



CGW.jbr

5 November 2021

## **Re: and so the second half begins**

Dear Parents,

I hope that this letters finds you well and that you had a safe and enjoyable half-term. Winter has come all of a sudden and I write to you from my notoriously cold office (I am sure that it must be haunted) shivering and shaking lie a bowl of jelly in the wind so please forgive any typographical errors brought on by the arctic conditions at my desk.

I have much news to share with you, so I will deploy the dreaded sub-headings to make that easier to follow.

### Say Hello, Wave Goodbye

I am sorry to say that we are saying goodbye to a long-standing colleague at the end of this term as Mrs Whiting, our Head of Computer Studies, will leave the school at Christmas. Mrs Whiting has been with us for twelve years and in that time has not only taught ICT and Computing to everyone in the Senior School, but has also taught the KS2 Juniors. In addition, Mrs Whiting has been an outstanding Form Tutor and has had positive impact on the wider life of the school, not least through setting up and running our Eco Club. Following such a great time served, and great impact, she goes with our very best wishes and I am sure that her students will miss her.

I am fortunate to have sourced an exciting replacement for Mrs Whiting in Mr Rizvi who will join the school in January. He is an experienced Computer Studies teacher who will pick up Mrs Whiting's classes and, from September 2022, offer Computer Studies A level, while also taking three activities a week.

Excitingly, he owns a robot. More to come!

We are also, as of today, saying goodbye to Mrs Pacheco, our Head of Marketing and Office Manager. Mrs Pacheco has been in post for four and half years and in that time she has touched most aspects of school life and made great strides in our presentation, digital presence and house style. She will be greatly missed by the school and, on a personal level, I have very much valued her insights and kindness. She leaves with our very best wishes.

We will be looking to appoint a replacement very soon – more anon.

### Uncovering The Secret History of Pitsford Hall (part 1)

Before half-term (before I ran out of steam) I wanted to share with you one of our new clubs. Coordinated by Messrs Vié and Harrison, and led by Year 13's India Seunarayan, we have started an Archaeological Society as one of our activities. They have begun excavations in the normally out-of-bounds Walled Garden. This is immensely exciting stuff: not only is archaeology inherently fascinating



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but the site upon which the school sits is one redolent with history. As I will tell anyone with almost no provocation my own academic research was focused on fifteenth century England (and Italy) so I well understand that Northamptonshire was the crucible of much of the violent, tumultuous and bloody story of your country.

I am told that when the Junior School was built Saxon remains were uncovered (which is no surprise considering the utterly magnificent Saxon All Saints' Church close by in Brixworth), so we doubtless sit on untold treasures. Of course the Saxon period of our history is many feet further underground than where we have got to so far in the dig, but in the meantime the Hall and grounds had a storied and fascinating past through the early modern and modern periods, not least the Walled Garden whose derelict glass house is a listed building in recognition of this. Much will be revealed by the research of the students. Exciting stuff and when we find cool things I will let you know.

## Uncovering The Secret History of Pitsford Hall (part 2)

I also wanted to share with you the exciting news that our Governor and Chaplain Reverend Stephen Trott has been involved with, and is acknowledged in, the new and controversial biography of the Duke of Windsor and Wallis Simpson written by Andrew Lownie (provocatively entitled 'Traitor King') and published last month.

As many of you will know, Pitsford Hall, when it was the residence of George Drummond (former Head of Drummond's Bank, which became the NatWest Bank), was well known to the Royal Family. The late Queen Mother was a regular visitor with her husband when he was Duke of York and when he was King (and indeed they were godparents of one of Drummond's children). The Royal Family worshipped in Pitsford Church (where we have our school services) and indeed the Queen and her late sister learned to ride on the top lawn of Pitsford Hall and a summer room, sadly torn down before I became Head, was built to allow their grandmother, Queen Mary, to watch them from a warm and comfortable spot. This explains why the Queen Mother later visited the school, and even laid the foundation stone for our school library.

As Lownie's book explores, the Duke of Windsor, when he was Prince of Wales and then during his brief reign as Edward VIII, was also well-known to the Drummond family, and indeed there was more than a hint of scandal surrounding this during his time as a guest at the Hall. This only takes up a few pages of the biography, which is not at all fond of Windsor and his Baltimore-born wife, but for all of us Pitsfordians it is fascinating stuff. The sections on the hall are down to Reverend Trott's knowledge and research. Well done to him – I will say no more at this point lest any of you want to read the book for yourselves.

## Sixth Form Foreign Trip

Over half-term almost half of the Sixth Form went with Mrs King, Mrs Kirk and me on our latest overseas adventure, this time to Scotland. During the visit I am told God smote Pitsford and Northamptonshire with fierce and ferocious rains, while in Scotland we had to cope with a pretty steady drizzle. The trip was a packed success, taking in museums in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as some good walking, Arthur's Seat and a tour of the spooky and supernatural heart of Scotland's capital (there was also shopping and cinema). The students had a great time, I caught the mother of all colds

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which ruined the rest of my break, and Mrs King and Mrs Kirk are to be praised for giving up their holiday to make it happen. Well done to all.

## Another National Champion from Pitsford

Speaking of well done, in the first half of this term Old Pitsfordian Ross Tait won the National Championship in Trampolining for the age group 17-21. He had already won this prize in 2019 (the pandemic stopped him defending it in 2020). Ross left school after GCSE to focus on his sport and it is wonderful to see that brave gamble paying off.

He has already represented England at international level, and he has now been selected for the GB team which will compete in the World Championships in Baku in Azerbaijan later this month. Very well done to Ross – the school and his family are most proud of his achievements.

It is remarkable how much leading sport there is at Pitsford. As well as old boys, like Ross, excelling on an international stage, we have current students who are elite golfers, horse women, athletes and footballers. Added to this, through the FCV International Football Academy, we have an FA-registered semi-professional team in school. Quite something for a wee school that punches way above its weight.

I will revisit this in more detail before Christmas as I want to share with you our students' outstanding successes.

## A Busy Social Calendar

As both of the events below will happen before I write again, I want to flag up the School Bonfire which will take place tomorrow evening from 6.30pm. This is a Parents' Association event and tickets can be bought (£5 adults, £3 children, £14 family) which include entry and food. Buy tickets here: [www.tickettailor.com/events/ptapitsfordschool](http://www.tickettailor.com/events/ptapitsfordschool). I'll see you there.

The same website has details of the Christmas Fair which will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> December and about which I will speak nearer the time.

Also, next Friday, is our All Together Now Concert which will start at 7pm and to which you are very warmly invited – as always our Music is immensely strong, it will be a great night.

And that is more than enough for now. This will be a very busy half-term – and only six weeks of it are left – with all of the complications and fun of Christmas to come and before then multiple trips, House events and concerts. More to come and in the meantime have a good and safe weekend.

Best wishes,

Dr C G Walker  
Headmaster



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