

September 2008

Dear Parents,

I hope you and your daughters have had a very good summer break and that this school year will be a happy and successful one. Thank you to the staff who gave up time in the holidays to run the German Exchange and the Romania trip; the girls were all a credit to the school. Well done, too, to the girls who were part of the Young Pleasance production of "Upstart Crows" at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

We have a number of **new teaching staff** this term and I hope they will all enjoy being part of our JAGS community: Mr Arora (Head of German), Mrs Berrill (part-time Art & History of Art), Ms Bishop (part-time English, maternity cover), Mrs Branson (part-time French), Mrs Buckley (part-time History), Dr Edwards (Head of English), Mr Fouilleul (French), Miss Johnson (English) and Mr Kerr (Drama). Some existing staff have changed roles: Mrs Billington has become Director of Drama, Mr Davies is now full-time Physics, Mrs Mayo is now Head of Years 7-9 (with Miss Turner deputy for Years 8 & 9 and Miss Wynne-Jones deputy for Year 7), Mrs Oxbrow has become Assistant Head and Mrs Venn Communications Director.

The girls, teachers and you their parents are to be congratulated on their **public examination results**. At A level, 56 of our 98 Year 13 leavers gained at least 3 A grades at full A level. Sotiria Manou-Stathopolou achieved 6 A grades and Yosra Albeyatti, Katherine de Rome and Caroline McNaught achieved 5 A grades at full A level. 26 girls achieved 4 A grades at full A level, 93% of all our A level entries were awarded grade A or B, with 71% at A grade. Four girls were commended by the Examination Board for being in the top ten nationally for Advanced Extension Award in History and one for being in the top ten nationally for A level Religious Studies. All 30 JAGS girls offered places at Oxford and Cambridge in January 2008 met the conditions and are taking up their places (some were post-A level). At GCSE, 85 of our 105 Year 11 girls gained at least 8 A\* or A grades. Shivaangee Agrawal achieved 11 A\*, 8 girls gained 10 A\*, 18 girls achieved 9 A\* and 10 girls achieved 8 A\*. 90% of all our entries were graded A\*/A, with 58% at A\*, and 100% of our girls achieved the national benchmark of 5 A\*-C grades. Sixteen Year 11 girls took AS French, after gaining GCSE in Year 9, and they achieved 13 A grades and 3 B grades. JAGS joined the boycott of the August newspaper "League Tables" as we believe education is about a wealth of things: music, sport, art, community action, learning for its own sake over and above the syllabus; it is not just about examinations. League tables comparing selective and non-selective schools, boarding and day, small and large, and those doing different sorts of exams, and putting them in rank order are not very helpful. We are still awaiting a number of re-marks from the Examination Boards; several girls' grades have already been increased.

Many congratulations, too, to Sian Evans (now in Year 9) who was awarded a **Bronze Medal in the UK Junior Maths Olympiad**. Sian was one of 1200 pupils nationally who were invited to take this challenge after success in the UK Junior Maths Challenge and one of the few to achieve a medal. The knowledge and skills required are beyond the normal school syllabus and Sian's result is outstanding.

**Building Works:** The builders, schoolkeepers and technicians have been very busy over the summer and we have many newly refurbished areas of the school and upgraded ICT. Unfortunately, the renovation of the Sixth Form Centre has been delayed by necessity to deal properly with asbestos pipe lagging, buried deep within the ground floor walls. The remainder of the Centre will be open in a few weeks. The new classroom block and drama studio are having their equipment installed and will be in use by pupils from 15 September. The new kitchen and dining room are progressing well and will be completed later this term. We are all looking

forward to enjoying these excellent new facilities and the removal of the builders' compound from the school.

Much work has been done over the summer to develop our proposals for the new **James Allen's Community Music Centre (JACMC)** and I look forward to seeing many of you at our Information Evenings when you can tour our new buildings and hear more about the JACMC. These events will take place at 4.30-6.00 p.m. and 7.30-9.00 p.m. on 13, 15 & 16 October and 3 & 6 November. If you have misplaced your reply slip please ask your daughter to collect one from the School Office or contact the Development Office. The first major fund-raising event for the JACMC is the **JAGS Art Fair** (Saturday & Sunday 22-23 November) Over 30 local and JAGS-connected artists will have stalls selling their artworks, priced between £50 and £5,000 and paying a fixed percentage of their takings to JAGS. At the same time we will be holding an online auction of specially donated works by some very well-known artists. Buyers will be able to log on and bid for these latter works for several weeks before the Art Fair, to ensure that we maximise their value. If you know any artist who would like to take a stall or donate an artwork for auction, please contact Myles Rusak, development Coordinator, in our Development Office. Meanwhile, our staff are seeking sponsorship to learn a musical instrument from scratch and pass Grade 1 – look out for further details!

Our first event of the term is the **James Allen's Community Orchestra Concert**, featuring Mahler's 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony, at 7.30 p.m. on Saturday 13 September at St. Barnabas, followed by the **Foundation Schools' Orchestral Concert** at 7.00 p.m. on Sunday 21 September at Dulwich College. Our Year 11 will be holding a **Battle of the Bands** with Dulwich College here on Friday 26 September at 7.00 p.m. and on Friday 3 October at 7.00 p.m. the **South African Sparrow School** will be performing a short musical drama and **JAGS Gospel Choir** will sing in the Prissian Theatre. Tickets for this event are available for parents and girls to buy in school from Alison Venn. The **JPA (JAGS Parents' Association) AGM** will be at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 6 October, followed by drinks and canapes. All parents are welcome.

The Government is developing a new national database of all children, called **ContactPoint**; in fact, as a result of IT problems, its launch has been delayed and the statutory guidance associated with it has not yet been published. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) is providing guidance to all ISC schools as to what their legal obligations may be. Please rest assured that we will not be handing over sensitive personal data on our pupils. We will be legally obliged to give some basic details, but will keep all parents fully informed, once we know what our statutory obligations are.

As you will be only too aware, we are suffering a great deal of wet weather at the moment. All girls need a mackintosh or coat for the winter, they should not be arriving at school in only a jumper. Although they may be travelling by car, they have to walk from the car into school and around the school grounds during the day to reach the sports centre, music school and sixth form centre. Girls' uniform skirts should be the correct length, no more than 10cm above mid-knee, and they need proper shoes, not ballet pumps. We had two "near-misses" outside the school in the summer term, when girls ran across the road from between the parked coaches to meet their parents on the opposite side. Please encourage your daughter to use the official crossings; we have no desire for them to be knocked down by a vehicle. Please also remember to show consideration to our neighbours when you park your car near the school.

I hope your daughters and you will have a very good year. Thank you for all your support.

Yours sincerely,

