



24 March 2026

Dear Parents

Two nights' ago, we were honoured to welcome Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh to the College and celebrate the official opening of the new Music School. It was a wonderful occasion with guests including a Deputy Lord-Lieutenant, the High Sheriff and the Mayors of Oxford and Abingdon representing the local community as well as many other friends of the College, from parents to Old Radleians to former music staff to those who assisted in the design and construction. The evening was about the building, of course, and it was a privilege to see Her Royal Highness unveil a plaque to mark the occasion, but the real reason for the evening was the concert itself, one of a number of outstanding such events in a remarkable opening season. The boys rose to the occasion and we were treated to a wonderful night of music with performances from the Chamber Choir, Brass Ensemble (both performing world premieres of pieces composed by Radley boys mentored by renowned composer Cecilia McDowell), Orchestra, Guitar Quartet, Concert Band, Close Harmony Group and Big Band. Ambitious repertoire, high expectations and exceptional levels of performance. Memorable.

Unsurprisingly, that has to be the highlight of the term. But I can run it close, at least on a personal level. On a recent – and inspirational – visit to see boys engaged in Partnership work with and within primary schools in Blackbird Leys, I ended the afternoon with a large group playing sport in a local leisure centre led by Radleians. As the session finished, it was decided that there should be a large group photograph. I went to join the back row and found myself next to a seven-year-old boy. I asked if it was alright for me to stand next to him as he seemed a little unsure. He looked at me long and hard and asked, with genuine sincerity and interest: 'Are you Donald Trump?'. When I denied it, he looked sceptical. 'You look like Donald Trump', he said. It was a salutary experience.

I was delighted that the recent Inspection team from ISI found our Partnerships work to be a 'significant strength' of the College, an accolade reserved (and not guaranteed) for an element of the school that inspectors find to be particularly impressive and embedded both in practice and in impact throughout all we do. I think they were right. Even just in this last week, we have hosted three major Partnership events with local schools, two related to sport and the third to music; the day after the concert described above, we had 400 children here for 'The Big Sing'. I am proud of the work the boys do in this regard and proud too of the skills they learn through it.

Of course, the Inspection noted many other strengths of the school in their report and, as I have written before, it is nice to see what we take for granted day-to-day noticed and acknowledged in that way, alongside the more prosaic (though important) areas of compliance and regulation. I am

grateful to the boys for the way in which, as ever, they welcomed the team and to you as parents for your overwhelmingly positive feedback on your experience of what Radley offers.

We were delighted with news of thirteen Oxbridge offers earlier this term and congratulate each of the boys on the achievement. Though some applications are yet to be processed at some universities, the overall picture is strong with offer rates at almost all Russell Group destinations either steady or rising, perhaps not what might appear to be the case according to media coverage. Of course, the first question is 'whether' rather than 'where' and although I am sure it will remain the case that almost all Radleians will go to university, it is not the only option and it was nice to welcome Old Radleians from the recent past back to Radley recently to speak to us about alternatives. Thinking about university is of course part of our wider Futures programme and it is good to see provision in this area grow, whether through speakers coming here to Radley, networking events in London which groups of boys as well as ORs attend, advice being available through a Radleian Society connection for any interested in exploring a particular route or new initiatives such as the 'Dragons' Den' competition that I know a lot of boys are working on.

As boys plan for the future, a Radley education offers much more than a set of results. But they still matter and I hope that all boys in Vth and 6.2 are clear in what they have to do and equally clear about how to do it in each of their subjects as they approach the task of revision for GCSE and A Level exams. I hope too that they are up for the challenge; I would encourage parents to sit down at the start of the holiday and establish ambitious, realistic and - crucially - agreed ground rules and goals for the next few weeks and find ways and means to help each boy hold himself to account. People work differently but a few bits of generic advice: break it into chunks, start early in the day, ensure that areas of weakness are identified and prioritised, be consistent and measure work by outcome as well as the number of hours expended. I wish them – and you – well with the process.

Beyond the utilitarian demands of exam revision, it has been good to see academic stretch and excellence: the ESU debaters and public speakers reached the regional finals of their competitions, three teams reached the National Robotics finals (though sadly a quarter final was the best so no World Championship qualifiers this year). A Radley team finished as the 5th best UK team in the recent Naboj International Team Maths Challenge (32nd world-wide): a fantastic result. One member of that team deserves a particular mention: Kelvin (C, 6.2) helped the UK team secure 4th place in a recent major international Maths tournament and finished 3rd himself which, I am reliably informed (there is working to prove it), makes him one of the 40 or so best junior mathematicians in the world. These are just a few of the academic highlights; I look forward to announcing the winners of the Serpentes essay competition at the start of the Summer Term.

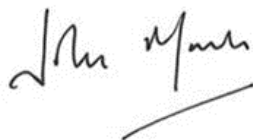
It has, of course, been a term with a whole host of other achievements too. The recent 6.1 play - *'Dead Poets Society'* - had a bitter-sweet feel to it, not only because of the storyline but also because it marked the last main production directed by Victoria Buse, our Director of Drama, who leaves to take on a similar role at Dulwich College in September. I know that the cast and audience of this production, as well as the fifteen that preceded it, will thank her for all her hard work. We also saw a fine Remove production of *'Sherlock Holmes'* where the dastardly Moriarty was defeated by

the eponymous hero with the help of a large cast. Our annual Declamations competition was again a real treat with the reprise (the nineteen best across the College) up there collectively with the very best of recent years. The fact that the overall winner was chosen from a mixture of a final letter from a World War One soldier, a piece of Shakespeare (attributed), a Roald Dahl short story, a Spooner-ised Cinderella and some Rowan Atkinson says much for the variety. The letter won. Not content with a series of stunning opening concerts, the music department has also overseen highly successful Guitar, Organ, Gunn (Brass and Woodwind) and Hudson (Strings) prize competitions.

It has been a joy to watch Bigside Hockey with some excellent wins against Abingdon, Bradfield and Marlborough among others. The Boat Club as a whole had an excellent Schools' Head with almost every crew finishing on the podium; this bodes very well for the Regatta Season ahead. I have high hopes that we will be adding Doubles rackets success at Queen's this week after the Singles success in December. The 4th, 5th, Colts 2 and JC1 XIs were the standout football teams on a competitive fixture list and particular congratulations to the unbeaten 3rd, JC1, JC3 and M5 hockey teams. We are also British School Arena National Polo champions. Internally, H Social deserves some praise for a notable joint triumph in the Ergo and Chess: a good combination. So much goes on both in terms of external fixtures and internal competitions; as ever, it is as much about participation and opportunity as it is about winning; the latter matters but in a world where, increasingly, schools care too much about elite provision and tend to have fewer teams, there is a tradition and ethos to keep alive and we are committed to it.

At the end of a busy term, I reflect on the fact that I have so many things to look back on and be proud of. To watch sport, host dinners, talk to boys, attend concerts, watch plays, listen to speakers . . . it is such an enjoyable job. It is a varied one too. My PA quietly asked as I went off to plant a tree at the Countryside centre alongside some Shells at a Wednesday activity whether I was squeamish. I said I was fine. I arrived to discover we had a visiting vet performing a castration on one of our rams. A group of boys – some coped better than others – had the joy of witnessing the experience and having a live Biology lesson. They will not forget it. Nor will I.

With thanks to you all for your continued support. Diana and I wish you a very Happy Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Moule', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

John Moule
Warden