

July 2010

Dear Parents

Every end of term is busy and eventful, but that of Summer 2010 is unparalleled! All members of the Polam Hall team are excited by, and enthusiastic about, the opportunities and new challenges which lie ahead.

The Diamond Model at Polam Hall

I will begin by giving everyone an update on our Diamond Model and on the developments since my letter of July 1st.

As I write, we have 60 boys on role for September – a terrific start to our Diamond School! This includes 12 boys in Y11 (U5) and 7 boys in Y10 (M5). They will be taught completely separately from the girls. We have registrations for 7 boys in Y9 (L5) and 3 boys in Y8 (U4). The Y9 boys will have some separate teaching from September and this will be reviewed as the year goes on.

I thought it would be helpful to parents to provide some background information to our plans for the School's future:

- Polam Hall Governors first discussed the move to a Diamond Model School two years ago.
- They had made the decision to adopt this strong vision for the school's future before the commencement of any meaningful negotiations with Hurworth House.
- Our original plan was to 'grow in' the Diamond structure. Indeed, relevant parents were informed in Autumn Term 2009 of the intention to retain boys to the end of Y2.
- The decision to admit boys to Polam Hall Senior School in 2010 has been taken because it is:
 - in keeping with the agreed vision
 - in the interests of all our Polam Hall pupils
 - in response to an overwhelming vote of confidence in the education we provide

We are moving forward with absolute confidence that we can maintain our core values and offer excellent teaching to both current and new pupils.

A few practicalities

- The boys will have their own form rooms – 3 in total – one for Y11, one for Y10 and one for Y9 & 8 combined. There will be no ‘visiting’ each other’s form rooms for either girls or boys. Social contact will be confined to supervised activities and the school grounds
- 3 former Hurworth House staff members have been interviewed and will be offered posts for September (these cover boys’ PE, some Geography, some Business Studies, Science, ICT and, if required, Lower School Maths). More staff interviews will take place over the next two weeks as our requirements are clarified.

Consultation and Parental Involvement

We are very committed to regular consultation and careful review throughout the next academic year. There will be ongoing staff input and a special Student Council focusing on Diamond Issues.

In addition, we wish to form a Parent Focus Group to inform the process as we move forward. The first meeting for this group will be on Wednesday 22nd September. We very much hope to include parents of both girls and boys, and to represent the full age range. Please do contact Mrs Craggs on jcraggs@polamhall.com or on 01325 463383 if you would like to be involved.

On Thursday December 2nd at 6.00pm there will be an open meeting for all parents to review the first term of our extended Diamond Model. Everyone is welcome!

End of term Events

The final part of the school year was filled with all of our usual events and we had much to celebrate in our end of term assembly. Public examinations took place over a seven-week period, and we wish every success to all involved from M5 to U6. Separate letters are enclosed with this mailing explaining the arrangements on results days. We look forward to seeing everyone concerned in August.

Also enclosed for those returning to the Sixth Form is the Dress Code which should be followed by all. The Code has been revised and discussed with current students. We expect high standards in this area in our new school year!

High standards were definitely on display at this year’s wonderful Sunshine Party. The Queen’s Tea Party proved to be an inspired theme, and the letters from Buckingham Palace given to all guests summed up the attention to detail which was the hallmark of the event. Warm congratulations to our Head Student, Rebecca Patterson, and to every single member of the Lower Sixth for their contributions. The elderly visitors were certainly given a day to remember!

Sports Days, for all age groups, were held in sunshine and showcased the athletic talents, and good sportsmanship, of our pupils. Trips, visits and workshops have been much enjoyed and the behaviour of our girls has been highly commended on several occasions. The Sixth Form Celebration Ball at Blackwell Grange and the Upper Five Prom at Rockcliffe Hall were stylish, superbly organised and very successful events.

In the last week of term a team of Middle 5 girls took part in the Bannatyne's Bright Sparks Competition held at the Dolphin Centre. Their clever idea – giftfixer.com – was brilliantly presented and they won the prize, a cheque for £250, for the best marketing plan.

On the final day of term we said farewell, or more likely au revoir, to Mrs Margaret Harrison who has been a valued member of the Modern Languages team since 2001. We are very sad to be losing Mrs Helen Schofield who has inspired our Junior School children throughout her time with us. We wish Helen every happiness as she takes up a new challenge as a Deputy Head and moves to the south of England. It was 1987 when Mrs Sleightholme joined the Polam Hall team. Generations of girls owe the development of their musical talents and their lifelong love of music to her. The vibrant, energising and thoroughly enjoyable performances of 'Grease' on the last Thursday, Friday and Saturday of term said much about the strength of music and drama at Polam Hall. It was an absolute privilege to hear the Senior Choir perform in our Final Reading. The quality of our choir is a fitting legacy to Mrs Sleightholme's tremendous contribution to Polam Hall. She will be a very hard act to follow and we send best wishes to Miss Caroline Laws to whom that challenge falls, and look forward to welcoming her in September.

I would like to thank all parents for your support and for all your contributions to the Polam Hall team.

A reminder that the Autumn Term begins on 1st September for Sixth Form, Lower Four and the boys, and on 2nd September for the whole school.

Have a happy summer break and enjoy reading our colourful school magazine.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie Green". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

M Green (Miss)
Head