

## The Roche School Moving On Blog – October 2019

Dear Parents,

The beginning of the new academic year is always a busy time for educational networking and the start of this year has been no exception! Invitations were a-plenty and I even had to start sharing them out with other staff! Thank you to Charlotte Baly (Year 6, 11+ Co-ordinator) and our own Dr Roche for sharing the load. Most local senior schools attend our biannual Secondary Schools Fair and we are happy to attend their functions in return - hearing the latest news and views from their leaders!

Earlier this month, Charlotte headed off for the Prep Heads dinner at **Fulham School** since we were busy with our own Lower School Social on this occasion. All eyes have been on this local independent co-ed in terms of their premises. Previously running to 13+, Fulham School will now encompass pre-prep, prep and senior and much building work has been taking place. To paraphrase Robbie Burns, the “best laid (building) plans of mice and men oft gang awry” but things seem to be moving apace. Roche School parents tend to like Fulham Prep (and Senior) because it is a local, co-ed with a currently sensible entrance exam.

On to the Dulwich College dinner; this is one of my favourites since we have long been huge fans of Dulwich and I venture to suggest that they might feel the same about us. They are always very complimentary about our old boys. I was seated next to the registrar, Sarah Betts, so had the chance of a proper catch-up with her and was able to congratulate her on the recent 400-year celebrations. Here’s to the next 400! Also, watch out for High Master, Dr Joe Spence who will be back to judge our Shakespeare Week competition next term.

Next stop King’s College, Wimbledon for a quick look at their impressive new sports centre and a catch up with some of our old boys who are loving life at KCS.



One of them won “best all-rounder” in his year group last year which was a wonderful accolade and music to our ears since, at The Roche School, we are all about turning out well-rounded people! I had lunch with Dr Halls and a few other Heads. It was small gathering so we were able to have really useful, enjoyable conversations.

Next, Latymer Upper in Hammersmith talked through the imminent unveiling of their fabulous new sixth form block - due September 2020. They also showed us their beautiful new piazza – more lovely space in which the pupils can mingle – but it was raining hard so we gazed at it safely from the hall instead! Latymer is a highly selective co-ed suiting grounded, unpretentious families. I am reliably informed that they have lots of bursaries available too.

A bit off our usual patch is Wetherby Senior in Marylebone. You may remember Wetherby Prep as the alma mater of Prince William who posed in its distinctive grey and red uniform on the steps with Diana, Princess of Wales. I don't know what I was expecting but I was impressed with the progressive young Head (Seth Bolderow) and his staff who seem to be a committed and dynamic team. A growing school with sound values, academics and strong sport - worth a look.

Dr Roche headed off to Trinity School (co-ed sixth form). This school has long had a reputation for academic excellence but a relatively recent change of Head (Alasdair Kennedy – really nice chap) has put it back on our radar. Part of the Whitgift Foundation, it is smaller than Whitgift School but more selective. Dr Roche reports on lovely wide, leafy grounds and extensive facilities. Music is extremely strong and the atmosphere of the school civilised. One ex-Roche parent (whose son attended and is off to study Philosophy at St Andrew's) described it as both “caring and challenging”. A great compliment! Lots of bursaries here too leading (as at Dulwich College) to a good socio-economic mix.

Last term Charlotte B took in Notre Dame and St James' – both slightly gentler girls' schools where ex-Roche girls are thriving. Notre Dame (nominally Catholic) is a relatively small school (60 in a year) and is a good mid-range, values-based school with a well-balanced approach to academia and extracurricular subjects. Worth a look if you don't mind heading down the A3.

St James' School for Girls (sister school to St James' Boys in Ashted) has only 30 girls per year group, so a very personal feel. It is a vegetarian school for ethical reasons. They have always been way ahead in the mindfulness game with the beginning and end of lessons having a minute of reflection as well as five minutes of meditative time in assemblies. Charlotte reports on a happy feel with a good level of diversity.

Of course, eating lovely meals and high-quality canapes in generally beautiful surroundings is an extremely tough job and somebody has to do it! However, in our case, we simply aim to stay connected to the schools around us so we are familiar with the latest news, leadership changes and prevailing culture. This enables us to give our parents the best possible advice when it comes to their child moving on. We know your child and we know the schools and this is the basis for our productive home/school dialogue.

If you are interested in The Roche Approach to Moving On then stay tuned - we will be running whole school talks about our approach to managing the transfer to secondary school for those interested.

**Mrs Adams - Headmistress**