



St. Paul's School

MANIBUS POTENTIA STUDIUM ANIMIS

Friday 19th June 2015

Dear Parents,

As we reach the end of term, there is much to reflect on that has been achieved this term. The annual review, delivered to school on Thursday this week gives us a good overview of the activities of all of us at school. It is a fabulous record of all that your children have been involved in and have achieved this year, and gives a flavour of the school's vision, ethos and aims for the school community. I want to focus your attention on one event that has not managed to make it into the review, because it is so recent, but which is, nonetheless, an excellent example of what the school does really well and what can really benefit our pupils.

Last weekend a group of 18 lower sixth formers, accompanied by 3 staff set out on an adventurous journey for the expedition section of the international Duke of Edinburgh's award. The D of E is an award, whose patron is the Duke of Edinburgh, set up in 1956, for young people to create challenge in their lives and give them an opportunity to try new things. There are three levels of the award (bronze, silver and gold) and four sections: physical activity, skill, service and expeditions. I much enjoyed participating in the scheme myself at school, achieving all three award levels, and through the scheme I developed a real love for the outdoors and the mountains. It taught me much about myself and I loved every minute of it (even the horrible bits).

The expedition section is often the part of the award that participants find the most challenging, both in terms of the physical and mental challenge. At gold level it requires the expedition group to find routes in wild country, for four days, camping for three nights, carrying their own equipment and cooking their own food. This is not something for the faint hearted. The team must navigate their way, develop their team working skills, make decisions together and, crucially, stick together in order to be successful. This tests the strongest of friendships and gives an enormous sense of satisfaction to the participants when they finally finish. I can still remember the feeling of relief when I finished my own gold expedition in North Yorkshire, nearly 30 years ago. It was magic!

This week our group faced great challenges. A very difficult route, campsites at high altitude with limited facilities, no easy communication with the outside world (the staff carry a satellite phone for emergencies), long days of hiking, driving rain and wind.... And, being the first gold award expedition group from the school, no experienced older friends and siblings to tell tales of what to expect. Despite the incredibly challenging conditions and route, the group completed the journey successfully. They have become the first gold award participants to complete the expedition section in the school. They should be very proud of

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all they have achieved, and I hope that they go on to complete all sections of the award to qualify as gold award holders.

Putting oneself out of one's comfort zone, whether that be in class, on the volleyball court, on a stage, in an orchestra, in a robotics competition or, indeed, on a windswept mountain, is a very good way to develop character, resilience and the skills needed in our lives. This is one of the reasons that we offer a full and varied programme of trips, clubs and societies (ECAs) behind the classroom for children throughout the school. Going away from home is an important part of developing some emotional strength, and going away from home with friends to do something challenging really can teach pupils many useful skills. The strongest memories that your sons and daughters will take with them from St. Paul's when they leave are likely to be those formed on trips and through the activities programme. It is wonderful that we have so many staff who are willing and able to give up their time to offer these opportunities to the pupils and I hope that you encourage your child to take part. Your support for this programme is essential and much appreciated. It is, after all, an essential part of the St. Paul's education. And if your child complains about being offered the chance to do an activity or says they don't want to go on a school trip, please try to change their mind! They will benefit so much from doing something different and from being away from you for a few days, and we will look after them so you don't need to worry.

This week has been incredibly busy in school, with much learning crammed into a range of different activities to end a busy term. I have spent a good number of hours over the last few weeks reading all the pupils' reports and it has been a real pleasure. From the youngest PP1 child who is just learning to recognise their numbers up to the sixth formers who are ready to fly the nest and go to university! The reports have some similar themes and messages. As a school, of course we value talent and ability in our pupils, but, more than that, we seek to reward commitment, hard work, dedication and the right attitude to learning. The very best reports indicate that pupils respond well to the advice they are given, they are self-critical, supportive of their friends and, most importantly, always aiming to do better. It is a privilege to be able to have a window into your child's learning and to see just how much progress they have made.

As we draw to the end of the academic year, we prepare to say goodbye to some staff who have shaped your child's learning. Our teaching team is outstanding and they are great fun to work with. They stretch and challenge your child, support them when they have difficulties, help them to think for themselves, ask questions and make connections and we are very lucky to have them. As a dynamic place though, inevitably teachers come and go; this term, sadly, we say goodbye to:

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From the Pre-Prep School

Assistants Mr Pedro Fernandes and Miss Virginia Walton; Miss Walton and Mr Fernandes have both secured teaching jobs here in São Paulo.

Miss Helen Salmon, PP3 teacher, leaves us for a job at an international school in Kuwait.

From the Prep School

Assistants Ms Janaina Miralhe Pinto and Miss Gabriela Nunes Caprara. Miss Miralhe Pinto is going to be a teacher here in São Paulo and Miss Nunes Caprara is moving to Chicago, USA.

Mrs Karin Magalhães, Prep 1 teacher, is retiring. Mr Mark Symmonds, also from the Prep 1 team is off to the Middle East, where he will work as a primary school teacher. Mr Eamon Lawlor, Prep 3 teacher, is also leaving, this time, not so far afield, to work at St. Francis College.

From the Senior School

Mrs Dani Phipps, Head of English, is returning to the UK, Ms Helen Devine Costa, Head of Sixth form leaves us to work in Prague, Mr Frank McMorrow, Head of PE and F5, is returning to the UK, Mr Graham Case, physics teacher and Duke of Edinburgh Leader leaves for a new role in Lima. Miss Hellen de Lima, Head of F3 and teacher of biology, is off to teach in Mexico City, Mr Murray Fergusson, teacher of English and film, leaves us for a new post in Lisbon, Mr Diego Oliveira, teacher of geography, is heading to an exciting role in Zanzibar.

We wish all our departing teachers every success and happiness for the future; they go with our warmest wishes and our grateful thanks for the difference that they have made whilst working with us. As with all leavers, they take a little of St Paul's with them and they will have left just a little of themselves here in school and we hope that they will stay in touch. We will remember them fondly.

This week has been one of celebration and farewells. Wednesday evening saw my first ever Brazilian graduation ceremony for the lower sixth who have completed their ensino médio qualification. It was a lovely evening and it was wonderful to be able to invite Professora Rosângela Valim, the regional director of education and Professora Nereide Pereira the Ensino supervisora to join us. The L6th should be proud of all they have achieved and we wish those that are leaving to study in Brazilian universities every happiness and the best of luck for their undergraduate courses. They deserve every success.

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Throughout this week and last we have enjoyed the stunning end of year shows and celebrations for the prep and pre-prep children. So creative, funny and earnest, these productions really are heartwarming. My thanks and congratulations go to all the children and their teachers and assistants for the hard work and patience that makes them such joyous performances to watch.

And on Friday, the final day of term, we presented the final awards and prizes at our prize giving ceremony. The prize winners are rightly proud of all they have achieved. They have shown grit, determination and tenacity and have responded to their teachers' advice to develop and fulfil their potential. Many congratulations to them all.

It has been lovely to see so many of you as the term has drawn to a close at the many events in which your children are participating. I am sure you would like to join me in thanking the staff for all the efforts that they have put into your child's education this term. We are lucky to have such a committed team and I am grateful to each of them for all they do in support of your sons and daughters.

And finally I would like to thank you all. My first year in Brazil has passed in the blink of an eye and the warmth and support of the parents has been crucial in making it successful. I have loved every minute of this first year, and I look forward to the next! Over 600 of you have completed the online parent survey that we have distributed in the last few weeks. Your feedback and comments are incredibly helpful and we will be having a meeting at school on Wednesday 2nd September at 8.30 - 9.30 in the Theatre to share the findings with you. I hope to see lots of you there.

I wish you all a happy and restful holiday. I hope that you enjoy the opportunity to spend quality time with your sons and daughters over the coming weeks, whether at home or abroad. And of course, that you are all back in São Paulo in plenty of time for the start of term on 5th August (for the Senior School) and 6th August (for the Pre-Prep and Prep Schools).

Very best wishes,

Louise Simpson
Head