



Dear Parents,

Recent Events:

A sparkling start to the new month comes in the shape of our first 11+ results. We already know that several boys have attained marks in the Grammar School selection tests that should lead to firm offers of places when the state school offers are made in March. Within the private sector, Haileybury College have offered academic scholarships to **Aaron Huang** (who is our internal Hume Scholar) and to **Theirno Diallo**. Thierno also features as an academic scholar to New Hall School along with **Regan Creasey** and **Jensen Puvaneswaran**. **Michael Dong** received an offer of a place at Haileybury and passed the preliminary test for Harrow School. **Gabriel Mehlman, Arthur Johnson, Bobby Pope and Ryan Silva** have received offers from New Hall. Good numbers of boys are receiving call back interview offers and we await the formal publication of results from other schools due by the end of half term.

The second literally sparkling event to celebrate was the (unannounced) inspection of our kitchens by Epping Forest Environmental Health which (for the fifth time running) awarded us with highest possible hygiene and food safety grading: five stars. Many congratulations to catering Manager **Mark Palmer and his team**.

Sports in January were centred more on rugby and swimming – although in soccer the **Under 9As and Bs** both defeated Chigwell 4-0 at the end of the month. As you know, rugby for us is an extra-curricular voluntary sport and whilst it is important to maintain a competitive fixture list we are aware that most of our opponents our schools who specialise in rugby as their main winter sport. Mr Bleasdale already have posted sports results on the school website:

U11s Rugby v Brentwood - a very understrength side lost **12 tries -0**

U 10s Rugby v Widford Lodge two losses against two strong teams – but we played with notable competitiveness and resilience.

U8s Rugby v St Eds - lost an entertaining game after a slow start only **13-12 tries**

U9s Rugby v St Eds - lost a very tight game only narrowly by **3-2 tries**

U11 Forest Swimming Gala -

25m breaststroke: Charlie Gell 1st in heat

25m backstroke: Arthur Johnson 2nd in heat

25m frontcrawl: Bobby Pope 2nd in heat

50m frontcrawl: Zach Garfield 1st in heat (despite being only in Elements)

Individual 400m medley: Zach Garfield 1st in heat

Our 4 x100m freestyle and 4 x 100m medley relay team also came 2nd in heat in both races.

I attended the annual conference for the Heads of Catholic Independent Schools held this year in Liverpool. There was much gained from the keynote speeches and seminars although as ever the networking with colleagues was perhaps the most influential part of the conference. After the Conference Mass led by the Archbishop of Liverpool, I was congratulated on my impending retirement – although my length of service was prosaically described as two life sentences – which in terms of time, I suppose is true.

I was very pleased to receive letters of appreciation from the Royal British Legion thanking us for raising £505.47 in the Poppy Appeal last November and from the Chigwell Riding Trust which received £168 from us following the collection made at the end of the Nativity production.

Finally the P.T.A. have sufficient funds for the acquisition of our first replacement mini bus. Watch this space ...

You may be aware that in terms of communication I am increasing uses the Twitter account linked into the school website. All can access it by clicking on the link [@LoyolaPrepEssex](#). If you have your own Twitter account you can respond to the posts – some of which admittedly are more personal or banal than others! Currently the account has 192 followers! If you haven't found it already, it's worth a look!

Biting the Bullet (the lure of 7+)

There has been several symmetries to my time at Loyola. One that recently has come full circle is the question of the 7+. Back in 1988, the proportion of the school's Year 2 pupils who were seeking transfer at 7 was significant. My first year was trying to understand the reasons and from thence to respond to them.

The heads of the local standalone Prep schools meet regularly and we share issues together. This year in particular all schools are reporting an upsurge in the numbers seeking admittance to the Prep departments of senior schools at 7. Talking to the Head of one of these Prep departments, he spoke of having 187 applicants for 5 places. Colleague Heads are reporting Year 2 pupils taking up to seven sets of entrance exams. So what is going on?

First of all, let me say that as the Head of a private school, I believe absolutely on parental choice

and respect entirely the right of parents to seek the best possible provision for their children. There are two common reasons why parents decide to consider 7+ transfer:

- The pupils has siblings at a certain school and the parents wish to educate their children together.
- Parents want to put the pupils through the process to see how they get on as a guide to both their current standard and potential.
- Parents have been committed to their child's admission to a certain school from the outset and always intended to facilitate a transfer at 7
- There is a real and present fear that achieving entrance at 11+ is going to be much harder and therefore to secure a place at 7 eases that strain.

As I did thirty years ago, it may be useful to point out some other realities:

- I am not sure of the veracity of choosing a secondary school for a child when he is still developing cognitively and physically at the age of 7.
- All secondary independent schools will review the progress of existing pupils at 11+ and security of admission into the secondary wing is not guaranteed.
- Any pupils who passes entrance at 7 will at 11 unless there is a major flaw in the admission system.
- Whilst it is true that the numbers applying at 11+ have increased and that the number of places in the wider locality have been pressed further by the closure of the Walden School in Essex (and subsequent flow of additional candidates in the east of our region), it remains the case that the entrance exams are best seen as ascertaining whether a particular pupil suits a school. If the pupil does his best, but is unable to compete with the academic standards achieved by the top candidates, the likelihood is that he will not cope with the day to day requirements of the school. A standalone Prep School will work with parents and pupils to try to find the best possible setting for a pupils at the age of 11. A Prep School tied to a particular Senior School will not have this flexibility – as I can testify from the days that I ran the Prep School of St Edmund's. I can also affirm that my entire academic career pivoted on the fact that I did **not** pass the 11+ and went to a school that entirely suited my needs at that point in my development.
- Many pupils are not ready for entrance exams at 7 but are by the age of 11. A number of our current Rudiments who have done well so far in the entrance exams came to us themselves at 7 having not made the grade to Bancroft's, Forest and Chigwell then.
- To gain the full impact of Loyola, remaining as a pupil throughout clearly has the greatest advantages. We encourage our boys to be aspirational and one of the chief aspirations is to follow the role modelling of our seniors and become a Rudiments boy. The school structure emphasises seniority as in each teaching block pupils ascend literally higher up the school as they mature. The experience of being a senior boy and the top of the student tree is important for self-esteem and confidence. You are part of a school which is national and county soccer champions, highly regarded for the quality of the choir that for example has sung in St Peter's

Rome on five separate occasions, which already after results were issued from two schools have gathered five academic scholarships.

- There is no doubt that pupils undertaking 7+ procedures become increasingly ambivalent about their performance at Loyola and can become increasingly difficult to motivate. They also are opted out of the possibility of being considered for the internal scholarships that are awarded at the end of Pre-Prep 2.

I write this (as I did historically) for clarification, but should any parent wish to discuss this issue further with me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Staffing:

Parents of boys in Reception 2 will be well aware of the happy event awaiting Mrs Foster and I can confirm that she will commence her maternity leave next term whereupon I am delighted to announce that Mrs Noble will extend her working week to four days. We are still confirming final arrangements for the fifth weekday, but staff used will be already well known to the boys.

The disposition of staff for September has been virtually decided and arrangements will be published in the March newsletter.

Behaviour:

Whilst I was away in Sussex inspecting another school, an initiative was launched here with respect to some aspects of pupil behaviour. This is an opportunity for me to add to the memorandum recently sent out by Mrs Anthony.

Let me say from the outset, that I am proud of our Loyola boys and am very aware of the reputation they enjoy in the schools that we feed and the wider community (including most recently the priests of the diocese!) As a group they have a great sense of occasion and display self-confidence and a lively disposition. However, recently we have noticed that aspects of this self-confidence has spilled over into a diminution of their standards of good manners particularly when moving around the buildings and stairways. As I told them after Mass yesterday, my ambition for them is that as Loyola boys their pride in the school would motivate naturally responsive behaviour without the need for external sanction, and since new arrangements have been implemented, we have seen improvement in this regard while also significantly a good number of boys have expressed appreciation of the new procedures. We continue to keep these under review but remain committed to maintaining the school as a safe and welcoming environment for all of our stakeholders.

Summer Events

There are various fallouts to planned events due to the fact that next term is my final term as Head.

Please take note of the following:

- Wednesday May 2nd Whole School Photograph
- Wednesday June 4th School pilgrimage to Loyola and Lourdes departs
- Friday June 15th Sports Day Lea Valley - school closes 12.00 p.m.
- Friday June 22nd Celebration school mass on occasion of Mr and Mrs Nicholson's retirement 2.00 p.m. (School closes for Early Years and Reception at 1.00 p.m.)
- Saturday June 23rd P.T.A. School Ball
- Wednesday June 27th "Farewell" Instrumental and Choral Concert 7.00 p.m.
- Saturday June 30th Rudiments depart for Normandy
- Thursday July 5th Rudiments return from Normandy
- Friday July 6th Celebration Mass at Brentwood Cathedral 7.00 p.m. (Schola involved)
- Tuesday July 10th Academy Evening (Speech and Awards Evening) 7.00 p.m. For the first time we are planning to include Pre-Prep 1 in this).
- Wednesday July 11th Rudiments Leavers' Mass (Rudiments leave after Mass ... but **return for Formal Leavers' Dinner at 6.00 p.m.**
- Thursday July 12th Familiarisation Morning. Pupil barbecue sponsored by P.T.A. at lunchtime
- Friday July 13th End of term and school year 3.05 p.m.

February Events:

Week beginning Monday January 29 th	Staff Appraisal—I shall be employed during the next two weeks in observing classes as part of the official annual appraisal process.
Friday February 2 nd	Candlemas Day – formal end of the season of Christmas Under 8/9 tag Rugby v. Forest
Monday February 5 th	Open Morning from 9.00 a.m.
Tuesday February 6 th	Rudiments no badminton this morning Under 11 soccer v St John's

Wednesday February 7 th	Pre-Prep 2 led Mass with Father George 10.30 a.m.
Thursday February 8 th	Under 9 Rugby v St Aubyn's 2.30 p.m.
Friday February 9 th	Under 10 and 11 rugby v St Aubyn's 2.30 p.m. General Subject (excluding English and maths) Reports issued from Reception 2 to Figures ¹ Half Term commences
Wednesday February 14 th	Ash Wednesday (commencement of the season of Lent)
Saturday February 17 th	Publication of local 7+ and 11+ results.
Monday February 19 th	Half Term ends
Tuesday February 20 th	7+Assessment Day Twilight Staff Meeting – Understanding Children's Anxiety Part 1 from 3.30 p.m.
Wednesday February 21 st	Rudiments led Mass with Fr Bossy 9.30 a.m.
Thursday February 22 nd	Under 9 rugby v Brentwood 2.15 p.m.
Friday February 23 rd	Under 11 and 10 rugby v St Edmund's Prep 2.30 p.m.
Tuesday February 27 th	Under 11 soccer v. Woodford Green Prep Twilight Staff Meeting – Understanding Children's Anxiety Part 2 from 3.30 p.m.
Wednesday February 28 th	Owen House led Mass with Fr Waller 10.45 a.m.

¹ Please note that in Reception 2, reports will be issued for boys who entered the class in September. Reports for the younger cohort who entered the class in January will be issued at the end of term in March.

Birthdays

A very happy birthday to **Ashwin Anjulan, Alexander Chandra-Pool, Rory McNally, Max Garfield, Karthik Dasari, Bieant Bains, Thierno Diallo, and James Bidgood (with his twin sister Rebecca!)**

With all good wishes.

P.G.M. Nicholson

