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TOM: ON HIS WAY TO A BAFTA?



PENNELL CHESS CHAMPS



JAMES: BACH WITH A BANG

PENNELL NEWS



James, Tiger, Max and Sam on the Boulevard

Dear Pennell Parents and Guardians,

Chatting to a parent at the end of term, she mentioned that both her Eastbourne College children were exhausted. Reflecting afterwards on why this term is always so tiring, the image of an intensity curve came to me where the graph begins on a sharp uptick that reaches a peak after just three days and stays pretty much flat until, with three weeks to go, there’s another step up as the “inter house everything” tournament swings into full gear. Just the sport alone requires a spreadsheet that I keep on my homescreen so that I can try and herd the cats in the right general direction. In fairness to them, however, they are pretty self-reliant with only the occasional reluctant waterpolo-ist needing encouragement. We have had inter house heats and finals of waterpolo, hockey, football, chess and even a capella singing. The range of activity and the positivity of the boys is impressive and, though passions can run high, it is all generally entered into with supreme gusto and good-humour. The irony is that I am increasingly double, if

not triple-booked with teaching, duty in house or sport when much of this is happening so I, too, am running around like a proverbial headless chicken and reliant on match reports from (sometimes unreliable) witnesses.

Academic

The starting pistol for the academic side of life at the College in the Lent term is the Y11 mocks and though not an easy start to the first day of term for them these exams are an essential waypoint on their journey to GCSEs. Particular congratulations go to Cedric and Victor for their very solid results. The show hsm/ praise league at the end of term looks like this:



Victor, Pieter and Cedric - inter house chess champions

Year	1st	2nd=	2nd=
9	Hector Chong	Tom Harper	Harry Evans
Year	1st	2nd	3rd
10	Sam Kirk	Harvey Patterson	Manuel Félix
Year	1st=		
11	Charlie Jones, Barney Revill, Tom Schoorlemmer		
Year	1st	2nd=	
12	Will Allen	Tom Müller-Broich, Zain Radwan, Michele Zhang	
Year	1st	2nd	3rd
13	Ethan Harris	Rolland Lau	Louis Bullen

Particular congratulations to the Y10s who have finally worked out that they get chocolate for show hsms. The second half of term was notable for the number of show hsms in the lower years and Sam Kirk takes 1st position overall with 23 praise and show hsm points. Sam Huang and Tiger Ge are due congratulations too for their Silver Awards in the Senior Physics Challenge while Michele Zhang and Darryl Fong won a Bronze. Impressive achievements in a difficult problem-solving competition. Congratulations are also due to Marcus Chow for his Creative Arts half colours in Design and Technology.



Sam and the Y10s in action in the house concert

Concert and culture



Y12s singin' in the rain

The house concert was after half term this year as a consequence of some boring internal politics and this concerned me since the boys tend not to see anything beyond half term, but in fairness to them they did actually put a decent level of effort into rehearsing and videoing before the holiday which meant that videos could be edited in good time...and then hastily re-edited the night before after hsm intervention; same old, same old. The other coronary-inducing factors included being unable to have a true technical or dress rehearsal because the theatre was full of exam desks and then the stage had a Y13 set covering half of it. Usually, after the Thursday night rehearsal Calum and I can relax knowing that the technical elements won't let us down. This year, we had not even run the whole thing until the show which was very unnerving. Make do and mend was the order of the day and it didn't seem to limit the fun of the occasion, nor materially affect the quality and, true to form, the boys adapted brilliantly to the situation. Gus and Bertie ran the show, compèring with confidence and charisma - even though they eschewed my favourite Dad joke. We thought we'd take the pressure off Ys9 and 10 this year by asking them to participate in the surreal gameshow





Taskmaster. It's on Channel 4 and highly recommended if you like what you saw at the concert. They were anxious that we'd make them look silly but in the end they rose to the occasion. I mean, how silly can you look trying to blow a pea off a cardboard tube with a straw?! The only fly in the ointment was not being able to practise with the microphones which meant we missed some of the answers in the Y10 animal-mime-but-wrong-letter-of-the-alphabet game! It was great to have a well-rehearsed house band this year with a very convincing performance of Boulevard of Broken Dreams. The Year 11s' video was genuinely funny which is not always a given and the Y12s, under Susan's watchful eye, put a great deal of effort into their Singin' in the Rain performance. It was simple, effective and surprisingly well-coordinated. James Yee's Bach piece was technically excellent and atmospheric while the Y13s gave us an insight into Will's TV-watching preferences and their leavers' video was as emotional as ever. The Ge brothers then blew us away with a superb version of Cream's classic Sunshine of your Love. The headmaster turned to me as it was introduced and asked incredulously if they were actually going to tackle the *real thing*. It's a favourite of his and he subsequently confirmed that it did not disappoint.

There were plenty of other other cultural high points this term. Harry Evans' performance in Michael Frayn's Matchbox Theatre as well as the Year 9 dance showcase were both hugely enjoyable. He was also the centre of gravity for our entry in the a cappella competition which went smoothly. I like to think that we came 4th as the adjudicator's only criticism was the over-eager shanty-stamping but that was merely a consequence of over-exuberance in a clearly enjoyable and enjoyed rendition of the Wellerman.





The Wellermen and, below, Arran and Tom with EBCTV



It's not an easy ask getting boys who have little-to-no experience to sing in close-part harmony so my enthusiastic thanks to Gus, Will, Tiger, Zain and Tom for supporting Harry so gamely and ably.

There is so much going on culturally at the College that might not be on everyone's radar. Bertie has also been busy both with his Y13 A level Drama scripted piece and also his Gold Arts Award which was a superb, fully choreographed

performance of the musical numbers from Heathers. Zain and other Y12s made up the cast. Another high-quality project that may have passed some by is the EBCTV show that has been filmed this year. The first episode was rapturously received and Tom Müller-Broich was lauded for all his filming and editing. The second episode was filmed this term and features Arran Fleming. I am very much looking forward to seeing it as we were left on somewhat of a cliffhanger.

Three boys took grades this term - all passing with merit. Congratulations to Hector Chong (piano grade 1), Tom Harper (piano grade 3) and James Yee (piano grade 6).



Sport

There are now so many sports available to pupils at the College that it can be hard to track who is doing what and where. Pennell, namely Jiayi, Tiger, Zain and Duke, continues to provide the backbone of the Basketball team and congratulations go to the captain, Jiayi Yuan for his full colours. Sam Sanders



was awarded his half-colours in swimming this term while Freddie Ferro captained the 1st squash team. We look forward to hearing about his cricket season next term. Matthew Phillips represented the 1sts in football while Gus Toomer the 1sts in hockey. Both richly deserved their full colours. We had e-sports against Millfield for the first time with Alfie Eastall and Robin



Pennell senior inter house toughmudder football

Philipon representing the College. Tom Stoner helped the U14As to an 80% win rate in hockey and also represented the College in fives and cross-country. Tom M-B was also selected for the latter. Sam Kirk played for the 15As in hockey. In Year 11, Fergus Brown and Tom Schoorlemmer made the 16As in football. Barney Revill played for the 16As in rugby 7s as well as hockey while Ross Seavill also played 16As 7s and even made it consistently to the 1sts for hockey. Jamie Foks continues to swim in the top squad for the College. Victor Sander is a top College fencer as well as a demon chess player. The Pennell chess team of Victor, Pieter Hoedemaker, Cedric Leung and James Yee were a thrilling prospect and after coming second in their heats, prevailed over the first-placed in the semi-final before going on to beat Wargrave in the final. What makes the win so satisfying is that they actually trained to win, often watching their opposition play to absorb and therefore anticipate their strategies. The sight of Victor with his notebook struck fear into all!



Tom and Fergus in action



Y10 i/h competition and Barney showing some flair



Gus, Zain and Harvey

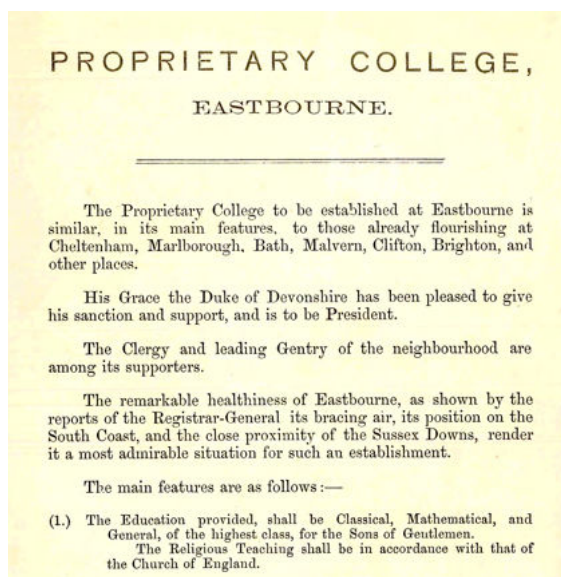
Final thought for the term

The composition of a house is an ever-changing thing. When I tour parents round the house they sometimes ask which is “the academic house”, which is “the sporty house” and in days of yore that would be a valid question but nowadays we positively eschew such limiting constraints if we possibly can because, in part, it encourages tribalism or a disdain for an interest in fields other than the one that the most charismatic members deem the most important. I can genuinely say, as I do in the Pennell Housebook that we honour the actor alongside the basketballist, the musician, the lighting designer, the e-sportsman, the physicist, the dancer, the DofE-er, the master-of-none Jack-of-all-trades. And these newsletters, *inter alia*, attempt to do that, however imperfectly. But it was talking to the chess players in the games room that got me thinking how broad a church we currently are. They are obsessed with chess, they make chess jokes and, most thrillingly of all, they draw others into their orbit. They have carved a niche for themselves that is entirely their own and they are totally admired for it. Sure, some houses have strong year groups in particular fields and some may be consistently better at sport than us but we pull rabbits out of hats from time to time, not because it is essential that we win or else

everyone (including some hsms...) gets very cross, but because winning is a pleasant feeling. I watched one nameless Y10 absolutely lose it with one of his team members in the swimming pool (and then again out of the swimming pool) during the inter house water polo because he had made a duff pass. Plotting a course to excellence is noble but failing to arrive is not a crime. I “carroted” pizza to the Y9s if they could sharpen up their act in the final few weeks of term (there had been some slipping punctuality, some post-lights-out out-of-beddedness and some indifferent preps) and when they stepped up they sealed the deal but one of them said he had done nothing excellent to deserve it. Excellence can be subjective and I value responding appropriately to direction, censure (or, in this case open bribery) as excellent when it achieves the desired result. And on subjectivity, I was very amused to see a very early advert for Eastbourne College (circa 1867) stating that “The education provided shall be Classical, Mathematical, and General”. And that’s it. A subjectively “excellent” curriculum if ever there was one! We are so blessed to have more than classicists and mathematicians in the house. In fact, “generalists” aptly sums up what a wonderful array of ability and interest we have within the house and I absolutely cherish that.



The pizza and, below, the advert



Finally, I am delighted to announce that due to a recent very generous donation from a parent our Brighton and Hove City Mission collection now stands at **£800!** That is simply amazing and I cannot thank you enough. The high street centre and foodbank they intend to create will be so much the richer for your generous support. Many, many thanks.

With very best wishes, as ever,

Ben



Some dates, requests and reminders:

Please see the email about Study Leave and Co-curricular guidance sent at the end of term (24/03). As far as I am concerned, if your son is in Y11 or 13 and taking study leave please just keep me posted with all and any comings and goings (dates, times, transport).

Dates:

Boarders return for start of term: by 6 pm Monday 17th April

Boarders' Ball: Saturday 22nd April
Year 11 dinner: Friday 28th April

Extended Exeat (due to King Charles' coronation) is on Friday 5th May from 14.35.
Boarders return Monday 8th from 18.00

Y11 study leave begins: Monday 15th May
Y13 study leave begins: Friday 19th May

Friday 26th May: HALF TERM from 14.35 plus Y9 GCSE options meeting (15.00) for Y9 parents and guardians

Sunday 4th June: boarders return from 16.00

Note: there is no second exeat this term

End of Term: Saturday 1st July

Please note that the last week of term has a lot going on. Public exam pupils who have been on study leave are required to be back in house on the evening of Thursday 29th June or the morning of Friday 30th June. Everyone else is expected to be with us to the end of term to enjoy the sports afternoon on Friday, the Dell Play, and the now customary last Friday night house supper of Greek gyros!

Nationally, and thanks to prolific, cynical marketing to teenagers, vaping is on the rise again: 20% of 15-year-olds have tried it, according to one survey. Please can you help to reinforce to your sons: a) the risk to health is not zero, in fact it is known to damage throat and lung tissue - and even brain tissue if they contain nicotine b) it is illegal for under 18s to purchase them c) it is against the school rules and one can be deemed "guilty by association" i.e. being in the same enclosed space as a device d) the tariff goes up quickly: second offence = 2-day suspension. In short, it carries health, reputational and potentially educational damage. I have been through this recently with them in a house assembly. They seemed most responsive to the thought that standing in a science block toilet cubicle with another pupil sharing the salivary mouthpiece of a shocking pink, mango-flavoured "Elf bar" was not particularly cool!