



11th February 2022

Re: a vision of love, wearing boxing gloves, and singing hearts and flowers

Dear Parents,

We have reached half-term and it has come not a day too soon. As we continue to move towards the second anniversary of the first lockdown (time flies etc etc) the pandemic remains a very live issue and as you know we have had quite a few students and staff testing positive through this last fortnight. This experience brings home very vividly how dangerous the virus remains and how important sensible precautions remain. I hope that the positive members of our community are avoiding the worst of the symptoms, and that everyone else avoids infection before this much-needed break.

At the same time, in what has been extraordinarily difficult circumstances for schools, I am very impressed by how much the students and staff at Pitsford have continued, progressed and made the best of the hand that they were dealt. We have had after-school clubs and fixtures, prizes and fund-raising, and lashings and lashings of learning. All almost like normal. Living through this terrible time has brought home to me what, as a History student I always knew was true in theory, namely that human beings are really resilient and innovative in the face of hostile conditions (and that is why they conquered the world).

On the subject of innovation, last week I wrote to you about the NANNA fancy-dress fest and I am pleased to let you know that over £500 was raised from the cake sale and an INCREDIBLE amount of pet food, blankets, toys and so on, were donated. The lucky animals at NANNA will have a fun Spring and well done to the year 10s who led (especially Alfie and Matthew), and you and your children who supported.

On the subject of raising money for good causes, Jake Pearce and Joel Houghton (both Year 12) started a post four o'clock tuck shop last term, to raise money for prostate cancer research (under the umbrella of the Movember campaign). This has been an extraordinary success. As I type over £1,500 has been raised and more than that, the levels of engagement shown by Jake and Joel and their team of helpers from the Sixth Form and Year 10, has been quite exceptional: it is very rare to see such a fantastic innovation happen in a school, or be so successful.

If you were to wander up our elegant drive at 4.10pm, such is the crowd stretching out of the Sixth Form Centre, waiting patiently to buy some sweetmeats or bottled water, and in doing so help fight a killer disease, you would assume a celebrity (such as Maya Jama or the guy who played Ron Weasley in the films about Harold Potter) was inside signing autographs and posing for selfies.

Mrs Sherlock (our Bursar) and I met with the tycoons themselves and we were both overawed by their maturity of purpose and delivery, as well as their adaptation to circumstances to improve outcomes (they even sourced a credit card reader for the bling-bling students of Pitsford who do not carry cash!).

Headmaster: Dr C Walker

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This is an extraordinary success and reflects incredibly well on Jake, Joel and the whole team. The tuck shop will continue, Jake and Joel want to future proof it, and it is incredibly popular with the students. I expect to report to you more great things in the future. Bravo and a doff of the cap to them all!

Away from fund-raising, earlier this week I attended the national UCAS Advisers' Conference in sleepy Harrogate and I am pleased to report to you that, based on the sessions that I attended there, Pitsford's approach to advice and support through the application process, including help with personal statements and the construction of school references, is exemplary. I was secretly pleased to hear other schools, some much bigger and swankier than us, admitting to practices we would not tolerate here and a lack of personalised care which is the essential value-added that Pitsford delivers. I am very satisfied that our approach remains gold standard. Don't tell anyone but I am planning to start selling what we do to other schools, make my fortune and then flee abroad and start a new life in Rome under an assumed name. But, for now, let's keep that between us and hush-hush.

Finally, the Independent Schools Inspectorate visit schools on a rotation, and we are due a visit. We have not been inspected this half-term, so we expect ISI to give us a call soon after we return at the end of February. They will be in touch with you then but I wanted to let you know it is our time in the cycle and when it comes it is as expected. Inspection never sleeps!

I hope that you all have a super and safe half-term and I will speak again on the other side.

Best wishes,

CG Walker



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