studies Department where he saw the direct application of modern technology to the work of S5/6 Secretarial Studies pupils. He ended his visit by joining the staff for coffee at morning interval. As Susan Philp, Convener of the Pupil Council, said in her vote of thanks, everyone was a little apprehensive about the Moderator's visit, although we need not have been. Dr. Shaw had the great gift of being able to put everyone at their ease and his visit was certainly an enjoyable and rewarding experience for, us as we hope it was for him.

The Shape of the School Day

Although the Tuesday afternoon early closing was designed to meet the needs of the split-site school by allowing time for departmental meetings, it has always tended to create an irregularity in the week. In the light of the much greater emphasis now placed on in-service training and curriculum development, it has become increasingly clear that it is no longer adequately fulfilling the purposes for which it was introduced. Next session, the amount of time required for development work is to be doubled and in order to accommodate this and to enable it to be spread more evenly across the week, we are proposing, in common with many other schools in Fife and elsewhere, to alter the shape of the school day. In order to achieve five days of the same length and at the same time fulfil the statutory requirement of a 27 ½ hour working week, the method of redistributing the time which seems to offer the greatest advantages to staff and pupils is for each day to begin earlier at 8.50 a.m. and finish earlier at 3.30 p.m. In this way any slight disadvantage of starting 10 minutes earlier every morning is counterbalanced by the much greater benefits of finishing 20 minutes earlier every afternoon. While we recognise that those pupils from outlying parts already have an early start, most of the buses are already arriving at school by 8.45 a.m., or earlier; with pupils having to hang about in cloakrooms and corridors until school starts. By allowing pupils to arrive home before dark, the earlier finish would remove one of the great worries of the winter months, while in the better weather they would have more time to enjoy themselves out of doors. Pupils staying on for extra-curricular activities would benefit in the same way. The bus companies have been consulted and it is perfectly possible for them to make any necessary alterations to their schedules. The proposals have also been approved by the Director of Education. Although this nod in the direction of the continental school day seems to us to be a sensible move, it may be that it presents difficulties of which I am unaware. If so, I should be grateful if you would regard this as an opportunity to take part in the consultative process and give me any comments or views you may have. Although there is no direct connection between them, changes in the internal arrangement of the school day are being considered at the same time. These are linked to many of the new developments in the curriculum which seem to lend themselves to a longer teaching unit than the traditional 40 minute period. Some schools are basing their timetable on units of 65 minutes. Others prefer a day with 6 periods of 55 minutes. It is this scheme which is currently being examined, although as yet no final decisions have been taken.

Parents

The PTA has successfully completed a full programme and enjoyed increased support. The Dessert Party which followed the Drama Club's production of 'The Comedy of Errors' provided a pleasant social occasion for staff, parents' and members of the cast. In spite of other conflicting claims on parents' support on the same evening, a talk and demonstration by staff and pupils of the Science Department, entitled 'The Young Experimenter', gave a large audience of parents an insight into the early stages of the Science course. The final meeting on the work of the Technical Department demonstrated the extent to which new technology has moved technical teaching away from its traditional craft skills image. However, it deserved a larger audience, especially in view of the fact that Technology will soon form an integral part of the curriculum for all pupils. All the members of the PTA committee, who have so ably organised meetings and provided coffee at parents' nights and concerts, have earned our thanks, but Mrs Ashcroft who retires after several arduous years as Secretary, deserves special mention, since her unremitting hard work has contributed so much to the Association's strength. In the course of the term Parents' Nights for S5/6, S4 and SI took place along with an extra evening for S2, specifically to deal with problems of course choice. Successful appointments systems were developed for S5/6 and SA and it is hoped to do the same for S3 next term. With SI and S2, where class sizes are larger and each pupil has more teachers, we have so far hesitated to try an appointments system. However, this will be one of the points considered when next session's programme is being planned.

Activities

Even though we escaped the Arctic conditions of last winter, the rain, which at times turned Station Park into a lake, has limited outdoor activities to a considerable extent. Hockey has been mainly concerned with indoor tournaments in which the 3rd Year team were overall runners-up. Susan Morris and Kandy Mitchell travel to Germany to represent Scotland as members of the U-16 national team, while on the boys' side Bruce and Neil Rust both played for Midlands in the U-16 district tournament. Three 3rd Year boys, Gary Thomson, Paul Martin and Graeme Cunningham, all played in the Fife Schools U-15 football team against the North of Scotland schools. At the Fife Schools Cross Country Championships, the senior boys won the team trophy, and Neil Douglas, the team captain, also gained an individual award. Kirkcaldy schools seem to have had a monopoly in this competition and this is only the third time in its history that the trophy has come to a N.E. Fife school. Rugby has re-emerged and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year teams have played a total of 41 games. Although numbers are not what they once were, they have been healthy enough to produce consistently strong XV's and the season's results reflect the hard work and commitment of the players, especially those in the 1st Year team who won 10 out of 14 games. It is hoped that next session an increase in numbers will allow two teams in each year group and a return to inter-school rugby for the seniors. At present, house matches in a variety of sports are taking place, but final results are not yet known.

Not surprisingly, the emphasis of the term has been on activities not subject to the vagaries of the British climate. Dorian Coxon won the Fife Schools U-14 Badminton championship and Kevin Ross was runner-up in the U-13 event. Both have been selected to represent Fife in the Scottish Championships. The Drama Club began the term with a lively and entertaining production of the Comedy of Errors in which a modern interpretation successfully conveyed the spirit of the play. The Burns Supper provided a memorable and enjoyable evening. Mr. Gilroy's impressive Immortal Memory was only equalled by Mr. Lindsay's magnificent tour de force 'Tam o' Anster'. It was a particular pleasure to have with us the officials of the St. Andrews' Burns Club and we/

We thank them for their interest and support and their generosity in providing two new prizes. These were the Alan Russell Shield for Junior Recitation and The Colin Risk Trophy for Junior Singing. They were won by Nicola Mackenzie and Karina Mackinnon. The Fergie Robertson Trophy for Senior Recitation was shared by Susan Philp and Morag Ross. The Maronski Shield for Senior Singing was won by Helen Mouat and the Special Education Recitation Competition by Jane Green. A public speaking competition, organised by the St Andrews Speakers' Club, attracted about a dozen young orators who spoke for five minutes on a topic of their choice. This produced a high overall standard and some excellent individual performances. We are grateful to the Club, not only for their help and encouragement but for the handsome trophy which they have generously given for annual competition. The first winner of the trophy was Morag Ross, Joanna Gascoigne was runner-up and Katie Craik was third. For the first time the school hosted the annual Rotary Club Inter-School Debate. The home team, speaking to the motion that 'Charity Begins at Home', gave a good account of themselves. However, in spite of a well-argued and well-presented case, they did not gain the hoped-for victory, losing in a closely fought contest to Bell Baxter whose motion 'Royals Out' lent itself more naturally to humorous treatment. Morag Ross kept the Madras flag flying by winning the individual award for the best opposing speech. Meanwhile, the debaters had progressed through the Regional and East of Scotland rounds of the United Nations All-Scotland Schools' Speaking Contest to be one of the six schools to reach the final in Glasgow. The team, Andrew Hammond, Camillo Fracassini and Morag Ross, were fully equal to the demands of competition at this level, but were again unlucky in that a performance of considerable merit went unrecognised.

Two events of a rather more unusual kind occurred this term. One was the Red Nose Day in aid of Comic Relief. In spite of some apprehension on the part of the staff, the day seemed to have a unifying effect on the school. It gave rise to a great deal of genuine fun and, in return for a comparatively small amount of organisational effort, it produced the gratifyingly large total of £1475. The other event was the Fashion Show, organised with the minimum of staff help, by the senior pupils who manage a Mini-Enterprise company as a minority time activity. This glittering occasion, which attracted a large audience, was a tribute to the skill and persistence of its organisers in coping with the complexities of what turned out to be quite a large scale business venture. Their skill was also evident in selection and training of the pupil models who displayed clothes and unexpected talent with considerable style. The school's other pupil controlled company, 'Variations' holds its final meeting this week and although its operations have been slightly less dramatic, it too has had a successful trading year. We take this opportunity to thank G.B. Papers for all the advice and support our young executives have received.

Music continues its successful onward march. Choirs, orchestras and soloists returned from the Fife Festival laden with trophies and certificates of merit too numerous to catalogue here. The Spring Concert enabled them to display this technical brilliance to a large and appreciative audience and we have little doubt that the twenty or so of our young musicians who are taking part in the Fife Youth Orchestra's forthcoming Canadian tour will elicit a similar response from audiences over there. Also venturing abroad at Easter is a party of 36 skiers led by Mr Pardoe and Mr Sproson. They are going to Switzerland in their annual quest for better snow, although at weekends throughout the term they have been active in taking advantage of the opportunities for practice provided by the Scottish slopes.

Awards

As extra curricular activities gradually recover from the lean years, it is pleasant to revive an old custom and recognise outstanding achievement by awarding 'dates' to pupils who have distinguished themselves not only by consistent performance in school teams but also by representing the school at district and even national level. However, awards are not automatic, since they are for more than a mere display of expertise. Attitude both on and off the field of play also counts. Accordingly, the Awards Committee scrutinize nominations very closely to ensure that in every respect the recipients are displaying qualities which make them worthy representatives of the school. The first awards of the session went to Lesley Cameron, Kandy Mitchell, Susan Morris - Hockey; Bruce Rust -- Boys' Hockey; Martin Hastie, Michael Braidwood - Golf; Michael Gray, Guy Devereux, Craig Donaldson, Graeme Cunningham - Football; Alan Brown, Edward Brex, David Tennant, - Swimming. In the last few days some additional awards have been made. These go to Dorian Coxon and Kevin Ross -- Badminton; Morag Ross, Camillo Fracassini, Andrew Hammond - Debating. Although Debating is not one of the activities for which awards are usually made, it was decided that the achievement of the team in reaching the final of the All Scotland Schools Speech-making Contest deserved special recognition.

The term is almost over. Only the Sixth Year Ball and the Easter Assemblies remain. It has been an arduous term for everyone. The break, when it comes, will be most welcome and, I hope, thoroughly enjoyable for the staff, parents and pupils.

Yours sincerely,



Rector.

Easter Holidays

School Closes - Friday, 25th March 1988
School Starts - Monday, 11th April 1988

Summer Holidays

School Closes - Wednesday, 29th June 1988
School Starts - Wednesday, 17th August 1988*

Autumn Holidays

School Closes - Friday, 14th October 1988
School Starts - Monday, 24th October 1988

Christmas Holidays

School Closes - Wednesday, 21st December 1988
School Starts - Monday, 9th January 1989

Single Day Holidays

Monday, 2nd May
Monday, 6th June
Monday, 3rd October

In-Service Day for Teachers

Wednesday, 17th August, 1988