

NRN THIRD YEAR PASTORAL FORUM SPEECH – 14 SEPTEMBER 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly a very warm welcome to you all and thank you for making the effort to attend this evening. I hope that you will find it interesting and informative and don't go home with more concerns about your teenage son than you arrived with!

I am Nick Newman, the Head of Third Year, and to my right is Penny Croucher, who is here to outline the counselling service on offer to all boys at Hampton. Penny now works part-time as a counsellor here having formerly been Head of Modern Languages at the school.

We have a full set of Third Year tutors present this evening, including Mr Wakefield, Assistant Head of Year for forms B-E, and Mr Woods, Assistant Head of Year for forms F-J and A. I hope that you will have an opportunity to introduce yourselves to your son's tutor later on in the Atrium, after the discussion groups have concluded. Mr Knibbs, the Pastoral Deputy Head and Mr Talman, the Head of PHSE will also be available throughout the evening should you have any questions for them.

I'm pleased to say that it seems the majority of the Third Year, new and old, have all settled down well so far. It has been a busy start to the year; Teambuilding Day last Thursday was hopefully enjoyed by all and I hope you got a chance to have a look at some of the photos from the day just now on the screen behind me. There will be a further display of photos from the day later on after our Group Forum Sessions. Sports Fixtures are fully under way, the first of two History trips to Northern France and Belgium is in three weeks time and I know final preparations are now in hand for the Geography trip to Sorrento over half-term. On a slightly different point, this Saturday brings the school's Open Morning, at which we will expect your son to help unless he is involved in a school sports fixture

And so....we are here this evening to find out all the right answers. You will no doubt leave later this evening fully informed about adolescence and confidently equipped to deal, once and for all, with any problems that might arise when dealing with your sons. You will be a fully qualified parent with honours and, from tomorrow morning onwards, after jumping straight out of bed, your sons will be smart, courteous and mature young men. Well, you never know....

(Play clip of Kevin turning into a teenager...)

I've heard rumours that Harry Enfield based this on reality? You will know far more than me, as we only see angels arriving at the school gates!

Statistics taken from a School-wide survey a few years ago also indicated that, in comparison with national averages, **Hampton boys are generally** taller, fitter, less likely to smoke, more likely to take exercise and less likely to play computer games. We are

incredibly fortunate at Hampton to have fantastic boys who, for the most part, make good, informed decisions about life, in and out of School.

But, turning to the crux of this evening, why is this such a potentially difficult time for boys and parents?

In an article titled: *'What can I do about my Teenager'* written in a local newspaper, the following appeared:

"Teenage years are notoriously difficult for parents, schools and teenagers. In previous decades adolescence was not recognised as a time of psychological stress, and this problem has largely developed since the 1950's.

Part of the problem lies in the wide variation of legal and personal responsibility between the ages of 14-21. On the irresponsible side, many teenagers are not expected to earn their own living, and will be supported by their parents until the age of 21. They will be provided with pocket money, accommodation, have their washing done and clothes bought for them. So in many ways parents feel they are dependents, and the parent is still responsible.

In terms of responsibility the teenage situation is most unclear. They are criminally responsible after the age of 14, but cannot have sex until age 16. They can marry at 16, but cannot watch X rated movies until 18 years. They can drive at 17 years but cannot buy alcohol until they are 18 years old. So they can legally marry and have a child before they can drive or watch an X rated movie.

This is why there is a continual tussle between the parents and the teenager. "Don't treat me like a child" rings very hollow in the ears of a parent who still pays for everything and ferries the teenager everywhere."

I hope that you may have had an opportunity to read the excerpt on the back of your letter card - written by an **Eton Housemaster in 1915** to the mother of a pupil. It warns of a rough ride in the approaching years. But at the other end of the journey, with patience and a little bit of luck, we will find well-rounded young men, who have transformed themselves into what we call a Hamptonian.

As teachers we can obviously educate, listen to and guide your sons to the best of our abilities. I have a two year old daughter but myself and many of the other staff here tonight do not have any experience of being a parent of a teenage boy. In that respect, whilst the main body of tonight is intended to be a forum for yourselves to share experiences, concerns, ideas and suggestions, it will also hopefully be a useful and fascinating perspective for ourselves of the view from the other side of the fence so to speak.

A key aspect of our provision for your son as a teenager in the modern world is **our PHSE programme; displayed on the screen now**. We cover a wide range of important and stimulating topics and I want to finish by drawing your attention to just a few of them.

Firstly, **drugs and illegal substances**: For some of you the prospect of your son's involvement with cannabis smoking or cannabis smokers may seem very far-fetched, but it is a sad reflection of today's society that it is quite likely that your son, during the next 18 months, will be in a situation - possibly at a party, a youth club, in the park or even round a friend's house - where he may be offered cannabis.

Hampton boys are not immune to exposure to drugs. But perhaps due to the clarity of the school's zero tolerance message, its comprehensive anti-drugs education programme, its high standards of pastoral care and the good relationships between staff and pupils - which mean we get to hear more of what goes on than might otherwise be the case - the boys are well-informed about the dangers of such. We do everything we can to teach your sons to become independently-minded, to make their own decisions and respect the choices of others too. Nevertheless, you should be prepared and be realistic, and your sons need to be prepared and to be realistic.

The second issue is **Cyber-Safety**. All boys in the Third Year will, in due course, receive a copy **of this Cyber Safety booklet** and we will discuss in Forms the dangers associated with revealing too much personal information online and how you can protect yourself. Online social networking – Facebook, MSN etc. – and general computer usage is often one of the most frequently discussed topics at these particular forums and maybe where you wish to start within your groups in a few minutes.

But perhaps, **more mundane but nevertheless important matters are on your minds** – homework, friendships, girls, transporting your son to all his commitments, your son pushing the boundaries, and more. Sometimes parents comment on the lack of homework being set, and sometimes parents suggest that we set too much homework. Some boys will inevitably take longer over their work, and other boys are perhaps rushing their work, completing it on the coach journey home, even undertaking homework at school – and for the record, the boys in the Third Year are not permitted to work in school outside timetabled lessons. Perhaps longer assignments are left and then a late night results at a later date. Teachers will be setting homework each night and the boys should be doing their best to complete it to the highest possible standard on the correct night.

Time for me to stop – I am not in possession of all the answers by any means. We hope that you will start to discuss some of the issues that I have mentioned and more later on. But if we do the best we can - if we all work together – teenagers, staff and parents - we might get a better result in the end and that's worth so much to all involved. I can honestly say that we are all hugely privileged to be a part of Hampton at present – teaching gifted boys, who are polite, smart and courteous, and who will grow up into fine young men!

Thank you

- Time to split into groups
- Please go with the group indicated on your card – they are not linked to forms
- Can spouses please try and go in different groups
- Please take a drink from the atrium ground floor with you before heading to the discussion group.
- The forum discussion groups will take about an hour and, at about 8.30pm, drinks and nibbles will be served in the Atrium of the New Block.
- There will be signs up there indicating the different forms 3A-J where you may wish to cluster in order to informally meet other parents of boys in your form + your son's Form Tutor.
- Please take all belongings with you as this area of the school will be locked once we have departed. When leaving at the end of the evening please use the exit from the atrium which leads onto a path to the side of the school.
- Please don't use these upcoming forum sessions to question the staff on the School policy; myself or Mr Knibbs will be happy to answer any questions later on.
- Finally both Penny's and my speech will be placed onto the Third Year area of the school website for your information. I will send an email to all Third Year parents with the exact website link.

Group	Staff	Room (all in New Block)
A	RA	3E bottom floor
B	MRG	3D
C	REW	3C
D	BCM	3B
E	DMP	14C first floor
F	PSt	14B
G	JB	14A
H	PDB	14
I	ADG	25 top floor
J	JHT	25A
K	WKP	3A bottom floor
L	SJW	13 first floor
M	NDW	4 bottom floor
N	KK*	5 bottom floor