





BARROW HILLS
SCHOOL

Our prospectus

by
Matthew Unsworth
HEADMASTER

*You will always remember
seeing Barrow Hills for the first time.
It is hard to picture a more perfect building
for a preparatory school—
an Arts and Crafts home
built of mellow Bargate stone
in the Jacobean style.
Turning off Roke Lane onto the drive
with the house ahead of you,
your eyes guide you to
the old front door.*

CHAPTER ONE

Pedagogy

I was a Headmaster before I was a father. Following the birth of my twins, I looked at the parents bringing their children into school with new clarity.

The ‘production line’ of passive prep school education—where the child is given hours of homework from the age of five or six, and then increasingly tested on that—may do the job of getting them

into their next school. If the next school follows the same philosophy, it may indeed lead to that coveted place at Oxbridge. But once they have finally arrived, the young adult has to take responsibility for their own learning in order that they can grow into an independent thinker. This is not such an easy task. Many flounder and drop out, or worse.

‘But’, you might argue, ‘if the school sidelines other opportunities by working them relentlessly, day after day and year after year, then surely this is worth it for all the As it will get them?’

There is another way.

Perhaps you had the very best of teachers, someone you easily recall, who made a difference to your education

and whose influence lingers to this day. Think about what they did. They saw in you a higher place, a level you could reach, way above your own expectations. They knew the way to get you there. For some it may have been by being persistently demanding and not letting you do anything other than your best. For others, though, it was by being infinitely kind and patient as you gradually got to grips with the task at hand. You will never forget them.

Too often at prep school, ‘academic’ can mean giving all the children the same amount of work at the same level, taking the credit for those who pass but not the responsibility for those who fail. How does this enthrall a child?

Let me define the term ‘academic’ at Barrow Hills. It is all of our teachers

knowing every child, and caring enough about each one to see exactly how they are progressing along the path, how new summits can be scaled and reached, and how to guide and support them through every new step of their extraordinary personal journey. It is our children engaging with their work, putting in whatever effort is needed to grasp the challenge in front of them. It is a living culture of learning and teaching.

I am continually inspired by this challenge and see it as my duty to ensure that this happens for every single one of our children, with every single one of their teachers; that Barrow Hills provides the environment where children love to learn, where they flourish in every class and at every subject, relishing the process

of discovering new possibilities and new worlds opening before them.

Intelligence is not fixed. When a child is absorbed by their work, what limits are there to what they can achieve?

Stanford Professor Carol Dweck talks about having a 'growth mindset'—being someone who loves the process of learning itself, with the ultimate rewards of understanding and newfound wisdom.

This to me is the true goal of education and learning—to be eternally interested in what happens next and just how far an idea can be taken.

TEACHERS

A school where only the children learn is a poor school. The staff at Barrow Hills are active in our pursuit of becoming wiser. We analyse and debate all aspects of pedagogy in our quest to continue learning.

The great public schools want children who are interesting and interested. They want children to come to them with an enthusiasm for learning. They know that if they nurture that enthusiasm, the child will flourish, participating energetically in the full curriculum and enjoying life with vigour.

A great prep school will look to prepare the children for this—to help them acquire a growth mindset and perhaps discover the beginnings of a vocation.

To my mind, there is a dangerous experiment going on at the moment with middle class parents and their children. We seem prepared to sacrifice the immediacy of childhood for some perceived future academic gain, and, following from this, economic gain.

Before their teenage years, children can, by and large, be compliant with this doctrine, especially if you start them young enough. You can take away evenings and weekends with extra Maths and English, set them past paper exams and verbal reasoning papers, and they will go along with it. Helicoptering them to extra this from extra that. Yet when they look back on these years, what will they remember?

Professor Joan Freeman wrote a book, *Gifted Lives: What Happens When Gifted*

Children Grow Up. In her book she studied the adult careers of 210 acknowledged child geniuses. Of these, only six could be judged to be incredibly successful in later life. So many complained of emotionally deprived childhoods, of visiting museums as their only ‘treat’, of never being allowed to read comics.

Childhood itself seems increasingly under threat. This is a good reason to find a prep school where childhood matters.

The ages of three to thirteen are the wonder years of childhood. We want to ensure our children have a childhood—a time to wonder, to stop and stare, to giggle, marvel and gasp.

Don’t you?

We need to treasure this time before

the external pressures of adulthood are put upon them. A child can do amazing things aged five with an iPad. It is not the iPad that is amazing. It is the child. The same child can do even more amazing things with a cardboard box. That is because at the age of five a child’s imagination and creativity are sensational. Put that child with others equally enthused by a sense of exploration and you give this creativity the oxygen it needs to ignite.

It has been forecast that around two-thirds of the jobs our children will do when they grow up do not yet exist. One of the most perceptive educationalists in Britain, Professor Guy Claxton, who has worked with our staff, puts that statistic most clearly into focus when he says that education cannot be about preparing our

children for the life of a nineteenth century clerk. It must be about enabling our children to be twenty-first century explorers.

We need to see the years our children are with us not just as the time to learn the intrinsic benefits of the subjects they study but also to develop useful intellectual habits. For example, we need them to study history in a way that develops the habit of healthy scepticism and thoughtful research. By giving our children the responsibility for devising some of their own experiments, to find out for themselves what is going on and why, we empower them to be the research scientists of the future. We constantly look beyond the content of the curriculum in every subject to seize opportunities to add other dimensions to their thinking that they

will intrinsically draw upon in later life.

One of the first educationalists of modern times, Jean Piaget, defined intelligence as: 'knowing what to do when you don't know what to do'. We want all our children to develop this ability.

CATHOLIC ?

We are a Catholic school with 30% of our families being Catholic, while 65% are Anglican and the remainder other beliefs. It is straightforward for a Catholic to want a Catholic education for their child. But why do the other 70% choose Barrow Hills?

As a Catholic, you know that you want your child to grow up with Christian values and you choose and trust your child's school to work in partnership with you to

inculcate these values in your child. This is our unsaid, but mutually understood, agreement above the agreement to deliver the education that makes up the timetable. We live out the values we give to our children.

I know that for our Anglican parents, this approach to education—one where the Christian values of kindness, honesty, empathy and fortitude are interwoven into the very fabric of the school—was one that could be taken for granted a generation ago. Now this has largely gone, to be replaced by a moral vacuum. Many schools are now silent on such matters. We are not. We base our ethos and find communion in these values and our children grow up in our family, understanding and cherishing them.

For our non-Christian parents, they know that we talk about God, we educate our children to be understanding of others, to see themselves as stewards of the world around them, to know right from wrong.

Everyone will, ultimately, make their own decision. Growing up at Barrow Hills our children come to appreciate the values given to them as a way to live well with others and this gives them the sense of purpose to make the world a better place.

NO ONE IS INVISIBLE

Teachers must go the extra mile for their children. If they can't or won't, they need to find another profession. Good teachers are continually learning to be

better teachers, honing and refining the art of their profession.

Differentiation is key. It is never good enough to teach to the broad middle of the class. At prep schools, where children's behaviour is by and large good, it is all too easy to create passive children. Those who do not quite understand, learn to look as if they do. Teachers of a certain attitude do not see beyond this front. Such children then drift through education becoming ever more invisible.

We challenge ourselves to be honest and declare if a child is invisible to us. To ask if we truly know that each individual in our care is actually engaged in learning and making progress. Are they in any way, and in any aspect, invisible to us?

Through our education, children who need a boost, some support, are encouraged through small group work, to close the gap on their peer group.

Equally, children who are able can easily achieve top marks and finish before the others. These children should not be rewarded by colouring in a picture or reading a book until the end of the lesson—activities that do little or nothing to open up the possibilities of going further. These children, too, are at risk of becoming passive and learning how to live in a comfort zone.

LESS IS MORE

From Junior Prep, every different subject is like working for a different boss at a

different desk. Some schools have nine or ten timetabled lessons each day, which allows about thirty minutes on one subject before the children are up and off again somewhere else.

We have six one-hour lessons per day, two before morning break, two before lunch and two before home time. We schedule the subjects that lead eventually to written exams, such as English and Maths, before lunch, and subjects such as Art and Sport in the afternoon.

COMMON ENTRANCE

What academic framework of subjects and syllabuses do we use to underpin such a progressive approach to learning? Maths, English, RE, Computer Science,

Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History, French, Latin and Spanish, and beyond this, Art, Design Technology, Drama and Music. We have five hours a week of Sport, with a match a week representing the school.

Common Entrance remains the gold standard. The top schools require the same pass marks now that they did twenty years ago. If only the same could be said about some other examination standards.

Common Entrance combines rigour and challenge. It provides us with the space to be independent in our teaching and get to the heart of our subjects. It is not by chasing radically different subjects and assessments that we prepare our children for their futures, but in how we teach what we teach and how the children learn.

CHAPTER TWO

Of sticks and cups

Jean Piaget provocatively proposed that all we can do as adults is to provide as rich an environment as possible for our children. They will learn for themselves, we cannot teach them.

Then Lev Vygotsky put forward the idea that teachers provide the scaffolding that enables children to take steps up in their learning. Like scaffolding, they maintain

this support until the children feel stable enough with their new knowledge to apply it by themselves.

Further pedagogy introduced the notion of being a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learner. Do you learn best through seeing, listening or doing?

More recently, Harvard Professor Howard Gardner's seminal contribution to education was to question the perceived view that intelligence is purely in the realms of academic intellect. He saw intelligences in many other areas.

So then, at the very least, we need schools that are abundant in resources and opportunities. Add to this teachers who are expert in understanding where a child can be and who possess the means

to effectively champion that growth. This is a strong beginning. If we then deliver this learning through a multi-sensory approach and a curriculum that captivates the child, we are getting somewhere. And that is what Barrow Hills is all about.

FIRST STEPS

Play. Let us rejoice in such a precious word. We promote the joy of play and are proud that our children start their ten-year journey at Barrow Hills immersed in a culture of play.

It is the art of delivering this play that defines our Kindergarten. We make a conscious decision to employ a qualified teacher for our three-year-olds. Someone who understands progress and can guide

the play towards that goal, rather than merely steer their charges through a day of child-chosen activities.

Therein lies our strength. The children love Kindy because it is filled with play. Our understanding is that through this play, our children learn how to work alongside each other, how to share and take turns as much as how to count and know their letters. The children love our Director of Sport when he comes in to take their sport time; they love our Director of Music when he comes in to take their music time; they love our French teacher when she comes in to open their ears to another way of naming the world around them; they love our Forest School teacher when he takes them out into our woods for our outdoor education and the children

gather sticks to make, in their imagination, a home for hedgehogs around the base of an ancient oak.

It is excellent to see our youngest children learning from specialist teachers, laying the foundation for sport, music, language, and through Forest School, an understanding of nature and learning at a different pace. I also see our children learning from adult male and female role models who are neither family nor family friends.

LEARNING HOW TO RUN

Reception is the year when all our children learn to read books and write in sentences with capital letters and full stops, as well as how to add and take away.

English and Mathematics are vital. They are the cornerstones of academic learning and remain the most important indicators of academic ability when children sit exams for senior schools.

English is an interesting language to teach. It is phonetic, yet only to a point. Children need to learn their phonic sounds, blend them to make words, record this in writing and while doing this, get to grips with the many words that do not read the way they are written. We teach children how to read and write using the 'Read, Write, Inc' scheme, devised by Ruth Miskin, because it cheerfully meets the task head-on and, in a pragmatic way, lays a firm foundation in the complexities of our language which endows them with the confidence to write and read stories.

It is a sobering statistic that over 90% of children who at eleven, have not reached the required standard in Mathematics, will go on to fail their GCSE Maths at sixteen. This failure did not start at sixteen, nor at eleven.

England, for whatever reason, has a blind spot in regard to Maths. In this country, one can openly admit to having failed Maths in a way that no one would admit to not being able to read. Why is this?

The majority of primary teachers are Arts graduates, often leaving their own personal learning of Maths behind at sixteen. In the early years, when the children are learning to count and write their numbers, to do the basic four rules and know the basic shapes, this perhaps is not so much of an issue. However, during

the primary years, Maths accelerates beyond this and moves into decimals, ratios, percentages, graphs and algebra.

We teach Maths through a hands-on, concrete method in the early years called *Maths Makes Sense*. Much of the visual and kinaesthetic is provided by using paper cups to see and move about by hand to prove the abstract they write on paper. A child who has personally divided a paper cup into quarters is never in doubt as to what a quarter is. Neither will they have any difficulty in understanding that a quarter 'goes into' one four times, or into two eight times. Hence in Reception they confidently add and subtract halves and quarters, and by Year Two, happily divide six by a half and come up with the correct answer of twelve. The rigor involved is

high—the children work in their own Maths books, writing out their sums, being actively taught by their teacher. So are the rewards. We have seen that, for many of our children, gaining ability at Mathematics is an important boost to their confidence and hence a stepping stone to being good at every subject. From Year Four upwards, our Maths is taught by Maths specialists giving our children the strength and depth of teacher knowledge to push forwards as the subject grows from the foundations of the four rules.

Like many parents before me, I have seen my own children enter Reception with inquisitive minds and no more than an awareness of letters and numbers. Less than half a year later they were able to look at posters and signs when out and

about and read them to me, get out paper cups at home and 'teach Daddy' how to do long sums.

With this firm foundation, Years One and Two continue to guide the children so that they become confident readers, writers and mathematicians. Ils savent un peu de Français, they can sing and they are confident on stage. They become good friends who know how to play and work together. In short, they know how to share and enjoy their school life.

By the end of Pre-Prep, our children have become confident individuals. They know they are unique, they are interested in their work and they understand that they are part of a community that involves many others, some more like them, some less so. It is this coming together of

talents and potentials that leaves them excited to come back, after the summer holidays, to life in Junior Prep.

CHAPTER THREE

Into the Ark

For our children, being in Junior Prep means one thing above all else—wearing the School blazer.

It does not seem to matter whether it is in the depths of winter or the height of summer, our children will not take them off and I rather like this. In some schools blazers are worn, it seems, on only three days a year—first day, carol service and

last day, which is very odd, given the expense. Our children thoughtfully manage to wear out and grow out of their blazers with perfect timing.

THE ARK

The main house at Barrow Hills is called Great Roke. It was built in 1909 and replaced a farmhouse. Because it had been a farm, the site had a big barn, which survived the change from working farm to private house and it remained untouched when the estate became the School in 1952.

In 2006 the barn was rebuilt. Still looking like a barn outwardly, it ingeniously houses four modern classrooms and a computer suite. These are the form rooms of our Years Three and Four.

The coming together of children from our Pre-Prep and those joining from local village infant schools works its wonders. Our Year Threes and Fours do feel quite grown up now with the blazer and all. However, they are still very young, and to have their own place for these years is just right.

The two-year voyage takes our children from the confident individuals of Pre-Prep to knowing more about themselves and becoming more independent workers. By the time they step into Upper Prep, moving back into Great Roke, they have a real sense of what they are good at, what their talents are pointing towards, and with this, an awakening of vocation. Importantly, they have also developed a realistic appraisal of their weaknesses and

are beginning to want to work on these just as much as their strengths, because they want to be their best.

All of this takes much care, dedication and planning from the teachers. However from the child's perspective, the day-by-day change is gently imperceptible.

These two years are also a transition from the mainly form teacher-led education in Pre-Prep, to the completely subject specialist teaching of Upper Prep. In Junior Prep, the children have their form teachers for around half their timetable, being set for English and Maths across the year, and in their own classes for nearly all the rest of their time.

GAMES

One of the main features of life at Barrow Hills is sport, and from Year Three our children have five hours of sport a week. We know that part of the fun of prep school life is pulling on the colours and playing for the School. Sport is such a big thing. Before becoming a Head, friends of mine who were Heads elsewhere predicted that I would have the most complaints each week from sport. The first couple of years at Barrow Hills proved them exactly right. Week in, week out, two or three parents would complain to me that their son or daughter should be in the Firsts, in the A team, should be given a chance to show what they could do. And week in, week out, I would scrupulously defend my staff. Performances were assessed and teams

were picked on current form, I would reply with a straight bat.

Seeing that this had the legs to be ever thus it was time to call my sports staff together. We looked deeper into the message behind the messengers and concluded the main issue was that the Firsts—the A teams—were playing every week, and when the Seconds—the B teams—were not playing, those who were not playing felt left out. Then, when the B teams were playing, those in the C teams, who only used to play once a month, felt left out. We needed to both challenge our most able sports girls and boys, and also ensure sport for all.

The way forward was clear. Get all the children out playing for the School every week, week in, week out. And as

far as is humanly possible, this is what we have done ever since. Sport, in terms of keeping me busy, has dropped from three complaints a week to three a year, if that.

The love and joy of taking part in sport, at whatever level, is fervently and firmly in the heart of every Barrow Hillian.

ART AND DESIGN

In Junior Prep, the children embark on specialist lessons in Art and in Design Technology. These subjects are housed in what used to be the stables of the estate and provide a learning environment like no other.

It helps that the Heads of Art and Design Technology are inspired and ingenious. This, in turn, explains why

the children adore these subjects. On a Friday lunchtime, the gardens are near-deserted, as most of the children are voluntarily and eagerly packed into the Old Stables being artists and designers. Needless to say, many of them celebrate at the end of Year Eight with scholarships to public school due to the excitement of finding their own creativity in the atmosphere of this wonderful building.

ST ALBERTUS MAGNUS

We know that in the right environment (Piaget!), and in the right hands (Vygotsky!), science is as creative as art. To this end we tore out the insides of a 1960s classroom block and created two specialist science laboratories—one

for Junior Prep and one for Common Entrance. We named the building the St Albertus Magnus Laboratories, after Saint Albertus who in the late Middle Ages made observations of the natural world, performing experiments to test the validity of what he read in books. In the Middle Ages, such a sceptical and enquiring approach was unusual, especially in a Catholic bishop. Now it is regarded as an essential attribute to the trained and disciplined mind. Today, too many schoolchildren aged seven, eight and nine learn science in a classroom from just reading books. Not so at Barrow Hills. As much science as possible is done by our children through their own experiments. St Albertus would be (and maybe is) very proud.

The building of academic prowess continues apace, with specialist Maths teaching beginning in Year Four. There is a growing sense of purpose and knowledge held by the children. The path towards life in Upper Prep has been carefully laid.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ad Majora Paramur

*We are prepared for
greater things*

Upper Prep, Years Five to Eight, is the last stage of our children's journey at Barrow Hills. As noted earlier, Vygotsky described the role of teaching (both for teachers as professionals and for all of us as parents) as providing scaffolding to our children's learning until the point they can stand up by themselves and no longer need the support.

When our children leave us, either at 13+ or 11+, the scaffolding we provide is taken down. The founding Headmaster of Barrow Hills, Father Erconwald Probst, decided on the School's motto by 'happy thought'—and he could not have chosen better: *Ad Majora Paramur*. We are prepared for greater things.

The role of a great prep school—and the clue is in the name—is to prepare our children to stride confidently into their next school. We expect our children to achieve greater things at eighteen than at thirteen or eleven. If we get it right, our children will continue to see life as one continuous progression of learning, enquiry and application. Common Entrance, GCSEs, A levels, degrees, are all mileposts along the way, to walk up to and then walk beyond.

We prepare our oldest children to be more than individuals, to be able to be team players, to be interdependent. They know their own strengths and appreciate, and celebrate, the strengths of others. They know from their time at Barrow Hills up to Year Six that independence can enable them to work by themselves, to get a job done with self-discipline. Moving forwards into Years Seven and Eight they learn how to work collaboratively and, through this knowledge, to know how to be a good team player—sometimes to lead, at other times to support. This is a key life skill that will be especially appreciated by their first employer.

There is more that we achieve with our oldest children. They learn through the process of Common Entrance to

set themselves goals, to sharpen their ambition to succeed. By the time they sit Common Entrance in the June of Year Eight, they have their sights set on the prize of a place in their next school. They aim for straight As and put in the extra hours of study through their personal desire to do their very best.

We achieve this alchemy with our children in their final two years with us and it sets them up for the rest of their lives.

We provide an academic education in Upper Prep to rise to this call. We give our children the scaffolding they need to grow up to the levels demanded of them, both in their subject work and pastorally, so that they see all this as the best sort of motivational gauntlet thrown down in front of them.

For some of our children, public school life begins at 11+, not 13+. For some of our girls, Guildford High School and St Catherine's at Bramley provide two examples of the best in senior school education and prove the perfect destination for them. Entry for these schools is at 11+. Equally, for our boys aiming for the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, at 13+, the entrance exam for deferred entry stands before them in the January of Year Six.

Preparation for 11+ is an art. From Year Five onwards all subjects are specialist-taught and our children form working partnerships with their teachers that will take them through.

Our children in the January of Year Six, many of them still only ten years of

age, are not fully aware of the enormity of the consequences of the exams they take. It is not a natural time for them to be mature enough to fully comprehend the process. We know our children stand at a crossroads with their future schools. They can only take one road ahead and they need to pass exams to have the choice.

It is all too easy to put our children into a pressurised environment, with more intensity than they can fully cope with. We, then, as parents and teachers, work together to find the right balance and provide the extra hands to help.

Through Year Five and into Year Six, we prepare our children with a thorough programme of past papers and exam techniques balanced with the continuing broad curriculum embracing a full school life.

The Sport, Art, Music and Drama lessons continue and they have the right balance of work and homework to ensure they do their best come the exams. Consequently, when our children move to their next schools, they flourish and thrive. We set great store by working with parents through this process, tailoring the level of work exactly to the individual's needs.

EXTENDING

We want all our children to grow wiser and better.

When a child shows promise and potential in a subject, they do not need to start at question one and wade through ten or so questions to get to those that will excite and challenge—they start on

question eleven. Our teachers provide our most able children with extension work that often goes well beyond the work of the day, or takes the child sideways to explore other angles and thoughts.

When a group of children show an aptitude for a subject, we get them together and take them over and beyond the subject. Academically, this could mean going completely 'off piste' and into work that might well not be on the syllabus but is exciting and expansive for them. I teach physics to the top years. For my extension group I regularly mine what is in the media for something they have heard about and are curious to know more.

As children approach the top of the school, many will be in the running for a scholarship to public school. We give

these children a mentor who meets with them and helps ensure they receive the preparation required to be at their best come the scholarship exams.

For one of our Academics, their mentor is one of their core subject teachers who liaises with the other academic staff to ensure plenty of practice, guidance and support for a particular public school's scholarship papers. In individual disciplines, it will be the Head of Subject. For example, our Head of Art works with our artists to ensure their portfolio is alive with work.

Our ethos, the Catholic ethos of education, is to educate the whole child, find out what they are good at and celebrate this in our school community. All our children in Upper Prep are part of at least

one extension group if not more. Not one child slips through the net. Our approach to extension embodies our ethos, and it is something I am proud of.

We approach support in the same way. If, for example, the academic playing field can be levelled by giving a child notes in the right font, in the right size and on the right coloured paper we do this.

On occasion a few children in a particular year group need a bit more, for example help with spelling or tables, or to crack long division. We take this group aside and work with them to master whatever it is they are falling behind their peers with.

If a child would benefit from a visiting specialist or a specialist member of staff

working with them, one-to-one, to make that difference the best time is found during the week for this to happen.

Through this approach, support becomes extension. It really is something I find so exciting—seeing our children inspired by this progress to achieve unanticipated successes.

GOLDEN

For the children fortunate enough to be able to stay on to Years Seven and Eight, and for many looking back afterwards, the best two years are about to unfold.

For a start, they get to wear the blue blazer. This marks them out at the top

of the school and all the other children look up to them. By this time, many of our children are working on potential scholarships to public school through our Extension programme. During these two years their personal work ethic is being honed, ready for the public school exams in Year Eight.

In the summer term of Year Seven, all our children are asked to think of an area of school life they would like to give something back to, in order that they can become a leader for their last year.

I don't mind what form this takes—it could be helping out in Pre-Prep hearing readers. It could be as Drama Captain, leading the Extension Drama Club or as Sports Captain, helping out with games in Year Two. One year, our Head Girl and

Deputy Head Girl wanted to help out in the office. So, for the year, they answered the telephones for the school for half an hour every Friday lunchtime. Each child has the opportunity to give something back. By doing this, our children benefit from the positive boost to their self-esteem, becoming role models for the younger members of the school.

I grew up in the Norfolk countryside in a house surrounded by fields of wheat. I would see the first shoots of green emerge some time in February and then, day by day, grow to full height and ripen in the summer sun. Those days before harvest, when it is warm and sunny, seem to last forever. Then, there is that evening when the air is dry and the farmer knows tomorrow will be harvest. All that has

taken so long to nurture, husband and prepare, is taken in, and gone.

I think of the final year of prep school, Year Eight, as the time that seems to last forever in the warmth of the sun. Some of the children would have started at Barrow Hills ten years before in Kindy and now they are at the top of the school and the peak of their current abilities, fully enjoying all prep school life has to offer. However, time is not standing still.

The November exams happen—a time to set targets before the mocks in February. Christmas comes and goes, along with their last Carol Service. Mocks are passed as a good signpost to Common Entrance; scholarships are won. Easter, for the first time, is not just a time of rest but also a time of revision. The

summer term begins, and the focus is on the June exams. The Hall is set up with exam desks and the big clock moved to the front, just as it was at the end of Year Seven. However, this time it is for real.

The last exam of Common Entrance for some is on Wednesday, for those doing Latin, Thursday morning. There is a week of waiting, then, in come the results—all passed, all in to where they aimed for. All that work paid off and now, time for some fun. The activities programme: life-saving in the pool, conservation work on Witley Common, a special Shakespeare workshop perhaps and then off to the Ardèche to go rafting and camping-out under the stars.

Finally, back to a uniform that does not quite fit so well any more. The last week

and then, the last day. Leavers' Mass and all the mums in unison reaching for a hanky as the children sing the final hymn, the School Song, with joy and gusto, for their last time as a Barrow Hillian. Prize-giving after lunch: the Headmaster droning on for a bit, the Chairman of Governors likewise. The Guest Speaker with an important life message to give. The cups, the trophies and Jansen Shield awarded to the Captain of the winning House for the year. The Head Girl's and Head Boy's traditional speech poking gentle fun at the school and all the anachronisms that served them so long that now, fondly, they can see they have outgrown. Time for a final hymn and prayer. Then it is all over; their education here is at an end. They are prepared for greater things, and

now they will go forward and do them.

As I did so often as a boy, standing on the stubble after the harvest is gone, I stand as Headmaster outside the front of the School as the School loads itself into cars and disperses. The year is at an end. Rather wistfully, I turn to the front door and go in, knowing that come September, excited children in brand new uniforms will come up the drive, stand in front for that photograph for Grandma and Grandad on the first day of school, knock on the door, and it all begins anew.

BARROW HILLS SCHOOL

*Roke Lane
Witley, Godalming
Surrey GU8 5NY*

telephone: 01428 683639 or 01428 682634

www.barrowhills.org.uk

ADMISSIONS
sec@barrowhills.org.uk

HEADMASTER
matthew.unsworth@barrowhills.org.uk



