

Gravesend Grammar School for Girls

Newsletter Number 5

June 2003

Dear Parents

This newsletter has been delayed until after the Ofsted report was sent home (the week before the Whitsun break). I trust you received your copy and would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt by returning the slip to your daughter's Form Tutor. If you haven't received your copy may I suggest you check the bottom of your daughter's bag before requesting a copy from her Form Tutor.

A message from the Governing Body

At the next Governors' Meeting in June, Governors will appoint four Partnership Governors. Both parents of students on the school roll and the Governing Body may nominate partnership governors. Nominees must be members of the community served by the School who are committed to the good government and success of the School. It is also very useful if Governors can bring with them some expertise such as finance, buildings, and personnel. If you would like to nominate someone, who is **not also the parent of a student in the School, a teacher, elected member or employee of KCC**, please write to the Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Pam Bates, c/o Gravesend Grammar School for Girls.

Later this term the School will be holding elections for Parent Governors and you will be receiving details of this. There will be three vacancies. I hope you will consider standing. It is very interesting working 'behind the scenes'. There will be a committee meeting each half term. Meetings are held in the School usually at 5.15pm. Again, if you would like more information, please contact Mrs Bates. The closing date for nominations is 16th June.

Governors are very pleased to receive the Ofsted Report. Both the staff and the students are to be congratulated on such a good report, which has confirmed what Governors have always felt – that Gravesend Grammar School for Girls is “a very good school that provides its students with and sixth form students with a high quality of

education”. The report states that the School ‘gives very good value for money’, and the lead Inspector commented at a meeting with Governors that this was very difficult to achieve. The Governors were pleased to read that the School is led very effectively by the Headteacher and Senior Staff and also by Governors. There were very few areas where improvement was needed and these will form the basis of the School's Action Plan, which Governors will be considering. A copy will be sent to you later this term.

Achievement Award



As you may have already read in the press GGSG has received the School Achievement Award for the second year running. This is for improvement in GCSE results and measured by value added since 1999. I am naturally delighted and congratulate all the staff and of course the girls!

Another Reason to Celebrate!



We have also been awarded the Artsmark Silver in recognition for the school's commitment to providing opportunities across all art forms. I am grateful to Miss Sayers for preparing the not inconsiderable application. Felicity Pitcher will join us in receiving the award in July.

School Budgets



You will be aware of the financial difficulties many of us in the South are experiencing with the new funding formula for schools. I regret to say that GGSG has not escaped this plight! We have found it extremely difficult to balance our budget for 2003-2004 and whilst through judicious financial planning (confirmed by Ofsted), the Governors have some reserves, these are earmarked for capital investment which our buildings so desperately need. We have therefore carried out a very detailed analysis of our commitments. The income we have been allocated through Kent and the Standards Grant directly from Central Government are insufficient to meet our commitments let alone allow us to develop the School in the areas identified in our Strategic Plan. Our priority is

clearly to maintain the breadth of curriculum on offer at each Key Stage, however this is proving increasingly expensive, particularly as we have form groups of under 30 at Key Stage 3 and 4. We have had to reduce our staffing and the amount spent on staff development. This means that in the Sixth Form groups are likely to continue to be larger than had been the case prior to curriculum 2000. When groups are smaller than 10 students the number of periods allocated will also need to be reduced. Whilst this is not ideal it will mean that students will need to develop even more effective independent learning skills (an area for which we were praised by Ofsted!). We have had, reluctantly, to cut back on the Modern Foreign Language assistants but also in the number of management allowances for staff responsibilities as well as time to carry out leadership and management responsibilities for Senior Staff. Our Premise maintenance budget has also been cut. Everything will be very tight indeed! You have my and the Governors' assurance that no decisions are taken lightly! We have not yet received our income figures for the following 2 years but indications are that we shall barely receive the increase necessary to cover inflation! Our situation is somehow made worse by the fact that we are so successful. We are not entitled to the Leadership Incentive Grant which high schools are receiving. Our only opportunity for additional income will be obtaining Science College Status but that in itself gives us additional targets and therefore expenditure. I have contacted the LEA, KCC, our local MP and the Secretary of State – to no avail, as yet!

You can see how very important School Fund and the PA fund raising are in their context. I urge you therefore to support in both areas, as far as you are able. If you haven't paid School Fund yet, please respond to the next reminder. I have taken the liberty to attach information about the PA supermarket scheme. It needn't cost you anything other than help you plan ahead of time. I thank you in advance for whatever you are able to do to help.

School Trips



These are one of the many strengths of our School. Many staff are prepared to devote their own time outside school hours to run these. Please support them by ensuring that you collect your daughter at the time stated for their return. I do not think it is fair to my staff to expect them to wait (sometimes up to nearly an hour) for you to collect your

daughters – yet they do this to ensure your daughter's safety. Thank you.

Italy Trip



On a very sunny morning on Thursday 17th April 40 students aged 14 to 17 set off on a ten day trip to Italy.

The journey to Montecatini Terme in Tuscany (the location of our first hotel) took almost 22 hours in total. However, the Italian sun was shining and the weather was quite warm on arrival on the Friday. It was the first evening to explore an Italian town and get a feeling for the culture.

On Saturday we headed for Florence to spend a few hours in this Renaissance City before going on to our main hotel near Rome. Most girls and staff had the opportunity to see 'il duomo' (Florence's impressive cathedral) and its tower, as well as the famous Ponte Vecchio lined with shops selling jewellery.



Sunday was a more relaxing day. After a leisurely breakfast, we set off to Ostia Antica. The first of our ancient Roman sites – Ostia was a thriving Roman town, which operated as a port at the original entrance to the River Tiber. Whilst it is not on the scale of Pompeii, there are still many fantastic mosaics and wall paintings to be seen here.

Monday was set to be our longest excursion day – Pompeii and we were set to have rather a wet visit due to heavy rain. Despite this downpour, everyone wanted to visit the site – many of the Year 11 girls had done their coursework on Pompeii, and everyone had certainly heard about what had happened to destroy the city (on 24th August AD79 – Mount Vesuvius erupted and buried the city of Pompeii and other neighbouring towns in up to 40 feet of ash and pumice stone).

The weather on both Tuesday and Wednesday could not have been more different – we entered Rome in triumph and in the glorious sunshine. Having left the coach parked in the Via Gregorio VII, we walked the students towards the Basilica of St. Peter and the Vatican City. Crossing over the River Tiber we walked the length of the Via Vittorio Emmanuele II towards ‘his’ monument in the Piazza Venezia. The second day in Rome was a day of leisure. On arriving back at St. Peter’s for the start of the day, we had the opportunity to see the Pope delivering a speech from a specially erected platform.

On the way back to Montecatini, we made a detour to Pisa to visit the Leaning Tower. The typical photograph shoot took place of various students pretending to hold up the tower. Our last ‘free’ night in Italy involved most girls going out for a ‘farewell’ ice cream etc.

On the Friday, it was time to set off for the return by coach to Calais and then Gravesend. Why is it that the journey back always seems quicker??? Finally after a hearty cooked breakfast on the ferry we said goodbye to our drivers at Dover and welcomed our ‘feeder’ driver for the rest of the trip. We arrived back in the Avenue mid-morning on Saturday 26th April, tired but having seen so much in such a relatively short space of time.

Arrivederci. Miss K Vamplew.

I would like to say a personal thank you to Miss Vamplew, the staff who accompanied the trip and to all the girls who took part. Next year we shall be taking a year off from running a Classics trip abroad but the current Year 9 can be assured that they will have the chance to go when they are in Year 11 and I know that you will have a great time.



Eurodisney 2003

On Friday 2nd May at 11.30pm 110 girls from Year 8 gathered in the front of the school along with several members of staff. It was pouring with rain and never before had so many girls huddled together under so few umbrellas. The coaches had been expected at 11.15pm but there was no sign of them. Then, without warning 2 coaches sailed past the school entrance and disappeared from view. After what seemed like an eternity, (well to Mr Gilchrist anyway), they reappeared and carefully manoeuvred into the car park. Once they were all aboard they set off for Dover only to find that one coach had gone via the M20 whilst the other one went down the M2 (which was rather fortunate for Miss Mills and Mr Barker, as they were picked up from Canterbury!).

On arrival at Dover we were informed that the ferry had been cancelled due to adverse weather conditions (how reassuring) and we had to wait an extra hour before departing. Despite the delay the girls were very well behaved.

In France the weather was calm and dry and as we approached Paris the sun rose on a beautiful warm spring day. The day in the theme park was a long one but one which the majority of girls thoroughly enjoyed. In the absence of their parents they consumed large amounts of sugar and junk food and then tested the strength of their stomachs by going on roller coaster rides that looped loops and spun them round. Space Mountain proved to be a favourite with a number of girls going on it 5 or 6 times. The weather was ideal and the girls were a pleasure to be with. They all reported in at the appropriate times and made the day very easy for the staff who were looking after them. By the time we had to return to the coaches everyone was ready to go home as most had not had any sleep for 36 hours by now.



The journey home was, not surprisingly, quiet. However, some still managed to consume that last bar of chocolate on the way back to Calais. Fortunately, the return crossing was very calm!

Each girl was given a gift as a reminder of the day, and the staff were very grateful to the girls who thanked them for giving up some of their weekend to enable the trip to go ahead. Mr Gilchrist would like to thank all the girls for their excellent behaviour throughout the trip and also the staff who helped: Miss Murfet, Ms Cocks, Mr Barker, Miss Mills, Mrs Garner, Mrs Gunthner-Saville, Miss Vamplew and Miss Speechly.

Thank you to Mr Gilchrist for organising the event.

French Work Experience

The week before the Easter holidays the U6 French A Level class set off to France for a week's work experience. After a journey by Eurostar they arrived in Pontarlier, a mountain town close to the Swiss border. Each student stayed with a French family and the work placements included two primary schools, a centre for young delinquents, a



centre for handicapped youngsters and a sports club.

It was a very positive experience which improved their French and their knowledge of the French culture and cheeses!

Thank you to Mrs Heywood for arranging this.

Music



The following girls passed the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity Music examinations in the Spring Term. Well done!

NAME	YEAR	INSTRUMENT	GRADE
Rebecca Standley	8	Piano	5
Kerri Worrell	8	Piano	4*
Becky Jewiss	9	Flute	4
Hannah Parker	9	Alto Saxophone	4**
Jennifer Storr	9	Piano	2
Aimee Beagley	10	Theory	5*
Vicky Climpson	10	Violin	4
Katie Davis	10	Piano	3**
Emily Death	10	Flute	6*
Stephanie Meade	10	Piano	1*
Caroline Townsend	10	Piano	1*
Emma Winton	10	Theory	5*
Madeline Case	11	Theory	5
Rosalyn Mott	11	Violin	5
Paula Nice	11	Theory	5**
Adele Sumner	11	Theory	5
Sophie Turner	11	Flute	7
Sarah Buchan	L6	Piano	7**

* = with merit
** = with distinction

Congratulations go to Flora Death in Year 11 as she has successfully auditioned for the Kent Youth Wind Orchestra (KYWO) on clarinet. Well done!

School's public Telephones



It has been the case that occasional false emergency calls have been made from these. Clearly, this is not only an offence but it is highly irresponsible. Please reiterate this to your daughters – they have been told!

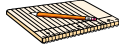
Coursework



If your daughter has reached Year 10 you will be familiar with the strains and tribulations associated with the pressure of coursework. It is crucial that the deadlines are met. We have to implement a strict policy therefore. Occasionally, girls abuse this – it is not fair to those girls who work hard to

meet the deadlines to see those extended! We shall therefore enforce our policy strictly and the parents of girls who do not meet the deadlines will be informed on the day a piece of coursework was due but not handed in. Any work achieved up to that point will be submitted leading inevitably to a lower mark. May I remind you that coursework carries as much as 60% of the marks in some subjects. I ask for your support in monitoring and supporting your daughter in those stressful times.

Examinations



Year 9 have completed theirs – a relief I am sure. Year 7, 8 & 10 have returned to do theirs after half term. Our thoughts are of course with Year 11 and the Sixth Form who have already started their all important GCSE, AS and A Levels. Good luck to them. Year 11 and the Upper Sixth have already celebrated the end of an era for them with some sadness – but also excitement!

The Lower Sixth will be returning on Monday 9th June to start their A2 courses. I am aware of the pressure this puts on the students and their teachers.

A Reminder



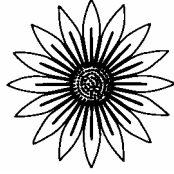
On Wednesday 25th June school will be closed to students and this is a designated staff training day.

You may be surprised to hear that it is not a Monday or a Friday - please understand that we try to vary the days in order not to affect the same classes each time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "N Chapman".

Mrs N Chapman
Headteacher



Gravesend Grammar School for Girls

Please return to your daughter's form tutor

I acknowledge receipt of the following:

The Newsletter, Issue 5
P A Supermarket Voucher Scheme form

Daughter's name _____

Form _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____