

PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

21st September

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you to all those parents who completed our beginning of the year “Expectations and Ambitions” survey. It’s really good to know which aspects of the school’s provision are important to you so that we can try to tailor provision to meet these where it is practically possible. This is a relatively short newsletter to respond to your comments and reflections.

The feedback is overwhelmingly positive and I am delighted that the vast majority of you are more than happy with what we are doing or, if you are a new parent, to hear your positive impressions of the school thus far. We try to do our very best for students, so it is pleasing to read so many feel we are achieving this.

Let’s start with some statistics:

In answer to Question 4 (in which you were asked to rank certain statements in order of importance to you), it was clear that the most important thing to almost all parents was that you want our school to be a happy environment in which everyone feels cared for and valued. This is wholly consistent with responses to the same question from both students and staff. In reporting this to students and staff, I asked them to consider how they would contribute to making this a reality for everybody and, in the same way, the challenge is there for us all. How we engage with each other, how we communicate and work together will ultimately determine whether we maintain such an environment. Towards the end of the term we will ask how many believe that we have achieved this.

Even more overwhelming was that, in reporting how proud you feel to be part of The Purcell School (where 10 is very proud), a staggering 97.1% of you responded with an 8 or above. Again, this was replicated amongst the student and staff body, so we are all on the same page.

Some key suggestions for change:

More Regular Communication with Instrumental Teachers

This comes up each and every year and Paul Hoskins, instrumental Heads of Department and I try to wrestle to find a practical

solution. The difficulty is that our instrumental teachers are professional musicians and teachers for whom Purcell is just one part of their portfolio.

Some are here for a whole day (some more) and some are here just for a few hours, their pattern of work varies from one week to the next and they are

only contracted for the hours they teach. This makes finding an opportunity for them to attend a parent evening or an information evening almost impossible and we have no ability to require them to attend school outside of their contracted teaching hours (and it would be an impossibility to have all teachers in at the same time - they simply wouldn't have the availability). All teachers are required to

write a detailed report for each student as part of the annual reporting cycle which is supplemented by a second musical report from their Head of Department. Most instrumental staff are happy to take a call by arrangement through the school, but it may not be an immediate response because they are simply not here all the time. By contrast, the Head of Department is available to discuss concerns

and progress at any time, as is the Director of Music, both of whom will have a complete picture of how any individual student is progressing and can relay concerns between families and instrumental staff. They will happily respond by email, by phone or, if necessary, in person. But we will also return to this issue once again to see if there is any practical solution.

Academic Provision

A few concerns about academic provision were raised. Much of this is about communication and, as a consequence, I have reminded staff that they should not

wait until a formal reporting opportunity to consult you about any developing concerns they have. Parents may always contact a teacher directly if they are concerned

about progress in a particular subject or they may raise concerns via the student's tutor or Michael Long (Director of Teaching and Learning).

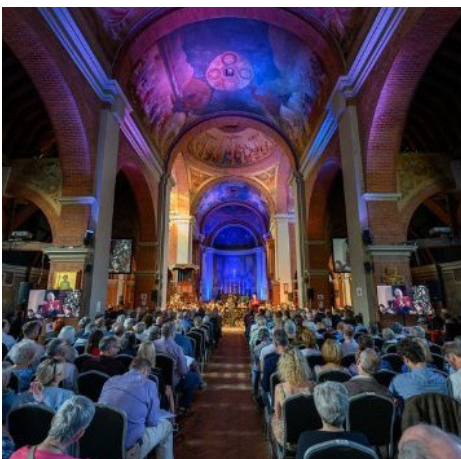
Performances

A number of people (I suspect those of you who are far away) have asked for more digital performances to be posted so that you can enjoy them at home. In the year before Covid, we started experimenting with live-streaming some lunchtime concerts so we will consider whether this is something we can manage to reinstate in the coming year. Many

concerts (both internal and external) find their way onto the School's YouTube channel (although often a little time after the event) and this will continue throughout this year.

For those who are nearer to the school, do remember that you are welcome to attend any lunchtime or evening concert. Full details are on the website and a quick chat with your son

or daughter should be enough to establish whether they are involved in a particular event. Once we are up to speed, we can often be presenting three or more events in a day, so sadly it's not practically possible for us to inform you directly when your child is performing - we would end up doing nothing else!



Meeting Houseparents

We have previously advertised an informal discussion evening for parents with myself and Paul Hoskins on Tuesday 10th October from 6.30. Some families have asked for an opportunity to meet with Houseparents so this seems like an ideal

time. Therefore, following the meeting with Paul and myself, families who elect to may visit their boarding house and have a cup of tea with their Houseparent. We'll open a booking system for this [here](#) so that we know how many to expect.

That covers the main themes raised by multiple respondents but all comments have been digested and discussed at SLT (Senior Leadership Team) and with other relevant staff.

Principal's Vlog

Many apologies for the technological gremlin which "attacked" the release of my first Principal's Vlog last week. Thank you to those

who alerted us to it. We recirculated the link this week so that it now works. Given that we have only just re-released last week's vlog, I

won't produce the second one this week - you can have too much of a good thing!!

For those of you who are looking forward to the forthcoming exeat weekend, I hope you enjoy being together as a family for a few days.

With all good wishes



Paul Bambrough
Principal