



PitsfordSchool

CGW.jbr

11 March 2022

Re: halfway to Easter

Dear Parents

I hope that this email finds you well as we hit the half-way point in our half-term and I can almost taste the sweetness of freedom, and those Easter eggs, right now.

It has been another busy week – more for my colleagues than for me as I spent the first two days at the Society of Heads Annual Conference. The Society is the body to which Pitsford School belongs and I am expected to attend. It is an interesting group as it includes an incredibly wide-range of schools, from the big and famous (like Bedales, Denston or Bristol Grammar) to really niche (the National Maths College and the Royal Ballet School). It includes schools much smaller than us and many like us.

It was a privilege to hear these other schools' perspectives and successes as they face similar challenges to the ones that present in Pitsford's path. I am pleased to note that we are doing well comparatively and we are in a good position: it is tough out there and some schools have had a terrible coronavirus experience and find themselves in real crises. God-willing things will finally improve again for them, and for us.

It is also worth noting, by-the-by, that the Society of Heads Annual Conference was the last conference that I attended, at it took place at the start of March 2020. I remember one of our keynote speakers was an old boy of the host school and he was now the third most senior doctor in the UK. He was talking about students' entry to Medicine, but he devoted half of his talk to this virus that was spreading from China and had, by that point, hit Italy. I vividly recall him saying that we should not worry and it would all be OK and that there was a lot of scaremongering going on. I was so heartened that, at the Conference, I wrote to the Governors sharing that good news.

A few weeks later we entered lockdown for the first time and everything changed. Now, I am not a superstitious man and I am sure the Society of Heads Annual Conference has nothing to do with pandemics but I am buying in a lot pasta and a lot of toilet paper just in case lightning strikes again.

Back to Conference '22, we had a number of excellent talks focussing on key functions of schools, such as safeguarding and readying for inspection which I found very valuable and I

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have cascaded the lessons I learned to my colleagues in school so that we are as on point as it is possible to be – I was cheered to see how en vogue we are already.

We also had some inspirational talks and I was particularly struck by three things said at the keynote speech by the Chair of the Society, Sarah Raffray. She was discussing why our schools exist and what their function is in education and society. She noted that Society schools were distinct in that we do not see boys and girls as data sets, but rather we recognise them as individuals. She went on to observe that in our schools grades matter but our education means more than just that. She talked about our sorts of schools offering a rich life outside classrooms, and she called it super-curricular, which I really like and I intend to use (and, down the line, claim as my own invention).

She ended with two statistics which were recently published by the Lego Foundation who had recently researched wellbeing in schools, and which I would like to share with you as a thought point and something to which we can and will return. The research found that of the parents that they had surveyed, 80% were concerned that their children were growing up too soon. In truth, I am surprised that the figure was not higher. At the same time, 20% of the children they surveyed responded that they were too busy (partly through parental pressure, partly through school work) to have any time to play. This captures powerfully the conundrum schools and families find themselves in at the start of the twenty-first century: trying to be all things to all people all at the same time. I am pleased that the Society is trying to address this problem which is something that has animated me since I joined Pitsford, and has coloured many of the decisions that I have taken. This is a journey we are still on and I will talk about it with you again in the coming months.

Away from my conference, I want to take a moment to pay immense respect to you as Pitsford families for how much you have engaged with our appeal for supplies to be sent to Ukraine. Your generosity and humanity have shone like a beacon and I am pleased to report that Pitsford Hall is overflowing with food, clothes and vital supplies which will make a difference to families as they face trials and challenges for which noone can prepare and noone deserves. I will ask that some pictures are taken and circulated as it is a wonderful achievement and reflects so well on you all. Bravo, bravo!

I'll leave you on that very high point and hope that you have a good and relaxing weekend.

Best wishes,

Dr C G Walker
Headmaster



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