

24th May 2024

Dear All,

This time of year, in schools, is sometimes referred to as “silly season”. The preparation for tests and exams being sat by our young people in Years 6, 11 & 13, followed by all the events and activities that tend to take place afterwards, make our schools even more emotional, energetic and exciting places to be than normal. Let’s remember to keep in our prayers over the coming weeks, all those staff, students, children and parents who are experiencing this firsthand.

For those children in Year 6 who have now completed their SATs, thoughts will inevitably be turning towards life at secondary school and all the opportunities and challenges that may bring. I have recently corresponded and met with several parents, from various Xavier schools, who are supporters of the [Smartphone Free Childhood](#) campaign. I appreciate that for many, this is a contentious issue. Our Xavier schools already have strict policies about the use of smartphones and whilst we are broadly supportive of the proposals of the campaign, we don’t yet go as far as banning them altogether in our schools. However, the growing evidence of the impact of smartphones and social media on children’s mental health and well-being is compelling and there is a growing consensus amongst colleagues that there is a need to review our current policy and practice. Regardless of where we get to with this, we would urge all parents and carers to ensure that they are monitoring and limiting their children’s use of smartphones; I know from personal experience how difficult this is, but I believe it will be worth it in the long run! Whilst we recognise the amazing potential of this technology for communication, creativity and education, we are also increasingly aware of the damage that can be done to children if it is not appropriately regulated.

The thorny issue above is just one example of the many challenging situations that are faced by those who are called to a vocation in Catholic education. We are blessed with the wonderful people who serve in our schools as staff, volunteers and governors, who rise to these challenges every day and through their patience, determination and selfless professionalism ensure that children and young people reap the rewards of Catholic education and become the best versions of themselves. We employ over 1,000 people across Xavier in a wide variety of roles, if you would like to find out more about opportunities to work with us, please visit our [website](#).

We have had Ofsted inspections at St Peter’s, Guildford and St Hugh of Lincoln, Knaphill in recent days. Frustratingly, we are not allowed to share the outcomes of these inspections until the reports have been published after half term but suffice to say, we were delighted with the outcome at both schools. Congratulations to Mr Miller and Mrs Grace and everyone in those two school communities, and a huge thank you to all the staff, students, children, parents and governors involved in the inspections.

The announcement of the General Election brings hope that we may soon see an end to the current stagnation of support for public services. We will no doubt hear much from politicians in the coming weeks about their call to public service. Any aspiring MPs who really want to know what public service looks like may wish to consider the example of [St. John Bosco](#), founder of the Salesians who have been enabling children to move closer to God and achieve great things for over 200 years. Today is the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, an important celebration for all followers of Don Bosco who rely on Our Lady to support them in their vocations. As we embark on the half term holiday, we give thanks for all Xavier vocations and ask for the prayers of Our Lady for all those who serve in and, are served by our Xavier family of schools. Happy half term!

God bless,

James Kibble
CEO