



# Dane Court Grammar School Newsletter



## December 2015

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN A CARING AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

THE HEADTEACHER WRITES...

### Hold the front page – for the champions!

Our First XI football team has been crowned champions of the East Kent Schools League, Premier Division. This is a fantastic achievement in a tough league with the added pressure of having to complete all of the games by the end of the autumn term. Having always been in contention, the boys nailed their prize the hard way this week at current title holders, Tunbridge

Wells Grammar School for Boys. An awful start saw Dane Court slip to a 0-3 deficit before the true character of the side showed itself and they sealed a stirring fight back in the final minute to bring a 4-3 victory. With other contenders losing their games, Dane Court Grammar School was left sitting pretty at the top of the table for a deserved league title. Mr Towe reminds us that the last time Dane Court won this title was in the inaugural year of the league, 1979.

*Ian Wallace*



### Changes at the top

Following recent developments within the Coastal Academies Trust, there have been some changes in management at Dane Court. The school is a founder member of The Coastal Academies Trust, a small group of schools dedicated to improving the quality of education across Thanet. Paul Luxmoore has become Executive Headteacher of the Coastal Academies Trust, and I have become Headteacher at Dane Court. I am honoured to have been appointed. This is a very fine school with a strong tradition of excellence, where staff and students enjoy their work and treat one another with respect. We face difficult times, in terms of school funding, but I am confident that we can work through them together. I am completely committed to leading Dane Court into an even more successful future, and I value the support given to us by parents and other members of the wider school community.



## Dane Court is in the Top 100!

Dane Court is celebrating its extraordinary rating in the Sunday Times 'Top 200 State Secondary Schools'. The table ranks schools on the percentage of students gaining A\* and A grades at GCSE and the percentage of students gaining A\* to B at A level or equivalent. Out of nearly 3,500 state secondary schools, Dane Court came 98<sup>th</sup> equal in the whole country, beating other Kent grammar schools, such as Invicta Grammar School (112<sup>th</sup>), Highworth Grammar School (151<sup>st</sup>), Maidstone Grammar School for Girls (159<sup>th</sup>), Barton Court (171<sup>st</sup>), Sir Roger Manwood's (174<sup>th</sup>), Maidstone Grammar School for Boys (180<sup>th</sup>), Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Boys (191<sup>st</sup>) and Dover Grammar School for Girls (194<sup>th</sup>). Simon Langton Girls came 228<sup>th</sup> and Chatham and Clarendon House came 292<sup>nd</sup>.

This phenomenal achievement is proof of the effectiveness of the International Baccalaureate. Dane Court students are competing with and out-performing students in some of the most selective schools in the UK. We offer the IB precisely because it gives our students a massive advantage. Young people from Thanet are easily outperforming those from towns like Tonbridge and this will, in turn, lead to offers from the better universities and better job opportunities in the future. Dane Court is punching well above its weight and that is an achievement of which the whole of Thanet should be proud.

There is increasing evidence that universities and employers prefer the IB to A levels because it offers a broader range of study and develops students who are more resilient and self-reliant.

*Paul Luxmoore*



## Sir Ian McKellen: inspirational visit

Dane Court Grammar School recently hosted a surprise visit by the acclaimed actor, film star and gay rights campaigner Sir Ian McKellen. Sir Ian came to Dane Court in his role as one of the founding members of the charity Stonewall. The charity campaigns for equality on behalf of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. One of Stonewall's principal aims is to educate as many young people as possible about the importance of equality. Dane Court has been working with Stonewall for the last two years, raising the profile of equality within the school.



Sir Ian McKellen captivated the whole school as he talked candidly about his life experiences. The students were then given a unique opportunity to ask Sir Ian questions. These questions showed impressive levels of the maturity and empathy that Dane Court is so keen to develop within its students. Before he finished, Sir Ian treated the students to an inspiring performance of part of one of William Shakespeare's lesser-known plays, 'Sir Thomas More', a hugely relevant piece with its references to the plight of refugee migrants.

A select group of students was able to spend time with Sir Ian to explain the progress Dane Court is making in addressing issues of equality. Sir Ian

was delighted with the progress that has already been made and was most impressed by the school's commitment to tackling prejudice of all types.

There was a fantastic buzz around the school from staff and students alike, with many comments being shared in school and online.



Eleven year old student Lauren Gutrige had a particularly special encounter with Sir Ian. Lauren, who has a hearing impairment, said 'When Sir Ian McKellen was talking about Stonewall I couldn't hear what he was saying, so I got my radio aid and asked him if I could put it round his neck. I was a bit anxious as to how he would react when I told him about my hearing disability. He was really understanding and whispered to me, "Don't worry what other people think." I said, "I won't." Next he told the whole school that having a hearing disability doesn't mean that you should be treated any differently. The whole school cheered and that made me feel ecstatic. Then he kissed me on top of my head and hugged me and told me that I was special and that really touched my heart.'

One member of staff remarked, 'What a wonderful experience it was to meet Sir Ian today. It is something the students will remember for ever – and the staff for that matter! I thought he spoke brilliantly and I was very moved by what he had to say; he was so relaxed and really connected with our students.'

*John Rye*

# Dane Court **BIG** choir

We have had a successful launch and an enjoyable first term. We already have a good number of singers including some parents, staff, pupils, ex-pupils and friends thereof, including five men! We have focussed on contemporary repertoire – Adele, Keane and The Beach Boys – and on making a good sound. We revealed ourselves to the world at St. Peter's Christmas Tree Festival in December but our plans in 2016 include a choral concert on Tuesday 22 March and a choir festival at the Winter Gardens in May. Our rehearsals resume after the holidays on Monday 4 January. If you have not sung with us this term and would like to join us, please come along 6.00pm in the music room H7.

*Patrick Dunn*

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## Creative Writing Competition

The English Department has been running its latest creative writing competition, with this term's contest open to all year groups. Entrants were given a maximum word count of 300 and a choice of three appropriately ambiguous titles. Any genre or style or writing was welcome, and the English Department was particularly impressed with the variety of texts produced by pupils, ranging from skilfully crafted poetry to persuasive pieces on social issues. Judging is still ongoing, but already the quality of entries looks impressively high. Prizes will be awarded to winners before Christmas.

*Ben Forward*

## The Poetry Trials

Dane Court's talented poets have been making an extremely positive impression in The Poetry Trials, a nationwide search for the next generation of poets and writers.

Entries by twelve pupils from Dane Court have been selected for publication in an anthology published by an organisation named Young Writers, and a copy of the book will be sent to the school in due course. That so many of our pupils have been chosen is a tribute to the creativity and flair possessed by many of our young writers at the school. Once the book is published, an overall winning school will be selected, while the winning individuals will be decided by a public vote. The talented pupils who can look forward to seeing their works in print are Sam Williams, Siobhan Corbey Tobin, Frank Perkins, Lily Finch, Tom Askin, Mia Jones, Amber Bragg, Jacob Allan, Stan Wood, Chloe Strutt, Helen Sunny and Jessie Cherry. Congratulations to all of them!

*Lucy Holmes*

## House Captains 2015

Having reached the end of the house year, now is a good opportunity to reflect. The wide range of events offered has ensured a large range of pupils participating. From the creative 'black bag fashion' to the active dodge ball, sports day to the drama



and music cups it has been great to see a sizeable turnout coupled with fantastic commitment by all and we as house captains are very grateful. As our time as leaders comes to an end, we will hand the baton over to the new, eager leaders of tomorrow, having gained new skills, made new friends and having embraced an important role in the community here at Dane Court. We hope that they will find the crucial role as rewarding as we have.

*Ben Parsons, Tallinn House Captain*

## Table Tennis

The three Dane Court teams taking part in the Kent Schools Table Tennis Tournament at the Medway Sports Centre all returned home with medals which represented the school's best ever performance at this prestigious event.

The under-16 girls' team received a blow before setting off with the news that Tayla Bayley was unwell and could not play but all four players, Catherine Banks, Annabel Cole, Gracie Phillips and Angel Foster, rose to the occasion. Despite being younger than several of their opponents, they drew 4-4 with a strong Highworth Grammar School A team from Ashford and then beat the Highworth B team 6-2. Dane Court squeezed home by a mere two points to become gold medal winners and county champions again after last year's success as under-13s.

The under-16 Boys team of Harry Brown, Ed Baker, Ethan Bexley and Tom Read won their two team group with a 6-2 victory over the Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells, to qualify for the three team final stage where unfortunately both Tunbridge Wells Boys Grammar School and the Judd School, Tonbridge proved too strong, leaving Dane Court as the bronze medal winners.

Last but not least, the under-13 boys' team performed above all expectations to beat both Whitstable Community College and Oakwood Park Grammar School to win their group before defeating the Howard School in the next round 5-3 margin after being 3-1 down after the first four games. This took the team into a three-way final where they emerged with the bronze medal. This was a fantastic performance from Will Barker, Len Edwards, Louis Lines and Nikos Kouthain-Whittaker to come third in a county-wide tournament where once again Dane Court did Thanet and East Kent proud against the might of West Kent in Boys School Table Tennis.

Now the Dane Court under-16 girls' team will represent Kent next January in the zonal finals scheduled to be played in London.

*Rob Pugh*

## Autumn Term Sports Report

The major achievement so far in this typically busy term is the U14 (year 9) boys' rugby team reaching their first Kent Cup Final for Developing Rugby Schools. After four challenging rounds against strong opposition we met Wilmington Grammar from Dartford in the final, played at Gravesend Rugby Club. This large all boys grammar school has concentrated upon rugby in recent years and were to prove much better than us on the night. However, as always, our boys gave everything in terms of effort and commitment to the team and were not lacking in spirit in front of a large supportive crowd. We thank them all for their continued enthusiasm and willingness to improve and congratulate them on this achievement.

Brief highlights of other sports are as follows:

### *District Cross Country Championships*

- Boys – Winners – years 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and sixth form
- Girls – Winners – year 7 and sixth form

### *Futsal (Indoor Football) Thanet and Dover District Championship*

- Boys – year 7 winners, year 11 winners, year 9 runners up
- Girls – year 7 winners, year 9 winners, year 11 winners

### *Badminton Thanet and Dover District Championships*

- Girls – U14 Winners, U16 Winners

### *Table Tennis Kent Team Championships*

- Girls U16 Gold Medal
- Boys U16 Bronze Medal
- Boys U13 Bronze Medal

We are pleased and proud of the efforts of all our students, whether successful or not, but it is right that we celebrate the successes mentioned here. We look forward to more as we progress through the school year.

## Fund raising for the school

We have joined **Easyfundraising**, which is a web site that you go through when shopping online and retailers then donate a percentage of what you have spent back to the school.

There are thousands of retailers signed up to it and it won't cost you anything extra.

You can use it for travel, insurance, Ebay, Amazon, M&S, Next etc etc.

Please take a look, using the attached link.

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/danecourtgrammar/>

## Keep taking the Tablets

Dane Court's Digital Leaders held an event in the theatre to battle it out to see which tablet was the best out of the iPads, Hudl 2 or Amazon Fire. In the best tradition of a *Which?* report, scores were allocated for speed and precision as various tasks were given such as taking a picture, emailing an attachment, turning on the device from cold and how many apps could be toggled at one time.

Obviously the outcome depended upon the user, but soon it became very obvious that iPads were in the lead but only just! If you took out the score for the picture, then the Hudl or the Amazon Fire would more than hold their own with the iPad 2. So was it the Goliath success of style and substance over the lowly David under £100 or did the underdog have an under-estimated success? The answer was a surprising round of applause for the sub-£100 tablets whose substance was almost a match for the style of the mighty iPad Mini at almost three times the price.

*Carol Weale*

## Suggested website to support parents

The free support site, [Parent Info](#), has advice for parents covering a wide range of areas from e-safety to eating disorders, from sexting to extremism – in fact, all the main issues affecting young people both online and offline. It is updated regularly with contributions from experts in their field.

*Carol Weale*

## Open All Hours?

I would like to remind all parents and guardians that the normal school hours are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Outside these times we cannot offer to supervise children. Any child staying on at school after 4:30 pm should do so only for a specific activity by arrangement with a teacher. Unless they are participating in organised evening events, all students must leave the school site by 6:00 pm. A warning signal on the Tannoy is sounded at 5:45 pm to advise students and staff to log off their computers.

*Andrew Fowler*

## Welcome!

We were very pleased to welcome a number of new members of staff this year. Mrs Radley joined us to teach English and drama and Mrs Valverde-Bautista arrived as Head of Spanish. To cover teachers who are on maternity leave, Mrs Heard is teaching biology and Dr Foley has returned to teach chemistry. Mr Curry is teaching mathematics and physics. Mr Towe and Mrs Benfield, who is also our school counsellor, have joined our team of part-time cover supervisors.

## Happy Christmas!

On behalf of all the teaching and support staff at Dane Court, I wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

