



Summer Results

The school year actually begins in August these days, with the publication of exam results and management of the many issues that follow from them. It was, once again, a pretty good time for UCS. Our A-level results have turned out to be the third best ever with, once again, well over 90% of passes at grades A & B and (for only the second time) over 70% at grade A. 2009 GCSE results were our best, with over 85% of passes at A or A* and, for the first time, 50% at A* alone.

Development work has quietened down and the 2009 summer holiday saw only one major project: the remodelling of the Biology Department to enable the construction of the new Science Lecture Theatre which has already proved itself to be a valuable and popular addition to UCS facilities.

September 2009 saw the second intake of girls into the UCS Sixth Form, so that the coeducational project is now complete. There are now over 60 girls in the school, well-established in the Olders Deme. The new Transitus girls have settled just as effectively as last year's pioneers, and interest is very strong from girls to join the UCS Sixth Form in 2010. The creation of a coeducational Sixth Form has been a success from every point of view.

School Inspection

You may be aware that the regime for inspecting independent schools is set to change and is likely to affect us at UCS pretty soon – indeed preparations are well under way.

From now on, inspection will be at far shorter notice – just five days – which seems very sensible. However, inspection teams will be smaller and there will be far less opportunity for them to visit classes, to speak to staff and pupils and to observe the actual quality of teaching and learning, and of pastoral care, at the school. Instead, the main thrust of the inspection will be directed towards the school's written policies and statements of practice. These will be analysed in far greater detail than previously in order to ensure compliance with DCSF edict. Only after that process is complete will inspectors be able to turn their attention to the experiences of pupils, staff and parents.

I fear this will turn out to be a significantly less interesting process for parents and a far less satisfying one for staff. It is certainly proving to be a great deal more wearisome for school and departmental leaders and managers. We have spent the past six months reviewing all UCS documentation against a regulatory background that grows ever more narrow-minded and which changes daily. All of this material is, by the way, available to all parents by accessing the UCS web-site (www.ucs.org.uk).

Inspection could come at any time from January 2010.

Electronic Communication

As part of our planning for the future, we are currently investigating the viability of shifting as high a proportion as possible of UCS correspondence to e-mail. We believe that this will succeed in increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

Part of the same project will be to extend the use of the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to provide far greater access for our students to learning materials in all subjects and at all levels of the school.

We hope that, by early next term, all homework tasks will be recorded on the VLE and will be accessible to all students both from home and at school. This will help to reduce the impact on students of absence through illness and will make it easier for parents to check that their sons or daughters are up-to-date with school assignments.

Any shift towards wholesale use of e-mail for school communication will not begin before September 2010. If we are to go ahead, it will be essential to have reliable and secure e-mail addresses for each UCS household. Our records are virtually complete. We will be updating them over the next few months. We would like to distribute students' end-of-term reports by e-mail too. Please let the Headmaster know if you foresee any difficulties with a change of this kind.

Sport

The rugby season has survived an extraordinarily wet November and we end the year with quite a lot to be proud of. The U12s and U13s have enjoyed some excellent results – which the U13s replicated on their mid-season tour to Venice. Elliot Mustoe is training with Middlesex and hopes to achieve representative honours. The U15s have been the most improved team of the season, showing real commitment and drive. They have reached the final of the Middlesex Cup Competition for their age-group (to be played soon before the end of term). Senior rugby teams have shown superb attitude and team-spirit, and have the capacity to play with real brilliance, but consistency against some tough opposition has generally eluded them.

Swimming and basketball are certainly the growth sports at UCS. Both U14 and U16 basketball squads train with real commitment and energy. They are at mid-season stage right now, and are looking good for success in the end. Our swimming squad is growing all the time as more and more students are keen to join and train. We will be participating in some galas next term.

We are also very pleased to report that UCS will play our first ever girls' netball fixture (against South Hampstead High School) next term. No pressure.

Music & Drama

As well as the traditional UCS ensembles, our musical life this term has been greatly enriched by a new project. We have invited the Orchestra of St Paul's (an outstanding ensemble, based at the Actors' Church in Covent Garden, comprising young professionals making their way in the classical music world). They have spent a day working with UCS instrumentalists and gave a memorable lunchtime concert. On the Sunday before the end of term they performed *Messiah* in the Great Hall to an extraordinarily high standard. They will visit again and a further major concert is planned in May, which will be extended to musically gifted primary schoolchildren from the local area.

UCS students performed beautifully in the Autumn Concert and, earlier in the term, joined with the Chamber Choir of South Hampstead High School to sing a varied programme in Hampstead Parish Church – also, of course, the venue for our annual Carol Service, which was particularly beautiful this year. The Carol Service is one of the rare occasions in the year when all three UCS schools come together. That alone makes it a delightful event. *Carols by Candlelight* was lovely too – less formal than the Carol Service but just as moving.

Finally, more and more UCS parents are getting in on the musical act. The UCS Centenary Choir is extremely popular and extremely successful. Their performance of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in the Great Hall, under the baton of John Bradbury, was enormously well-supported and of a really high standard.

There were two ambitious productions in the Lund Theatre this term, both of which gave welcome prominence to some of our younger actors. *Lord of the Flies* was directed by Sixth Form students (Daniel Eisenberg, Natalia Schwartz and Ramin Sabi) who elicited extraordinarily mature performances from their young cast. Cleverly re-envisioned, the play lost nothing of its power. It was scary stuff. Then at the end of term Peter Stancliffe directed a delightful production of *Wind in the Willows* (in the adaptation by Alan Bennett). It was funny, charming, extremely professional, with some immensely assured central performances. A lovely evening. Next term will see opportunities for older performers with Holly Aston directing the British premiere of *Autobahn* and Sean O'Casey's *Shadow of a Gunman*, to be directed (once again) by Peter Stancliffe.

Beyond Words

The annual *Beyond Words* Festival was held in early November. Once again, Martin Hitchcock and his team prepared an extraordinarily varied and exciting range of talks, films, entertainments and performances. Ballet Central were here again. Broadcasters, film-makers, actors, poets and writers gave up their time to work with UCS students. Michael Morpurgo gave a most movingly vivid performance version of *Private Peaceful*. There were cookery events. It was a truly memorable week, and a timely reminder that education means more than just passing exams, however important that may be.

Meetings for Parents Next Term

Remove Parents Evening A-K	Tuesday 19 January 2010	4.20 pm
Remove Parents Evening L-Z	Thursday 28 January 2010	4.20 pm
Lower Remove Parents Evening A-K	Thursday 4 February 2010	4.20 pm
Lower Remove Parents Evening L-Z	Tuesday 9 February 2010	4.20 pm
Entry Form Parents Evening A-K	Thursday 4 March 2010	4.20 pm
Entry Form Parents Evening L-Z	Tuesday 9 March 2010	4.20 pm
Upper Remove Parents Evening A-K	Thursday 18 March 2010	4.20 pm
Upper Remove Parents Evening L-Z	Tuesday 23 March 2010	4.20 pm

Spring Events

• 20-22 January	Lund Theatre	Autobahn directed by Holly Aston	19.30
• Saturday 6 February	Great Hall	Salsa for India	19.30
• Tuesday 9 February	Lecture Theatre	Jazz pupil's concert	19.30
• Thursday 25 February	Lund Theatre	Chris Bonington	19.30
• Wednesday 3 March	Great Hall	Parents' Guild Super Quiz	18.30
• Thursday 4 March	Great Hall	Chamber & Instrumental Concert	19.00
• Tuesday 9 March	Great Hall	Joint Symphony Orchestra Concert	20.00
• 16- 20 March	Lund Theatre	The Shadow of a Gunman	19.30
• Thursday 25 March	Great Hall	UCS Spring Concert	19.30

Points for Parents

- **Mock GCSE Examinations:** Please note that the bulk of the mock exams (for all members of the Upper Remove) will take place immediately after half-term next term. Robyn Spencer has included with this mailing some general and specific guidance to all GCSE candidates and their families regarding exam preparation and revision.
- **AS & A2 Modules in January:** A number of Sixth Formers are scheduled to take modular exams in January. The arrangements are explained on a separate letter within this mailing.
- **Confidentiality of Address Lists:** We regularly circulate to all families within particular year-groups lists of contact details for the year-group as a whole. Please always treat this information with absolute discretion and ensure that it can never fall into the hands of those likely to abuse it. Please note that no part of this information should ever be circulated without the specific consent of the families concerned.
- **Availability of Pupils for Saturday Games Fixtures:** Please respect the school's policy that selection to represent the school, on a Saturday or at any other time, represents a firm commitment for your son or daughter. We always understand that certain fixtures may prove impossible for family or religious reasons, but please try to inform us well in advance of such unavailability, so that games patrons can plan accordingly.
- **Road Works in Froggnal:** Work on the water mains is scheduled to re-start in Froggnal on 4th January. Please expect delays and try to ensure that students arrive promptly at school.

Outreach & Partnerships; Romania & Goa; Community Action

UCS's work in the community goes a good way beyond charitable fund-raising these days.

We have a full partnership with the Westminster Academy. We work closely with a number of local Primary Schools. UCS students also give their time in local charity shops. We devise and co-host a Summer School for Gifted and Talented Primary Schoolchildren each year. We have delivered training for KS2 Modern Languages teachers in Camden. We have created and hosted a Primary School football tournament.

Our commitment extends beyond the local area. We raise money every year for Equatorial College School in Uganda, finding bursaries and providing the capital for new building at that school. There is now a steady stream of UCS 'gap' students to ECS each year. Mr Chapman and the Headmaster will be joining them to visit the school in March 2010.

Chris Reynolds has pioneered our association with the Lighthouse Project. Under their auspices, three UCS students spent time in a Romanian childcare centre last summer. Their reports and assemblies on their time there were intensely moving. Chris has now established and led a new project. Three UCS students travelled with Chris to Goa last October to spend time working in a children's home and school. Once again, the impact on those students was huge and the impact on the whole school has been no less significant. Over forty members of the Transitus have applied to participate in these projects in the future.

And then, of course, there is the traditional festival of Community Action fund-raising. It has been as lively and varied as ever: bag-packing at Sainsbury's; the brilliantly conceived Dribbleathon (passing a football around a route connecting all of the Premier Club grounds in London); *Just a Minute*; cookie shop; *Battle of the Bands*; five-a-side football; bake stalls; assembly bingo; *UCS Has Got Talent*; and the underground railway fanatics who, having conquered London and Paris in 2007 and 2008, travelled to Moscow this year. The final fund-raising tally looks like being close to £19,000 but the causes that will benefit include: Action Aid, The Great Football Giveaway (sponsoring recreation in less developed countries), Treloar Trust School for Disabled Children, The Parkinson's Disease Society, and Cosmic (supporting paediatric intensive care at St Mary's Hospital).

Sir Chris Bonington

Sir Chris Bonington is surely the greatest living British mountaineer. He has climbed virtually every significant peak in the world including – famously – Everest. He has also written some of the best ever books on climbing, exploration and adventure.

He is also an old boy of UCS. We are very proud that he will be visiting the school on 25 February next term. We hope that he will have the chance to meet lots of students, especially those with an interest in climbing and adventurous activities. He will also give a talk in the Lund Theatre on the evening of the same day in which, along with Ean Brown, he will describe a recent trip to Anapurna and the region around it and will, I am sure, answer questions about his extraordinary career.

Tickets for this event will be on sale in January. Proceeds will go to a charity of Sir Chris's choosing that is set up to support the people of the Himalayan region.

Summer Term Activities Week

We are anxious to make better educational use of the post-exam period at the end of the Summer term. We are, therefore, currently planning to turn the final week of that term (beginning on Monday 28th June in 2010) into a UCS Activities Week. We are preparing a programme of activities for all pupils in the Entry, Shell, Lower Remove, Remove and Transitus Years. As soon as the details are finalised, we shall share them with parents. We are keen to take the opportunity for students to take part in day-long educational trips to sites close to London, and to arrange extended activities here at UCS. Pupils in the Entry Year will spend the time on their normal Activity holiday at Skern Lodge. We hope to be able to arrange a shorter residential trip for members of the Lower Remove.

The activities will, of course, be compulsory. There will be additional cost to parents.