



LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

by Kevin Riley,
Headmaster

For any school to develop effectively, it is essential that those in charge do not become so preoccupied with their quotidian tasks that they lose sight of the bigger picture. In the midst of a busy working life, there must still be time for planning and reflection.

Early in the Spring Term, an away-day took place, which was attended by most of the JLS Governors and the School Leadership Group. I am pleased to report that it was an extremely effective day. We reviewed in detail the last strategic plan and spent a considerable period of time developing the vision for the School and identifying six statements of strategic intention. Following on from that, there has been a meeting between the Leadership Group and the School's middle management (comprising Heads of Faculty and Heads of Section) to discuss these six statements, fleshing them out and beginning to consider how they are going to be achieved. To ensure the effectiveness of these meetings, we invited Jill Freinberg, a consultant who has led a number of training sessions at the School, to be an external facilitator.

All this is to take the School through the next five years. There is much more to our vision and strategy than just buildings. (For example, I have to consider developments in post-16 qualifications: whether to adopt the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge

Pre-U or the new diplomas. For the moment, I am sticking with A Levels, because they remain the most effective currency for securing places in top UK universities.) Nevertheless, our estates strategy building programme is a very important part of the overall strategy of the School, and one which requires careful planning, not least in terms of finance.

Strategic thinking against a backdrop of very strong demand for places

It is therefore encouraging to be doing such strategic thinking against a backdrop of very strong demand for places at the School and at a time when we are in a good position financially. Over 240 boys sat the 11+ examination this January, competing for 66 places. At 13+, the figures were 100 boys competing for 28 places. I have capped the School at 600 places - a level which ensures the special character of JLS is maintained.

On a personal level, it has been interesting to work on the estates strategy here at JLS, because I am also Chairman of the Bujagali Trust - a Riley family trust - which is building a nursery school in Uganda's second city, Jinja. I find that visiting Uganda, where I have many friends, always provides a fresh sense of perspective and ample scope for reflection. The Trust, which is recognised by the Charity Commission, is carrying out the nursery project in a formal partnership with the YMCA in Jinja: it will be called the YMCA Bujagali Trust Nursery. I have discovered that planning regulations are slightly looser in the developing world and costs somewhat lower! This 100-place nursery with day care facilities will cost the trust less than £10,000 - approximately 0.3% of the cost of our new science extension.

- Turn to p3 for photos from Uganda.





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VIEWS FROM THE INSIDE

RAVI SHAH (MOUNT STEWART JUNIOR SCHOOL)

I'm in Year 7. I'm 11 and my birthday is on 22 August [*Ravi is the youngest boy in the School - Ed*]. I got 5-5-5 in my SAT tests last year. One other boy from my junior school came to JLS with me - my friend Jaipal Mandair.

It's really good here. Before I came I thought 'it's going to be so hard to settle in' - but on the day that I first looked round the School I made a few friends and so I knew the School was friendly.

When I first came, the room we did Drama in was too small, but that's changed now, so now there's not really anything I don't like about JLS.

We did cricket and football at my old school, but here you just get more chances to play sport. I play football in the B team. What I really liked was the Headmaster, Mr Riley, coming to watch us in some of the games - he made an effort to wake up on a Saturday morning to come and see us.

My favourite teacher is probably my Science teacher, Mr Rana. He doesn't mind you going to him at lunchtime if there's something you don't understand.

I'm involved in lots of things here: on Mondays I do gymnastics; on Tuesdays cricket training - I'm a right-arm fast bowler; on Wednesdays there's triple games; on Thursdays there's badminton and most of the time on Saturdays I have football.



RICHARD SYMONDS (NORTHWOOD PREPARATORY SCHOOL)



I arrived here in the third year and I'm in Year 13 now. A majority from my old school, Northwood Prep, tend to go to Merchant Taylors', but I immediately disregarded that as an option, so then it was between Berkhamsted and JLS. I chose here because of the whole sense of it feeling like a community: the deciding factor was literally just walking around the School; the vibe I got.

Over the years, like most students I have got myself into a sticky situation here and there, but the teachers have always helped. That's when you realise that there is something different about this School. Some other schools are so big that they seem like exam grades factories: they barely even remember your name, but JLS isn't like that.

I've found a passion for music and drama. I've been in five musicals (one for every year I've been here: I think I'm the only one in the School to have done that) as well as concerts and plays. Getting up on the stage and performing and being part of it is just incredible: that's what makes me get out of bed in the morning!

My A Levels are in Biology, History and Drama. My aim is to do history at university - I'm hoping to go to Birmingham - and then a year of theatre studies at somewhere like RADA. Of course, my dream is to end up in the West End.

I enjoy sport too. I'm part of the 2nd XI, playing right back. I sing in the School Choir. I have also recorded a couple of songs, which I'm hoping to get professionally produced. I'm playing Tony in *Copacabana*. I think the final product is staggering for a school: the set is incredible and the performance that Miss Gibbs gets from us is incredible too.

To be honest, I have never come across a member of staff here I don't get along with: the dedication that all the teachers have is amazing. I'm the Moore House Captain and Mr Brammer is the Head of House. He is one of those teachers whose enthusiasm rubs off on you. He is so driven: it's really exciting to be working with him.

EXPANDING HORIZONS FOR THE GIFTED & TALENTED



In early 2006, The Standard reported on a major expansion of the School's work with Gifted & Talented (G&T) boys. Two years on, we spoke again to Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator Paul Clarke to find out how the work has developed.

Today's G&T programme at JLS has an unashamedly cultural bias, with an emphasis on ancient history, languages (Ancient Greek and Mandarin) music, opera, drama and art.

"Most G&T boys are not just academic - they excel in one or more of the performing arts as well," says Mr Clarke. The cultural content fits well with the ethos of JLS, seen increasingly as a centre of excellence in the arts.

"What I enjoy about working with G&T boys is the recognition that the 'clever guys' need special treatment, because otherwise they can easily be bored in lessons. They are the ones who are very efficient at doing their homework, leaving them scope to take on extra challenges. It's not about doing more of the same; it's about things that expand their horizons." Recent G&T events include trips to the English National Opera, British Library, and Wigmore Hall. Sometimes G&T boys are taken off timetable for a day to investigate thinking skills or to use their talents collectively to engage in critical thinking.

Most boys at JLS are already of above-average ability and many are very committed to their studies. However, these two qualities on their own are not enough

to secure membership of the G&T group. In fact, whereas more than 100 boys at JLS are eligible to join the Government's Young, Gifted & Talented scheme, there are currently only around 60 boys in the School's G&T cohort. Mr Clarke explains why: "I believe a third element, creativity, is the key. Boys in the G&T cohort, whether chosen for their academic commitment or their talent in the performing arts, tend to possess a far greater than average creative element. These boys are often the 'ideas people'. They are apt to question rules and regulations and may sometimes even be a problem in the classroom!"

He stressed that G&T events are not exclusively for the G&T group: any boy is welcome to ask to come along.

The greatest benefit of the programme is often getting G&T boys together from different year groups, added Mr Clarke. "Then they can talk more freely and are free to be 'clever'. Some of their work in a number of thinktanks we have held this year could really push the School forward."

MEET A TEACHER - PAUL CLARKE



The John Lyon School's Gifted & Talented Co-ordinator, Paul Clarke, is one of the School's longest-serving teachers, having arrived in 1990, originally as Head of Computing.

Today, in addition to his work with the Gifted & Talented boys, he spends most of his working week teaching Mathematics.

"I see the School as being in a time of change at the moment. Certainly, it's bigger than it was when I arrived and there is more going on," says Mr Clarke, who lives in Harrow.

Before JLS, he taught at various schools in Ealing and was also a computer programmer for a couple of years.

He took his PGCE teaching qualification at Birmingham University and has an MSc in Computer Science from UCL. After growing up in Northampton, Mr Clarke took his first degree, in Music and Mathematics, at Newcastle. He sees no conflict between these two subjects: "For some people, maths is a science; for me, it feels like an art. I see pattern recognition as very much part of both music and maths."

In his spare time, Mr Clarke, a baritone, enjoys singing operettas - the next will be Gilbert & Sullivan's *Mikado* - and acting in plays. He has directed several plays at JLS in the past.

He also attends many concerts - particularly of chamber music - and operas, and is particularly keen on opera at both the Coliseum and Covent Garden. Often, this interest takes him further afield, to the opera festival at Verona, for example. He enjoys visits to countries with ancient sites, such as Egypt: "There is just something about Egyptian ruins," he explains. "I also enjoy the glitz of Las Vegas - for mathematical research purposes, of course!"

A member of MENSA himself, Mr Clarke has enjoyed taking on the role of Gifted & Talented Co-ordinator and developing this aspect of the School's work. "I find the role very rewarding, not least because it ties in with my own cultural interests," he concludes.



From p1: The Headmaster has longstanding connections with education in Uganda's second city, Jinja

LAYERS OF LOVE IN A

Musicals are now an eagerly anticipated highlight of spring at The John Lyon School, with Head of Sixth Form and drama specialist Deborah Gibbs drawing performances of the highest standards from her students.

This year's JLS production in Harrow School's professionally equipped Ryan Theatre is Barry Manilow's 1985 musical, *Copacabana*, which is based around his hit song of the same name. *Copacabana* is a treat for both ears and eyes, with the School investing heavily in the sets and costumes, while the whole production is underpinned by an impressive group of musicians led by the show's Musical Director, Jo Rowley Jones.

Here, Miss Gibbs explains why she chose *Copacabana* and relates a little of its musical-within-a-musical plot:

"I liked the spectacle of last year's production, 42nd Street, and Copacabana is another show that is visually exciting - some performers have up to 10 costume changes. It's set in both New York and Havana. There's a big stage crew, with plenty of boys needed to fly in the back cloths. I also like Latin music and Latin dance - and there are some Latin-style numbers in it."



LATIN SPECTACULAR

"I wanted to do Copacabana after I saw Barry Manilow perform some time ago. To be honest, we bought the tickets as a bit of a joke, but then realised how good he is - a real 'pro'. It's a fun show with some good principal roles that only became available for schools to perform in 2006.

"Christopher Stupack, Year 12, plays Stephen - a character who is writing a musical, itself called Copacabana, in which a bar pianist and aspiring songwriter, Tony (played by Upper Sixth-Former Richard Symonds) falls in love with would-be star Lola (Issy Tranter, of Heathfield School). To complicate matters, Stephen also falls in love with his own dramatic

creation: it takes the whole show for him to realise that his wife in fact has all that he loves in Lola. There's also a darker storyline, which centres on Rico, a suave gangster and all-round bad guy, who is played by Year 12 pupil Milan Shah.

"Another leading role goes to Ashwanth Ravindrarajah, also of Year 12, who is Sam, the owner of the Copacabana Club. The girls with big roles include Hannah Meyer, from Stanmore College, who takes the role of Gladys, and Sarah Peters, of the Royal Masonic School for Girls, who plays Conchita."





The JLS boys also used the tournament to raise money for charity: 75% of the total goes to CLIC Sargent to provide ongoing support to children with cancer and their families, while the remaining 25% goes to St. George's.

The coaching lessons were the first element in the five-year JFO programme. Over the next two years, the same group will learn football refereeing skills and referee some internal house matches at the School. By the end of Year 11, they should have gained the nationally recognised FA level 1 referees' qualification. They will then be able to referee weekend and holiday matches, including their School's own fixtures. In the Sixth Form, the group will receive intensive training towards the prestigious FA level 2 qualification. It is also planned to teach them cricket umpiring skills in the summer terms.

INNOVATIVE FOOTBALL PROGRAMME KICKS OFF BY HELPING OUR NEIGHBOURS

Twelve Year 9 pupils have been coaching 30 Year 5 & 6 pupils from Harrow's St. George's Primary School as part of the innovative JLS Junior Football Organiser (JFO) programme.

"We're really excited about this programme: we don't know of anything else quite like it," said PE teacher Arthur Brammer. "The aim is to get our keenest young sportsmen to take on real responsibility at an early age. Staging a tournament for St George's at our Sudbury Hill grounds was an excellent way for these boys to put new coaching skills learnt earlier this year into practice and at the same time help out one of our local primary schools."



NEW SCIENCE BLOCK TAKES SHAPE

Work is now well underway on the new £3 million science block adjoining the main building. The three-storey building is the first project in the ten-year JLS estates strategy. The Headmaster and the Bursar, Nicholas Marten, are pictured visiting the site.

As the finishing touches are put to the new building over the summer, refurbishment and alterations will be carried out inside the Main Building. A large temporary classroom block will also be removed during the summer holidays, freeing up additional playground space.

The Headmaster said: "This project is very exciting and will create state-of-the-art science and drama facilities for our boys - but in fact it's just the start. Eventually our estates strategy will give us all the facilities we need to create



excellence, particularly in music, art, the performing arts and sport."

The current project, including the work in the Main Building, will create:

- Eight new Science laboratories
- Three classrooms
- Two drama studios
- Three preparation rooms
- Four staff resource bases.



SPORTS ROUND-UP - KEEPING UP THE MOMENTUM

The John Lyon School's sporting renaissance of recent years continued with a term of achievement in various sports.

The 2nd XI had a successful season, whether judged by results or by the quality of football played, reports Ian Parker. The team reached the semi-final of the county cup for their age group for the first time in over 20 years, gaining victories over Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, Harrow College, Woodhouse College, Fortismere School and Halliford School. "This was an exceptional performance from a side that consisted of half the team from Year 11 (U16) playing against U19 opposition on many occasions," said Mr Parker.

The School's 1st XI had some good results, including beating St Dominic's 4-0 and reaching the semi-final of the Harrow Cup. The U13s continued their great season, while the U12s have shown lots of promise, especially in eight-a-side matches. Among U14 and U15 boys, both A and B sides have enjoyed a sprinkling of good results.

Individual soccer successes include Louis Lavers, who started Year 12 in September 2007 but then left because he was offered a scholarship as a full-time

youth team player at Watford FC. "We were sad to lose Louis, but it was obviously the right move for him take up such an opportunity: we wish him every success," said Director of Sport Spencer Leach.

This year's Easter sports tour is the School's fifth to South Africa - and the first to include soccer as well as cricket. JLS began visiting South Africa in 2000 and has since been there every two years. Forty boys from Years 9 and 10 booked their places, with each age group playing four football and four cricket fixtures. Some boys were due to play in both sports.

Another innovation this year is that the Sportsmen Dinner, for 35 of the senior sportsmen, was held at Lord's Cricket Ground, thanks to JLS Governor and former England bowler Angus Fraser.

The School enjoyed a notable triumph in the Year 11 Harrow badminton finals, overcoming all their opponents. There was also success for the Year 9 (U14) badminton squad, who not only won the borough title but then went to on come second in the regional finals held in Hounslow. "Coming second was quite an achievement, and the experience of being exposed to badminton of such a

high standard should motivate them further," said Mr Parker.

The JLS U13 basketball team saw off 11 other schools in a tournament held at Orley Farm Preparatory School, winning all three of their matches in the group stages before beating Westminster School in the semi-final and then defeating Belmont School, Mill Hill, 10-0 in the final. "The boys played exceptionally well, with Luke Roach-Christie, Rishi Shah and Ben Sweeney really excelling. The team took a little time to adapt to a full-size court, but their quick passing game proved too much for the opposition," added Mr Leach.

The Headmaster concluded: "It's been another good term of sport at The John Lyon School, adding to the momentum that has been built up in sport here in recent years. I'm particularly pleased to see our boys' achievements in some of the 'minor' sports, such as badminton and basketball."

Looking forward to the Summer Term, in both cricket and athletics there are high expectations following last year's excellent performances, with our U14, U15 and U18 cricket teams all being county champions in 2007.

MIND-STRETCHING SCIENCE



There have been a number of very good science lectures this term to a range of age groups, reports Director of Studies Graham Ryder.

Among the speakers was Dr Pradeep Luther, of Imperial College [pictured], who has now come to JLS for seven consecutive years to speak to the Upper Sixth. Dr Luther's son is an Old Lyonian, who is currently about to finish Medicine at UCL.

Another highlight was an unusual lecture to A Level Physics students on 'String Theory' by Professor

Brian Foster, Head of Physics at Oxford University, accompanied by Jack Liebeck playing violin. The talk took the audience beyond Albert Einstein the scientist and introduced Einstein the musician, with his love of playing the violin. The lecture covered the mind-stretching concept of a ten-dimensional universe and the possibility of discovering the secrets of the 'big bang'.

RUGGED BEAUTY



These beautiful photographs were taken by pupil Ilia Karmanov during the Year 12 Duke of Edinburgh Gold group's visit to Snowdonia.

Twenty-three boys took part in the three-day 'wild country' expedition.



JLS TEACHER JOINS SELECT FEW FOR MATHEMATICS CONGRESS IN MEXICO

A JLS Mathematic teacher has been awarded a bursary to attend a conference in Mexico this summer.

The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) awards just six such bursaries, so Damon Vosper Singleton will join a very select UK delegation to the International Congress on Mathematics Education (ICME) in Monterrey in July.

He said: "I see this as a wonderful opportunity for building upon the strong work already being done by the Mathematics department at JLS, as well as a chance to further my PhD studies." Mr Vosper Singleton will be attending workshops and seminars and writing a blog for the NCETM portal. The NCETM acts to promote the professional development of mathematics teachers across the UK.



The congress, which takes place every four years in different locations around the world, aims to show what is happening in Mathematics education worldwide. It covers research as well as teaching practices. There are expected to be between 3,000 and 4,000 professionals from 100 countries at the conference, including researchers, educators and teachers.

IN SCOTT'S FOOTSTEPS

Planning has begun for one of the most ambitious expeditions ever undertaken by a British school. In 2009/10 a party of JLS students will celebrate the centenary of Scott's famous Antarctic expedition by travelling to the continent themselves. One group will then trek in the Ellsworth

mountains, while the other JLS students will be flown in a light aircraft to the 89th degree and will then ski the final degree to the pole, each of them towing a 75kg sledge with essential supplies.

Preparation and training has already begun for this hugely demanding expedition. More details will be revealed in the summer.

FROM OUR MAN AT THE TOP

UCAS Chief Executive Anthony McClaran, who is an Old Lyonian, paid a visit to the School to give Sixth-Formers his expert advice on applying for university.

Mr McClaran, who was at JLS between 1969 and 1976, went through the application procedures and the role of UCAS, before taking part in a Question & Answer session.

"The visit was clearly of immense benefit to the boys," said the Headmaster. "The boys in the Lower Sixth are already thinking seriously about university, and the information they received was invaluable. The fact that Anthony was himself a pupil at the School added extra interest."

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is the organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education courses in the UK. It processes more than two million applications for full-time undergraduate courses every year.



NEWS IN BRIEF

ADMISSIONS DATES FOR 2008/09

The 2008 JLS Open Day will take place on Saturday 11 October. A number of Admissions Forums also run throughout the year: prospective parents should contact the Admissions Office for details. The closing dates for all applications, scholarship requests and bursary awards relating to 11+ and 13+ admission in September 2009 will be Friday 28 November 2008, while for 16+ admission the relevant date is 31 January 2009.

BIOLOGY OLYMPIAD HONOURS

Three Sixth-Formers from The John Lyon School have achieved honours in the Institute of Biology's annual British Biology Olympiad. Imran Keshani won a bronze award, while Andrew Hopkins and William Weston were both commended. The Olympiad, which is for post-16 students, is a competition designed to extend and reward the best all-round young biologists in the country

PFA ONLINE - COMING SOON

A new section for the Parents' and Friends' Association is shortly to be added to the JLS website - www.johnlyon.org. It will include details of key contacts, reports on activities and news of forthcoming events.

A MODERN APPROACH TO ANCIENT GREEK

A small group of Year 8 and 9 boys is learning Ancient Greek on Wednesday afternoons. Led by Paul Cowie, of the History department, the pupils build on the skills acquired in modern languages lessons.

The students rapidly mastered reading and writing the Greek alphabet (alphabet) - no mean feat, according to Mr Cowie - before progressing to a solid working knowledge of common Greek nouns and verbs. More advanced structures were introduced in the last few weeks of the Spring Term to give the students versatility in reading and writing. "The future of ancient Greek as an informal interest group at The John Lyon School seems assured," says Mr Cowie.