

Assembly 6 October 2008

Six weeks on

Today we are starting Week 6 of the new school year. Strangely, we have had only one normal 5 day school week since the beginning of the term, given the days off for public holidays, swimming carnivals and typhoons. This week will be no different as tomorrow is the Chung Yeung Festival.

After completing a little over one month of the new school year, it is timely that we spend a few moments reviewing what has been accomplished since the 1st of September. Well over 200 of you can say that you competed in the swimming carnival. A similar number of you have played in the football and basketball competitions. The new Prefect and SA committees have started exercising their responsibilities. Various musical groups have been rehearsing hard in preparation for the festivals that lie ahead. The Scouts and the Youth Red Cross have embarked on their busy schedules of activities and events that will stretch over the year ahead. So many activities; so many programmes; so much to do. From all the reports that I have received, the year has started smoothly with high levels of participation and few cases of inactivity.

The teachers have also displayed a similar level of activity. A group of teachers has been spending Wednesday afternoons preparing materials and resources for the new Liberal Studies course that all students will study in Form 4 (or SS1) starting next year. This preparation for the NSS will intensify as we get closer to September 2009.

Another group of teachers has been working on a new approach to Homework that will see the details uploaded onto the e-learning platform so that it can be easily accessed by you, and your parents, from home. This new system will soon be implemented in subjects taken in Forms 1-3. It will also be used to monitor who has not been doing their homework.

Some senior teachers have been involved in planning for the relocation of the St. Paul's College Primary School from its current location in Hills Road to a new site on the corner of Pokfulam Road and Victoria Road. Preparations for this move will take the next three years.

Over the past month, some Heads of Department have started planning the next round of Global Classroom tours. Already, we have decided to send a group of four students to Perth in Western Australia to participate in a leadership programme with another 76 boys from 20 schools around the world.

We are only six weeks into the new school year yet much has already been accomplished.

But what about in the Classroom? Can we say that the same commitment has been given to classwork and homework? My expectation is that you understand that classwork and homework are important and that you have given 100% effort in each lesson over the past

five weeks. I do wonder, however, if this has been the case. After only 20 normal school days, I am hearing from some teachers that particular Forms and Subject classes are not performing to their high expectations. This is disappointing.

On Friday afternoons the College Office provides me with a list of students who have been given Conduct Marks that week. That list is interesting and enlightening. I am pleased so tell you that an increasing number of you are being awarded Plus Conduct Marks for work in the classroom as well as for service and participation in a broad range of activities. The Minus Conduct Marks, however, paint a different picture. Although we have been back at school only five weeks, a few of you are displaying old characteristics; lack of concentration in the classroom, rude to fellow classmates; poor time management; and not handing in current homework or additional work that was set over the summer vacation.

It is disturbing that some names appear regularly on the Minus Conduct Marks list that I am given each Friday afternoon. You should be under no illusion that this is by any means acceptable and I can assure you that repeat offenders will be dealt with and that their parents will be called to a meeting with the Principal. You are expected to be studious, polite and focused at all times and this is a message that will be drilled home to those who fail to understand what is required of them.

I will say that my comments are directed at a very small number of students. For the vast majority of you, Minus Conduct Marks are a rarity. However, you might believe that you are always studious, polite and focused. My advice to you this morning is: 'do not become complacent'. The smallest of misdemeanours can, over time, lead to a more serious problem.

Being late to class is one example. The School bell rings for a reason. The bell or chime marks the end of a lesson, the end of recess, the end of lunch and the end of the school day. However, the bell does not relate only to an ending; it also heralds a beginning. It reminds us that the roll call is to commence; that lessons are about to start; that after-school activities will soon be underway. The bell is a warning of what is to come. None of us would ignore an alarm bell if it were to ring in our apartment or while we in a shopping centre. The same reasoning should apply to the school bell: it is a signal for students, teachers and janitors to move to their next activity.

This is particularly important at the start of the school day and after lunch. On occasions there is an air of casualness, a relaxed attitude and a lack of seriousness. I should not have to remind those of you in Form 7 and Form 5 that this year is of the utmost importance and that there is absolutely no time to relax. But the same ought to apply to the rest of the College.

Six weeks is not a great length of time, yet so much can be achieved in six weeks. The challenge for each of you is to review what you have accomplished over the past six weeks and set out what you wish to achieve over the next six weeks. I hope that by mid

November, six weeks from now, all of you will be working with even greater commitment and with a determination to do your very best in all classes and activities.

J.R. Kennard