Message from the Head

Like many other great religions and secular philosophies, the Christian season of Easter celebrates the triumph of optimism and hope over pessimism and despair. The physicist, Stephen Hawking, who died this March, powerfully embodied such optimism and hope.

Hawking was Professor of Mathematics, a position previously held by Sir Isaac Newton, at Cambridge University for thirty years. Hawking was a celebrated academic, an expert on black holes and famous for popular science books such as ‘A Brief History of Time.’ He also suffered from a form of motor neurone disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, which progressed over the years and left him almost entirely paralysed.

As the Headteacher of Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School, the most inspiring thing about Stephen Hawking is his humanity and mind-set: “Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder what makes the universe exist. Be curious, and however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do, and succeed at. It matters that you don’t just give up.

As a St Albane grammar school student, Hawking was regarded as an ‘ordinary student’, not a ‘top academic.’ However, in fact he went on to outperform his contemporaries academically, and perhaps as a human being too. For anyone preparing for life’s challenges, whether health-related or public examinations, the tale of Stephen Hawking is a salutary reminder that with the right mind-set, ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

Reflecting on a busy Lent Term, I am grateful to our students and staff for their hard work, resilience and positive energy.

2018 has already brought us many wonderful highlights. There has been a very purposeful and positive working atmosphere across the school, which is reflected in this colour newsletter. Here, you can read about our strong school focus on inspiration and excellence through academic competitions (page 2-3), academic trips and curriculum innovation (page 4-5). There is also much to praise this term in terms of the breath-taking array of life-enhancing opportunities we offer our students from music (page 6) to drama (page 10) to international adventures (page 7, 14-15) to sports (page 12-15). None of this would happen without the exceptional support of our staff and parents. Above all, our school is a community. I am sure you will be delighted to read about the work being done to support our young people’s moral development (page 11) and the charitable and voluntary work undertaken by our students (page 11).

If you have not done so already, do come and support our Parent Association events (page 16). Key date for your diaries: Vesey Summer Ball, Friday 13 July.

Being a community for nearly 500 years gives our School a broad vision. This term it has been a privilege to mark the inspirational achievements, a hundred years ago, of Flight Lieutenant Alan Jerrard. We marked this as a School in a very special way on Friday 16 March, thanks to the support of our Chair of Governors, Dr John Craggs DL. I hope you enjoy reading all about our Jerrard 100 commemorations. (Pages 8-9)

In our community, student leadership is key. I must pay tribute here to William Hennessy and Sophie Lloyd who have been exceptional in their role as School Captain in the 2017-18 academic year. I am delighted that they have written about some of their reflections on their time in office in this newsletter.

Finally, I must let you that know we have two members of staff leaving this Easter: Mr David Devey (Hockey Coach) and Mrs Jugbir Kular (Economics Maternity Cover). They have both done a brilliant job and we thank them and wish them well for the future.

Yours, with optimism and hope for another extraordinary term,

Dominic Robson
Headteacher

Our year as School Captain

Will Hennessy

My time as school captain has been one of the highlights of my Vesey career. It has been a role that I have held with pride, honour and humility. As a Veseyan, I have developed an immense sense of school pride, and I have frequently taken pleasure in representing the school at formal events, as well as around school. I have been fortunate enough, alongside Sophie, to meet many of the wonderful Old Veseyans, with whom we share an overwhelming sense of gratitude towards BVGS, and an appreciation of all that the school has done for us.

The role hasn’t been easy, in fact, it has often been very stressful, and it has tested my time management, leadership and communication skills immensely. However the challenge has allowed me to develop myself as a person, and will stand me in good stead as I aim to become a Doctor. Overall, I have enjoyed the challenge, and I have relished the opportunity to better myself, to push myself out of my comfort zone, and to represent Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School as a proud ambassador.

Sophie Lloyd

As the first year to have two School Captains, Will and I have embraced many opportunities to be involved within school life and leadership.

In particular, speaking at events such as Speech Day, as well as our involvement in the launch of the Vesey 2027 projects have been highlights of our term.

I have enjoyed meeting younger students and Old Veseyans, and learning more about the history and future of our school.

It has been an exciting year for Bishop Vesey’s and I am very proud to have been School Captain at a time of such change. I wish the new captains, Lucy and Shaol as well as the rest of the school, the best for the years to come.
Sixteen Year 10 boys took part in this year’s Birmingham University’s Big Biology Quiz.

They enjoyed answering some tricky questions and attended a lecture on the wonderful world and diversity of microorganisms from Dr Andrew Lovering, (above) Birmingham University, Senior Lecturer, School of Biosciences. 430 students took part from across the city. A big congratulations must go to Sanan Hashmi, Arsh Iqbal, Jack Lees and Omar Syed who finished 3rd overall in the quiz.

Thank you to all the boys who took part.

Mr Graham, Biology Department


If your son or daughter loves Chemistry and would like to find out more about career opportunities in Chemistry visit the Royal Society of Chemistry’s website: http://www.rsc.org/careers/future/student-home-page

British Physics Olympiad

Following the results from the British Physics Olympiad in November, congratulations go to Nickeal Sidhu and Daniel McRae who won silver awards (finishing in the top 350 students in the country) whilst Tom Edwards won gold and finished in the top 50!

Tom now goes onto round two of the competition. All three have achieved the highest ever positions the school has received in the competition.

Well done to all!

Royal Society of Chemistry's UK Olympiad 2018

On Thursday 1 February 2018, all students in Years 9 and 10 took part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge. Over 250,000 students from more than 3,000 schools across the UK participated. Students had 60 minutes to answer 25 varied multiple-choice mathematical problems. The top-scoring 40% of participants were awarded bronze, silver and gold certificates in the ratio 3:2:1. Of all the students from BVGS, 23 achieved a gold certificate, putting them in the top 7% of participants in the whole of the UK. There were also 50 students who achieved a silver award, and 65 students who achieved a bronze award. We also had 24 students qualify for follow-up rounds, and we eagerly await the results of these. A special mention must go to Ruben Vorster in Year 9 who achieved the best result in the school, and was the only student to qualify for the Intermediate Mathematical Olympiad. Only 1,500 students out of the 250,000 who took part are invited to take part in this, putting him in the top 0.6% of participants! I would also like to congratulate Dan Jones for achieving the best score in Year 10. Well done to everyone who took part, and particularly those students who won a certificate. Thank you Mr Beasley, Second in Mathematics, for organising this opportunity.

House Maths

Students in years 7, 8, 9 and 10 took part in our annual Maths House Competition. The competitions took place over three weeks with teams of four from each form representing their house. In year 7, there was a very close battle for first place, with 7G and 7W tied for the lead going into the final round. In the final round it was 7G who came out on top, finishing on 74 points, with 7W close behind in second place on 68 points. In year 8 there was an even closer battle between 8B and 8P, with 8B managing to claw back an 11-point deficit in the final round to win by just 1 point! In year 9, it was closer still, with 9P and 9R finishing tied for first place on 107 points. In year 10, 10W came first or joint first in every round, finishing first overall with 99 points, and 11 points ahead of 10B in second place. Mr Beasley would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to everyone who took part, and an even bigger thank you to the Sixth Form Officers who gave up their time to help run the competition.
English Superstars

Every term the English Department choose their superstars from Year 7 and 8 and invite them to a special lunch where they receive a book as a prize for their commendable approach to learning in English. This Lent term’s winners were: 7G - George Howell, Aditya Mutukumar, 7R - Christian Hill, Rohan Aoulick, 7W - Coben Morgan, Amar Nahal, 7B - Hadi Rana, Thomas Hanlon, 7P - Toby Varley, Max Dalton, 8P – Daniel Bartlett, James Padley, 8W - Thomas Lam, Lucas Nix, 8R - Daniel George, Rajveer Chahan, 8B - Cian Burke, Joe Cronin, 8G - Joel Archibald-Eades. Well done all. Thank you to Mrs Lynch, Second in English, for organising this.

Robert Browning gets a rap 'makeover'

Y10 Omar Ahmed, Freddie Coleman, Kairo Dodd, Callum Foster, William Cowley and Jack Glover wrote and performed this rap inspired by Browning’s work. Well done boys.

Celebrating Robert Burns
(with Mr Byrne)

Well done to 8 Blue for excellent presentations on the life and poetry of Robert Burns in Big Write/Read today. A particular vote of thanks to Cian Burke and Dev Kumar for delicious haggis and curry respectively!

French - La semaine de franchophonie
17 - 25 Mars 2018

French speakers all around the world celebrate their shared language and culture during this period. The Language Department are encouraging students to join in the celebrations by using French around school. Well done to this year’s winner, Aditya Muthukumar in 7G, for his outstanding use of French.

Youth Speaks 2018

Well done to our Senior and Intermediate teams representing Sutton Coldfield in the ‘Youth Speaks’ regional public speaking competition at the Arden Hotel, Solihull this March.

The Senior Team, Joseph Edwards, Anmol Goel and Oksana Zimini, spoke on the theme of ‘The future of labour in the modern world’. (Well done also to Alisdair Bell, Christian White and Ollie Nash without whom the Senior Team would not passed through the local qualifying round).

Meanwhile, our Intermediate Team of Matthew Rusling, Aban Hashmi, Divyansh Kumar spoke about ‘HS2’.

We received a very nice letter from John Baden from Wylde Green Rotary about their performance: “I would just like to record how proud you should be of the two Bishop Vesey Teams, they were both a credit to the school. The standard of presentations on the day were the highest I can remember and I am delighted to advise that the Intermediate Team came 3rd equal. Although the Senior Team were not placed, their presentation was extremely good. How the judges were able to choose between the different schools I don’t know, because it really was a very close competition. Please pass on the thanks from the Rotary Club of Wylde Green to all the pupils for the time and hard work they put in.”

KS3 and 4 Debating against KE Aston

Mr Byrne organised an excellent competition one evening in Old Big School with our friends from KE Aston. We are very grateful to the former Head of English at Aston acting as adjudicator. Honours were even with KS3 victorious and KS4 narrowly defeated. Well done to all our debaters.
Cambridge University Union
Debating Competition

A big well done to Lower Sixth gentlemen Ali Lakhanpal (who founded and chairs our very popular and thriving Sixth Form student debating society) and Angus Carter for their very fine performance in the highly competitive Cambridge University Union debating competition at Solihull School. Both boys received excellent feedback for their impressive verbal jousting. Well done to Ali and Angus.

Articulation

On Wednesday 28 February Aimee Shorthouse represented BVGS at ARTiculation. This is the third consecutive year that the Art Department has entered students for this event, with Evie Shipp successfully making it through to the Finals at Cambridge University in 2017. The event invites students to select a piece of artwork to talk about. This year Aimee focused on a piece called Terpsichore, by artist Maud Salter. She used this as a platform to discuss the under representation of black people in Art throughout history. Amiee worked incredibly hard on both the content and delivery of her presentation on the run up to the event, held this year, at the Barber Institute of Fine Art, Birmingham University. On the day itself, Aimee competed against a number of students from schools across the region, with the majority choosing to focus on Portraiture. Unfortunately, despite Aimee’s fantastic performance on the day, she did not place in the judges top three. Nevertheless, a worthy winner in our minds, Aimee was gracious in defeat and felt that she had gained an awful lot from the experience.

Mrs Rowlands

Liverpool Art Trip

Mrs Heer and Mrs Rowlands took all students completing GCSE and A Level Art courses to Galleries in Liverpool on Wednesday the 7 February 2018. We spent the morning in Liverpool Tate, where students received a guided talk as well as the opportunity to experience a wide range of Modern and Contemporary Art. Following this students had some time to visit the Walker Gallery, here they visited exhibits ranging from traditional art work from many great masters of the earlier centuries. Students were encouraged to consider artwork which influenced their ideas, completing two studies to support their coursework and grade. Students found they were able to appreciate Abstract Art so much more by understand the work in the Tate, they were able to reflect on purpose and movements which influenced artists to question what they did and then produced. Students were even able to use this knowledge to become more articulate about their creative visions. The day was really valuable, a great experience for students and staff.

Mrs Heer

Year 11 Trip to Oxford University

On 29 March, a group from Year 11 enjoyed a trip to Oxford University. We were lucky to have the services of one of our current Old Veseyan undergraduates, Oliver Ayto, who is currently reading Economics and Management at Worcester College. Oliver gave the boys an entertaining and inspiring tour. We even visited a very clean real-life student kitchen! (Mrs Ayto would have been proud). Oliver was very keen to point out throughout our visit that studying at Oxford University was for students from all backgrounds and he outlined the pastoral and financial support that are available. He also sold the virtues of Worcester College, which along with an excellent academic reputation and geographical location (right next to the bus station in central Oxford) has excellent sporting, musical and drama facilities. We enjoyed lunch at ‘Noodle Nation’ on Gloucester Green and visited the Oxford Union, the Bodleian, Radcliffe Camera and Christ Church Meadow before the rain descended. I was very pleased by the excellent way in which Year 11 got the most out of the trip by asking Oliver intelligent and searching questions. Well done boys.

Madeleine Muir U6th
Fertile Ground Exhibition at Argentea Gallery

Following a successful school at this Gallery, Madeleine was selected by the gallery owner to exhibit again alongside a postgraduate contemporary photographer. Madeleine photographs filled a whole floor of the Gallery, displays her responses to body form, movement and identity. Her work received a really positive and enlightening critic by an art blogger, Ruth Millington, and impressed many who visited the show.
Mandarin Excellence Programme @BVGS1527
from September 2018

We are delighted to announce that from September 2018, Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School will be participating in the highly prestigious Mandarin Excellence Programme. The nationwide programme offers students an unprecedented opportunity in terms of language provision and aims to see at least 5,000 school pupils in England on track towards fluency in Mandarin Chinese by 2020.

In being the most widely spoken language in the world, Mandarin Chinese is recognised as one of the most important languages for the UK’s future. The programme therefore provides a fantastic opportunity for students to acquire vital language skills at an early stage – something essential for work and for life in an increasingly connected world.

All Year 7 will take two hours of ‘taster’ Mandarin a week (alongside two hours of French a week) from September 2018. Most students will ‘drop’ Mandarin at the end of Year 7 and take up Spanish. However, 25-30 boys from Year 7 will be selected to take part in the Mandarin Excellence Programme from the end of the Michaelmas Term of Year 7. These students will be expected to take Mandarin in Year 8 and beyond.

Students on the Mandarin Excellence programme will study across an academic year, the equivalent of eight hours of Mandarin Chinese every week – including four hours of classroom taught lessons. We hope to run a two week trip to China at the end of Year 8, in 2020, for these students. We will be at the forefront of delivering the programme – with support from the University College of London Institute of Education and the British Council. We will also be working in partnership on this exciting project with the Mandarin department at Queen Mary’s Grammar School in Walsall.

China Exchange 2019

Whilst it may seem a long way ahead, we are seeking expressions of interest at this early stage to help with the planning and preparation for our China Exchange 2019. This is likely to be in a window somewhere between 23 June to 14 July 2019 when summer examinations have been completed. This exchange will be open for our current Years 9-12 (10-13 in 2018/19). Students will enjoy a unique opportunity to integrate into everyday life in China, as they will be staying with host families and will be attending lessons at the No.4 Middle School. There will also be opportunities for local excursions to places of cultural interest such as local temples, markets, woodlands and villages. As well as the opportunity to attend regular lessons, there will be a programme of activities within school focused on bringing Chinese and English students together on joint projects involving music, art, sports and drama. English students will be able to learn some spoken and written Mandarin, as well as helping Chinese students improve their English. Due to the likely popularity of the exchange, places will be allocated firstly to students hosting Chinese exchange students this summer, and then via a ‘lottery’ system in which names will be drawn at random, so as to ensure fairness. Only students in Years 9 to 12 (10-13 in 2018/19) may apply, as the students in No.4 Middle School are all from this age group. We will be matching students with host families. We are limiting the total number of places available to 25. More information on the exchange will be available in due course. If you require any further information, please contact Mr Buxton, Director of Music, a.buxton@bishoveseyse.bham.sch.uk

German Exchange

Our German exchange took place for the 21st time this year. 26 German pupils, accompanied by Herrn Kaleschke and Frau Jahreis, enjoyed a week with their English counterparts. Highlights of their visit included meeting the Lord mayor, a day in London and a joint visit to freezing Alton Towers. Fun was had by all and we are looking forward to the return visit from 12 to 20 May.

Bromsgrove Young Musicians Platform Competition

The final of the 2018 Bromsgrove Young Musicians’ Platform was held in the magnificent Routh Concert Hall at Bromsgrove School on Saturday, 24 February. The three adjudicators were Malcolm Green (Chairman of Adjudicators), Cathy Benson and Jamie Phillips. The competitors were divided into two sections: 9 to 13 years old, and 14 to 17 years old. The prize winners were as follows: Junior section: 1st Prize Ziying He (piano); 2nd Prize Rebecca Bazlov (piano) Senior section: 1st Prize Naomi Bazlov (piano); 2nd Prize Angus Carter (trumpet)

A fine effort from Lower Sixth musical superstar, Angus Carter. Well done Angus!
Skoove January 2018

From January, Year 8 have been introduced by Mr Buxton, Director of Music, to Skoove. Skoove is an online piano learning platform with carefully constructed courses to help learners learn classical and contemporary music. We are currently the only school in the UK to be leading the way with this cutting-edge software. Ross Dryhurst below is showing his Skoove skills.

Music for Youth

On Tuesday, 6 March, two of our ensembles attended the Music for Youth Festival at the CBSO Centre. The Funky Bishops played ‘La Bamba’ (Mexican traditional) and ‘The Simpsons’ (Elfman) and the Clarinet Ensemble played Canon (Pachelbel) and The Sorcerer’s Apprentice (Rabin). It is hoped that they will be invited to the next stage of the National Festival. There were amazing solos from Jack O'Hara, David Thomas, Freddie Coleman, Angus Carter and Joel Stainthorpe. Everyone played with confidence and represented our school amazingly. Thank you to Mr and Mrs Buxton for organising and giving us this experience. By Max Dalton 7P.

CBSO visit - 30 January 2018

On 29 January, 154 Year 7s enjoyed a trip to the acoustically outstanding Symphony Hall to listen to the world-class City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) perform ‘A brief history of Music’. Our students were treated to ‘Winter’ from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, Stravinsky’s angular ballet ‘The Rite of Spring’ and Bingham’s ‘Four Minute Mile played’ in under three and a half minutes!

Kieran Thiarya

Kieran Thiarya has been awarded a 50% $2000 scholarship for his piano playing to attend the Castle Academy. The Castle Academy is in Hungary and organised by Adam Gyorgy who visited us early in the year. Kieran will hopefully spend 10 days in the Hungarian countryside in Pomaz in the heart of the Pilis Mountains surrounded by renowned professors and the inherent inspiration of nature. The academy is comprised of master classes, lectures from piano technique to stage fright, evaluating each individual’s strengths and weaknesses, audiovisual workshops about great artists, about improvisation, visiting sound recording studios (with the option to record) and more

Contributing to the Birmingham-wide Music Community

This academic year, BVGS musicians have been contributing to a number of cross-Birmingham ensembles: Birmingham Schools Recorder Sinfonia, Birmingham Schools Training Wind Orchestra, Birmingham Schools Concert Band and the Birmingham Schools Brass Band. Well done all!

Project Re-Mix

Congratulations to James Foxall and Nick Ward, who both took part in the Birmingham-wide Project Re-mix orchestra playing ‘Music inspired by David Bowie’ at Symphony Hall this March. They both had the opportunity to be mentored by a team of CBSO musicians.
Senior Soloists' 13 March 2018

What a brilliantly varied and passionate senior soloist concert programme! All performers lived up to the maxim of Ludwig Van Beethoven: “To play a wrong note is insignificant, to play without passion is inexcusable”.

Moonlight Sonata (Beethoven) – Ned Walklett (piano)
Idyll (Egk) – Jack O’Hara (trumpet)
And I am telling you (Kriegen) – Andre Bean (voice)
Sonata in E minor (Morcello) – Robin Maes-Prior (cello)
Ragtime dance (Joplin) – Thomas Shepherd (percussion)
Waves (Lewis) – Freddie Goodram (voice)
Spanish love songs (Anon) – James Rogers (saxophone)
Zen Zen Zenze (Radwimps) – Lawrence Li (piano)
Prince of Denmark’s March (Clarke) – Benedic Lawrence-Pietroni (trumpet)
On my own (Schonberg) – Lucy Windsor (voice)
Maple Leaf Rag (Joplin) – Ben Thompson (piano)
I dreamed a dream (Schonberg) – Alison Hewitt (voice)
Sonata in E (Beethoven) – Nickeal Sidhu (piano)
As long as he needs me (Bart) – Kiara Sagoo (voice)
Sonata in E (Handel) – David Howe (violin)
Concerto (Bohme) – Angus Carter (trumpet)
The Swan (Saint Saëns) – Alex Poniatowska (cello)
Firework (Perry) – Rhiannon Richards-Hargreaves (voice) and Jaan Johal (piano)
Need I remind you? (Double & Double) – Omar Takruri (percussion)
I’m not the only one (Smith) – Sophie Lloyd (voice)
Victorian Kitchen Garden Suite (Read) – Joseph Hughes (clarinet)
Bridge over troubled water (Simon & Garfunkel) – Ali Lakhanpal (cello)
Sonata (Poulen) – Lauren Tennant (flute)
Chanson Napoleonite (Tchaikovsky) – Jack O’Hara (trumpet)
Sober (Mahalia) – Jade Mahon (voice)
Passion fruit samba (Nightingale) – Madonna Jonhera (euphonium)
Evelglow (Coldplay) – Jaan Johal (piano) and Ben Thompson (voice)
Farewell (Kamel) – John Kamel (piano)

Twenty eight pieces on a range of instruments and two great compères from Year 10, Sam Gill and Matthew Whitehouse. Well done everyone! Thank you Mr Buxton and our outstanding teachers from Services for Education.

On 15 February 44 students and 5 staff embarked upon a cross-continent adventure to the French Canadian region of Québec. Upon our arrival to Montreal Airport, the staff and crew from Air Canada highly commended the students on their behaviour and politeness during the 7-hour flight. Off to a good start! A short transfer later, we arrived at the foot of a snowy Mont Sainte Anne just north of Quebec City. The 4-star accommodation complete with games rooms, swimming pools and free WIFI was greatly received (and not to mention the fabulous buffet breakfasts). Early to bed, early to rise... our first morning consisted of ski fit and we hit the slopes for our first 6 hours of skiing. Our 4 instructors took great care of us throughout the week and many laughs and jokes were had along the way. On Saturday, the students experienced some night skiing which they found thoroughly enjoyable and something they will never forget. Sunday- a day of rest, the group ventured to the Old Town of Québec (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) where we enjoyed a race down a 140 year old wooden toboggan run followed by a welcomed hot chocolate in the minus temperatures. After an hour exploring the culture and stocking up on ‘McDonalds’, the students arrived back laden with Maple Syrup, souvenirs and ice-hockey memorabilia. Next stop was the winter park for an evening of tubing, snow slides and general mayhem. Easily a highlight of everyone’s trip! It was an absolute joy to see the students’ (and staffs’) skiing abilities develop over the course of the week. We finished our trip with an awards night where students were presented with certificates, medals and trophies. An unforgettable experience and a trip of a lifetime for many, the students of BVGS did the School proud. A special thanks to our Moose of the day, Instructor Monna, Mr Yates’ sense of direction and the community of Mont Sainte Anne. This trip would not be possible without the generosity of parents/carers and the staff (Miss Egan, Mr Bousfield, Mr Greenwood, Mr Dobson and Mr Yates) who accompanied the students during their half term holiday. A massive MERCI to you all. À la prochaine fois!

West Midlands SING!
With Music Mark West
Midlands 12 February 2018

SING! is a biennial singing showcase comprised of nominated schools and choirs from across the midlands region which represent 14 Music Services, leaders of the 13 Music Education Hubs in the West Midlands. Many thanks to all the BVGS boys singing in this prestigious event at Symphony Hall. Here below are just a few of our participants on this evening.
Jerrard 100

A report by Nick Hammond, OVA

On approaching the School Main Entrance having been efficiently marshalled into parking spaces behind the new STEM Block guests were greeted by a ‘guard of honour’ on the main school steps who stood to attention as one climbed the steps. A delightful if unexpected experience! We were then guided by senior students along top corridor to assemble in Old Big School from 1.00 p.m. where a fine buffet lunch was laid out. Soft drinks, tea and coffee were graciously served by senior students.

Distinguished guests attending included Mr Tom Jerrard Canadian Third Cousin twice removed of Lieutenant Alan Jerrard, Andrew Mitchell MP for Sutton Coldfield, Sqn. Ldr. Ged Sheppeck MBE AFC RAF University of Birmingham Air Squadron, The Reverend Canon Dr Mark Pryce Chaplain to Her Majesty The Queen, Deputy Lieutenant John Craggs Chair of Governors, The Lord Mayor of Birmingham Cllr Anne Underwood, The Mayor of Sutton Coldfield David Pears OV, Mr Paul Wallis Chairman of the Old Veseyan Association.

Following lunch, guests were guided down to Big School to take their places in their designated seats and join the assembled senior students.

Angus Carter played ‘The Chosen Few’ by Year 10 student Luke Barrios to commence proceedings.

Sophie Lloyd and Will Hennessy, Joint School Captains, addressed the assembly with welcoming remarks and referred to the comparative bravery of current students wrestling with university applications and the students of a similar age in 1914 deciding whether to volunteer to fight for their country. They referred to the superior equipment and training of the German forces, the use of chemical warfare and the creation of the RAF and the bravery to fly open cockpit aircraft before the eventual signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Ibrahim Abdalla, Lucas Nix, Matthew Rusling and Harry Vlahakis, all Year 8 students, outlined the background to the Victoria Cross, details of Alan Jerrard’s early life and the build up to the Great War. The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP for Sutton Coldfield then read the famous Rupert Brooke poem The Soldier.

A combination of Senior and Junior choirs sang ‘Prayer is my Blessing’ and were conducted by Mr Ashley Buxton, BVGS Director of Music.

Year 8 students Miles Kelly, Joshua Thompson, Noah Southgate and Harry Vlahakis then outlined Alan Jerard’s life as a warfighter pilot as described above.

The poem ‘High Flight’ by Flying Officer John Magee was read by Sqn Ldr Ged Sheppeck MBE AFC RAF of the University of Birmingham Air Squadron.

CITATION for Alan Jerrard VC

‘Alan Jerrard, Lieutenant, Royal Air Force, formerly South Staffordshire Regiment, when on an offensive patrol with two other officers he attacked five enemy aeroplanes and shot down one in flames, following it down to within one hundred feet of the ground. He then attacked an enemy aerodrome from a height of fifty feet from the ground and engaging single-handed some nineteen machines, which were either landing or attempting to take-off, he succeeded in destroying one of them which crashed on the aerodrome. A large number of machines then attacked him, and whilst fully occupied, he observed that one of his patrol was in difficulties. He went immediately to his assistance, regardless of his own safety, and destroyed a third enemy machine. Fresh enemy machines continued to rise from the aerodrome, which he attacked one after another and only retreated still engaged with five enemy machines, when ordered to do so by his patrol leader. Although apparently wounded, this very gallant officer turned repeatedly and attacked single-handed the pursuing machines until he was eventually overwhelmed by numbers and driven to the ground. Lieutenant Jerrard had greatly distinguished himself on four previous occasions, within a period of twenty three days in destroying enemy machines, displaying bravery and ability of the very highest order.’
The Reverend Canon Dr Mark Pryce, Chaplain to Her Majesty The Queen reminded the attendees of the work carried out by organisations such as the British Legion and Toc H in helping ex-servicemen after the war and brought up to date by activities such as the Invictus Games through Prince Harry.

Dr Pryce then read the poem ‘Indifference’ written by G A Studdert Kennedy and speculated that it was likely that Studdert Kennedy and Alan Jerrard knew each other.

The audience the stood for Ben Wall, a year 11 student read The Exhortation and the congregation, as is customary, responded “we shall remember them”.

Angus Carter played the Last Post prior to the Two Minute Silence and Reveille thereafter.

Officer Cadet Ciara Buckely, of the University of Birmingham Air Squadron, then read a message sent to DL John Craggs by Air Chief marshal Sir Stephen Hillier KCB CBE DFC ADC MA RAF. In that message Hillier sent his congratulations to Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School and surmised that Lieutenant Alan Jerrard would be extremely flattered to be remembered by his school some 109 years since he left and that a service such as was being witnessed should take place in his honour. He completed his message quoting the motto of the RAF; “Per Ardua Ad Astra.”

Guest of Honour Tom Jerrard reflected upon the circumstances that had brought him from his home in Canada to this service of commemoration in Sutton Coldfield. Tom stated that he is in fact a 3rd cousin twice removed of Alan Jerrard. He recalled that his great uncle Bert had talked of Alan Jerrard and it was only during a visit to the RAF Museum at Hendon that he saw a picture of an airman who he thought was a spitting image of his Uncle Bert. Research took him some 15-20 years to establish that he was in fact related to that airman who was Alan Jerrard. Tom concluded, in expressing his thanks for the invitation that it was a revelation to him to be standing in Big School as the relative of a courageous and persistent man some 40 years after the encounter in Hendon.

Alan Jerrard was also honoured in London in the borough of his birth, Lewisham. Representatives from family descendants, the Staffordshire regiment and their mascot, a young ram called Private Derby XXX11, several senior RAF Officers, including the RAF Queen’s Colour Squadron, as well as the Chair of Governors from Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School, Deputy Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Dr John Craggs DL, were all in attendance, as a memorial stone was unveiled. Speaking on behalf of Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School School, Dr Craggs said “Although it was an honour to represent, together with colleague Alex Davis, Bishop Vesey’s Grammar School at the Lewisham commemorative paving stone unveiling, it was also a privilege to play a small role in a ceremony which commemorated the outstanding bravery of former pupil Alan Jerrard. We must never forget the bravery, courage and sacrifice, of not just Alan Jerrard, but all others who fought for our freedom. If we want to understand today and plan for tomorrow, we need to know and remember what happened yesterday- our history.”

High Flight
Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds-and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of; wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence, hovering there
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air
Up, up the long delirious blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark nor eagle flew
And while, with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high, untrespassed sanctity of space
Put out my hand and touched the face of God
On Friday 23 March and Saturday 24 March, Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, in conjunction with local drama school, Centrestage, put on a production of Macbeth. It was an outstanding production and all our students involved should be congratulated for their inspiring acting. My thanks also go to all the staff who made this play happen, in particular Centrestage School of Speech and Drama.

Rebekah O'Dowd, Principal of Centrestage, who leads Drama at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School said, “The pupils grew in confidence throughout the process and learnt so many skills. It was a pleasure and a privilege to work with them. The success of the plays was achieved through a great team effort, and I applaud my staff, the boys in the tech team and all the talented pupils at Vesey for their outstanding hard work and commitment.”


We are all looking forward now to the Year 7 production of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ in July.
Cancer Research
We held a very successful non-uniform day raising £1,096.25. In addition, Year 9 have done an amazing job selling cakes, wrist bands and raffle tickets. The final total is a massive £2,000. Thank you to Miss Field and our generous Year 9 boys for spearheading this very fine effort.

KIDS - Sutton Wide
Non-Uniform Day
Thanks to everyone for supporting the cross-wide Sutton schools’ non-uniform day. BVGS raised over £900 for the charity.

PHSE
At the recent Critical Thinking Workshop, students were presented with a range of information from familiar digital media sources, such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. All of the information related to the attacks, which took place on 9/11. Students worked together to evaluate each source of information for reliability and trustworthiness, with support from the facilitator. The facilitator weaved into the workshops, without making it the explicit aim, an underlying theme of extremism and radicalisation to highlight the vulnerability of young people who are exposed to digital media. Students then reflected on their critical thinking skills at the end of the session, and left with a greater understanding of the events that took place on 11 September 2001.

Workshops by the Children’s Society on Body Image
On Friday 2 February the first of three workshops delivered by the Children’s Society took place. They presented to Year 8.

Cancer Awareness Workshops
Over the last couple of weeks, the U6 girls have received an awareness workshop, delivered by Mrs Hodkinson, relating to breast and cervical cancer. The aim is to empower the girls with how to ‘self-check’, myth bust cervical smears and appreciate the importance of early intervention. Model demonstrators with lumps and abnormalities were used to support the girls with their understanding.

Easter Egg Appeal
Year 9 launched an Easter Egg appeal in support of Birmingham’s Children’s Hospital. The students and staff donated Easter eggs, which they delivered to the hospital at the end of term. This lovely gesture shows support for all the families and children who are suffering from illness, and the staff that work tirelessly to provide an excellent standard of care.

Time to Talk
Continuing our work in promoting awareness around mental illness and mark Time To Talk Day, 20 Year 9 students and our four Well Being Representatives in Year 10, attended a presentation and drama workshop on 1 February, delivered by mental health champions from the Time To Change organisation. The theme for this year’s Time To Talk Day centred on being ‘in your friend’s corner’, and not being afraid to talk about mental health and mental illness.

Sex Education Workshop for Year 11
As part of the PSHE curriculum, Year 11 attended a Sex Education workshop delivered by local organisation Raise Education. Rebecca expertly guided them on the legislation surrounding the distribution of sexually explicit images and the mental health issues created through watching pornographic material. There is a growing concern that young people are being exposed to such material from as young as eight years old due to access to social media and internet sites from mobile devices. All Year groups have recently attended age appropriate workshops to discuss the issues of social media and legislation around the sending of inappropriate images and messages.

MH2K
Year 9 have been working with MH2K (Mental Health 2000) who have been commissioned to tour schools and discuss the types of support available to young people in Birmingham and nationally. All of Year 9 were provided with a list of organisations that may be useful to them over the next few years. Information was included about Forward Thinking, the partnership organisation for the under 25’s which offers a wide variety of support in various formats: https://www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk. As well as this, there was information on the Headspace app, a free phone app for learning about meditation and mindfulness techniques to support issues around stress, anxiety, focus and sleep: https://www.headspace.com.
Senior Sports Dinner, March 2018

Thank you to all those that attended the Senior Sports Dinner last night. Congratulations to the prize-winners, and thanks to all of the outgoing Upper Sixth for their commitment and contribution to school sport throughout their time at BVGS. There were many excellent speeches from Mr Bousfield (Rowing), Mrs Clarke (Netball), Mr Whiting (Rugby) and Mr Howell (Hockey and Cross-Country). A big thank you also to Mr Parize, Mr Swindells, Mr Davies and Mr Williams who made this lovely evening happen.

Senior Rugby Summary Season 2017-18

For those who like their statistics our senior rugby performance shows a fourth year on year improvement with a pleasing

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I would like to personally thank all those who have made it all possible. We have continued to focus on player safety and welfare to maximise the benefits of our rugby programme, and have encouraged all our students to participate, progress and perform to the best of their ability whilst enjoying their rugby.

I would emphasise that our rugby programme is not just about our best players, it is about everyone. For example over the past four years our second team and under sixteen teams have been transformed into sides who have enviable reputations and form a pathway for our boys to follow.

I should also mention another first for our school rugby, our first ever girls’ senior rugby match when those concerned gave a fine performance in their debut against King Edwards’ Stratford.

Once again, the boys have set high standards in domestic, district, county, regional and academy rugby by following our values of dedication, determination and application.

U16 MIPOTY: A diligent and reliable team member, the award for most improved U16 player goes to Oliver Lilycrop.

U16 POTY: This award goes to a versatile rugby player who has been an excellent leader in training and fixtures. Matthew Hurley.

2nd XV MIPOTY: A dependable, tenacious and hardworking member of the team. His defence and tackling has been the trademark of his performances. Jude Heath.

2nd XV POTY: This young man has been an integral member of the very successful 2nd XV. Alex Garton.

This year it has proved incredibly difficult to single out individuals for 1st XV awards; the successes of this year have once again been founded on teamwork and EVERYONE has played their part. Will Poland, Matthew Price, Declan Mee, Ben Miles & Olly Madden are all worthy of a special mention in despatches, but sadly there can only be one winner.

The 1st XV Most Improved Player 2018 has proved resilient, reliable and has grown in skill on the back of enjoying his rugby. Dominic Devine.

Finally, the 1st XV Player of the Year Our winner has demonstrated both sportsmanship and leadership showing both integrity and humility. He has consistently represented the school, his county, Staffordshire, the Midlands region and narrowly missed selection for England Counties. William Hennessy.

Mr Julian Whiting Teacher i/c Rugby
Hockey
This has been another excellent year, with nearly 150 games being played across all age groups, and almost 60% of those games being won. The levels of performance continue to rise with over 20 boys playing representative hockey in some capacity, and more playing at clubs outside school, than ever before. In the senior section three teams have been fielded every Wednesday. The third team were often playing against other schools' first and second teams, and winning 50% of those games.

The second team are a talented, young side, and have had a good season, most notably finishing with a flourish by winning their last five games in a row, beating Solihull 3-2 and producing a convincing win against KES, Birmingham.

The first team had an excellent season playing 18 and winning 12, only losing two games all season, both to a strong, more experienced and physical Warwick in the cup and league. The highlights this year were beating Bromsgrove 8-0, Solihull twice and most significantly in the National Cup with Harry West equalizing in the closing seconds before going on to win on flicks. In the Warwickshire league, the First XI finished a very creditable third, with all the other teams made up of independent schools.

Awards for Hockey
Second Team Most Improved Player: Holly West
First Team Most Improved Player: Marcus Fu
First Team Player of the Year: Jainan Patel
Leadership Award: Henry Wade

Netball
Mrs Rowlands, Ms Nimmo, and I coach Vesey netball team. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people involved behind the scenes that make it possible for school netball to continue to grow and become part of school life. Special thanks goes to Mr Kevin Walmsley and Mr Paul Boyle who get the courts ready each week, and to the parents that support and encourage their daughters. I would like to include Emily O’Hare, first team captain, and Lauren Tennant second team captain for all their hard work and dedication.

Player’s player: Elis Toyne.
2nd team most improved player. A confident modest, happy individual that will continue to make progress because she gives her very best at all times. Emily Green.

Coaches Player of the second team never gives up and is dedicated and hardworking. Lauren Butler
First team most improved player. Her performance on court is always a good example of determination and wanting the best for her team. Emily O’Hare.
First team player of the year. Decision-making, interceptions, and her speed around the court have been Impressive. Niamh Fallon.

Newcomers: This year we feel that two girls in particular have given 100 percent to their netball and to Team Vesey. Charlotte Fellows and Victoria Lacey.

Mr Chris Howell, Teacher i/c Hockey and Director of Sport

Cross Country
The Senior Cross Country team have enjoyed a very successful season, with a double success in the Greater Birmingham Schools Cross Country League. Charley Bush convincingly won the Girls’ Individual League, remaining undefeated by other females throughout the season. She also impressively finished in the top 20 of the league for boys and girls combined. Tom Parkes also secured victory in the Boys’ Individual League, with his consistency across the season earning him top spot in a very close race for the title. He was ably supported by Matthew McClafferty, who finished in sixth place in his debut season. The other members of the team (Benedict Lawrence-Pietroni, James Ward, Ben Gordon, Alex Hughes, Gabriel Stevens, Michael Moore, Ciaran Weir and Haidar Khaliq) also performed strongly, helping the team to third place overall, behind a very strong team from Haberdashers' Adams and Old Swinford Hospital.

Mr Dan Everett Teacher i/c Cross-Country

Mrs Zylpha Clarke, Netball Coach
**Rowing**

The commitment our men and women show is exceptional. Rowing is a sport that demands so much from you physically. Lots of work has to go in to perform at our best. One of the greatest skills beyond the physical challenges that that our rowers develop is one of self-management. Races and training don’t stop during study leave, GCSE and A level exams. We adjust timetables to accommodate exams and revision but training and commitment to school sport doesn’t waiver. In rowing we are strong advocates of benefits that sport delivers particularly at stressful times when it’s often needed the most. A prime example is on show with the annual Oxford-Cambridge University boat race where 9 months of elite training go alongside rigorous academic work. Our rowers also work on a weekly basis to try and better themselves.

Without commitment you’ll never start, without consistency you’ll never finish.

Boys most improved rower. He has improved to a point where he is now a rowing regularly in the school’s first quad with ambitions to row at Henley Royal regatta in the summer term. **Tommo Priestley**.

Girls most improved rower award. She is dedicated to her training both on the rowing machine and on the water. She is regularly at before school during and after school sessions and works extremely hard in all she does. **Molly Markham**.

Boys rower of the year. The winner of this year is setting very high personal performance goals and as a result tops both the 2km and 20 minute leaderboard. **Matthew Burrows**.

**Sri Lanka Cricket Tour 2018**

I wanted to say a few words about our inaugural cricket tour to Sri Lanka, given my unique perspective as parent, member of staff and Governor.

As a parent, I must congratulate your team on organising a stunning trip. Karey and I were able to enjoy a fabulous holiday on another green and pleasant isle, with visits and experiences that will live long in the memory. Who could possibly forget ‘Monkeys stop play!’ or having to play second fiddle to an elephant that took an inordinately close and personal interest in my beloved.

Given that we both work at the school and carry the appropriate accreditations, we were pleased to be able to help out by running the infirmary. Heat exhaustion was the primary cause of admission, followed by sunburn and skinned elbows/knees. We were very happy to support our staff team of Mr. Davies and Mr. Goodwin- together with our prescience in bringing along a large tub of sudocrem.

As Governor, I found I didn’t initially understand what an extraordinary responsibility it is, standing “in loco parentis” thousands of miles from home- with the younger members of the party only 12 years old. I cannot praise the staff enough for the professional way they handled their responsibilities. I am fiercely proud of our school, and justifiably so. All the boys who wore the BVGS logo on their shirts were a shining advertisement for themselves, their parents and the school.

Sixteen boys have been able to bank some additional social capital on their individual journeys through life. I sincerely hope that this cricket tour is the first of many.

**Mr Geoff Gray, Cover Supervisor and Governor**
Easyfundraising

We are proud to announce a new sports sponsor for the next 3-years, Easyfundraising. The company help schools, charities and good causes to raise money through their supporters and community shopping through the Easyfundraising platform to which you can sign up via this link. It’s really easy way to support our school and your shopping won’t cost you a penny more. It really works - so far we’ve raised over £2,200 through easyfundraising but we want to raise more! Please go to our easyfundraising page and click ‘join us’ to start raising money when you shop online:

Alumni and Chamber Members offer Careers Guidance

On 9 February BVGS students were able to meet representatives from some 52 well-known businesses at our recent careers fair. They were able to discuss career opportunities with representatives and had the opportunity to attend seminars in Old Big School. As the fair was such a success, it is anticipated that similar events will be held in the future.

PA Quiz

Thanks to everyone who supported the Parent Association quiz. It was very good fun and Mr Goodwin, our quizmaster, as usual, did a great job! The staff team ‘Mitre Guessed’ narrowly triumphed with fine performances from our Old Veseyans, Messrs Barker, Beasley and Captain Nowek.

PA Summer Ball

Save the Date: Friday 13 July 2018. The PA Summer Ball will be held at Moor Hall Hotel (18:30 - 23:00, bar open until midnight). Tickets are £50 each to include a three course meal and entertainment from ‘The Under Covers’.

Commonwealth Success for Hamish

Well done to Hamish Carter (OV) who won a Bronze Medal for Scotland at the Commonwealth Games.

Ladies' Lunch

We are proud to announce that our inaugural event raised over £3,200. A huge thank you to Julie Gray from corporate partners Amici Events who organised the event along with Development Director Brian Davis and parents Michaela Casey and Heidi Middleton, who also ran a superb fashion show with items from her store Obsessions (Streetly Village). Another of our corporate partners, Moor Hall Hotel and Spa, provided a fantastic venue and superb service at the lovely two-course meal. Thank you to all parents and alumni that attended the event and made the day such a huge success.

Rugby Fundraiser

The school celebrated the start of the annual Six Nations rugby tournament, by hosting their first inaugural Six Nations dinner. The Guest Speaker was ex-Wales and Barbarians rugby legend, Phil Bennett who gave an excellent speech about his playing days with fellow Welshman Bobby Windsor and all-time Lion great, Willie John McBride. He ended his speech with a simple yet powerful message - to play the game in the right spirit, allowing youngsters to enjoy the sport, without taking it too seriously. There was a raffle and auction, which both raised a fantastic amount of money for the school.