

3 December 2021

Dear Parents

You will remember (I hope!) that last week I used Word from the Head to share with you some of the themes from this year's GSA Conference. I touched on the words of this year's President, Sam Price of Benenden, who applauded girls' confidence in speaking up and telling us about the kindness, respect and inclusivity they want to see in school and across society. However, as I said last week, she argued that this also carries a level of responsibility on their part, especially in being willing and able to hear different views.

This was the theme for Dr Michael Spence, philosopher and President and Provost of UCL since January 2021. In a fascinating talk entitled 'The Art of Disagreeing Well' he explored the challenges facing society today in engaging in proper, meaningful discussion of ideas. He started with the proposition that this has been eroded for a number of reasons and over a much longer time span than we might imagine. Long gone are the days of Enlightenment debate of ideas in coffee shops and salons among the educated elite (and a good thing too, that education and access to information is available to all rather than a few). Gone too, or at least significantly reduced in number and audience, are the moderated and balanced political analysis discussions in print media or on television. The advent of social media, he argued, is just the latest development which has stymied our ability to debate ideas well - but it is having a devastating impact.

With no moderation of content and a total lack of nuance in the dissemination of ideas, along with its ubiquity as the preferred source of information and current affairs news for young people, social media has played a major part in the loss of balance in civil discourse. As Dr Spence explained, this situation has been exacerbated by the extensive consumption of social media in lockdown. Our young people have been immersed in echo chambers offering puritanically simplistic views. Now they need help to navigate this terrain and their minds need to be given the chance to open. He outlined two possible reactions which he has seen becoming increasingly widespread in universities:

- 1) In the first scenario, young people feel they should be protected from confronting ideas they find difficult. They claim that hearing these ideas threatens their wellbeing or mental health so they have to be closed down. This leads to 'no platforming' speakers or banning publications from libraries. In his view there are two major problems with this route: firstly, it silences diverse or heterodox opinions. Also, it just doesn't work - if you silence difficult or different opinions you may manage to only encounter similarly-minded people while you're in the enclosed community of school or university, but the same will not be true throughout your life.

- 2) The other option reaction is for people to emphasise the virtue of free speech as more important than all other rights and freedoms and subscribe to the SUMO school of thought - shut up and move on. This state of debate means that we are not exchanging ideas, but rather just shouting at each other. Dr Spence pointed to recent controversies about gender/sex and Israel/Palestine on campus at UCL as good examples of this.

The problem is that in both situations, each side claims to feel unsafe as their values and wellbeing are not being supported while at the same time each side claims the right to free speech. As Dr Spence argued, it would be better if both sides talked and understood each other more, even if they carried on disagreeing at the end of it.

So how do we train our students and staff in this kind of debate? In his view we need to do this very deliberately, being mindful of the epistemic virtues. I will point out here that I had to go away and do some research to find out what 'epistemic virtues' are. If you're not a philosopher either, I hope you'll be interested to learn that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the concepts of truth, belief and justification of belief. In this context, epistemic virtues could be described as intellectual virtues and critical, conscientious thinkers could be described as epistemically virtuous.

You can imagine that I was thrilled with this definition, given the Unitarian emphasis on critical thinking: how lovely to think that Channing students are by their very nature epistemically virtuous! However, the truth is that these virtues are not intrinsic in all of us and our young people need help in developing them. Dr Spence provided some excellent examples of the values and characteristics we might consider:

- Humility: help them understand that their position might be wrong, and that debate might lead them to abandon their position or change their mind. We need to suspend judgement until we have a bit more information and understand the background.
- Use language which increases understanding, rather than shuts down alternative viewpoints or stops us really hearing what is being said
- Work hard on the ability to hear what the other person is saying. One way of doing this is to look carefully for the points of agreement between two sides and identify the specific points of disagreement, which are the ones which need to be discussed.
- Recognise the expertise of the other: when people hold a different opinion it's (usually) because evidence and experience has led them to that position. Use conversation to explore what brought them there rather than dismissing their conclusion as wrong or invalid.
- Emphasise the importance of courtesy and rigour in the kind of debate which builds understanding. Feeling uncomfortable is a good thing and what education is about, rather than something to be avoided.

Above all, our aim must be to help our young people think in a nuanced way, rather than in the slogan of a tweet. Many pupils approach debate feeling that the aim is to change other people's mind - in fact it's not, necessarily. Far more important is to build a coherent narrative about why you believe what you believe about a topic while leaving space to realise that you might be wrong and that that's OK. This is what enables people to disagree well: disagreement shouldn't feel like an attack or make people feel personally vulnerable. As Dr Spence put it, our young

people need to learn to deal critically and objectively with ideas and as adults we need to model what it means to live in a genuinely diverse society where not everybody believes the same thing.

This is something that we have built into the Channing ethos as part of our Unitarian tradition, but that doesn't mean it isn't challenging sometimes. Our students are no less immune to the siren call of social media clickbait and there is plenty of work to do in our lessons, assemblies and form times to ensure that they understand the wider context of some of the issues on which they are getting superficial or one-sided information.

To that end I was delighted to be able to share the news with Year 11 this week that we will be offering Philosophy A level at Channing from September 2022. Our new Head of Sixth Form who joins us in January, Ms Heidi Gjertsen, is a Philosophy specialist with an extremely successful track record, most recently at Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge which ranks among the highest performing Sixth Form colleges in the UK. She has even been nominated for a TES Teacher of the Year award! We are unusual in including Philosophy in our Year 7 curriculum so it's great to be offering this at A level and I know that there will be many who want to take it up. Soon Channing students really will be the most critical, conscientious thinkers around!

To end this week I have some announcements to share with you. The first is to let you know that at the end of this term Ms Elaine Ingram, School Secretary, will be stepping down from her role. She has done a huge amount for everyone in the school community over the last 14 years and I know that many of you are very well acquainted with her indeed! I am pleased to say that Mrs Sheila Pyke will join us as School Secretary from Monday 13 December to have a handover with Elaine - and also happy that Elaine is not leaving Channing. She will move to the Careers and Partnerships office for two days a week from January which will provide a change of scenery and responsibility for her. From January you can continue to email staff directly using the  Who should I contact document or contact Mrs Pyke via info@channing.co.uk.

The second thing is to let you know of new arrangements for the start of the Spring term in light of the Government's announcement that we must test all our students before they return to lessons after the holiday. Please note that Thursday 6 January will see a staggered return to school with Year 13 being tested first and then into lessons, followed by Year 11, Year 12 and Year 10. Year 7 - 9 will **not** come to school on Thursday 6 January. Instead Friday 7 January will see a staggered return to school for those year groups, with Year 7 being tested first followed by Year 8 and finally Year 9. Friday will be a normal teaching day for Years 10-13. We will write to you closer to the time with exact timings and location for the testing for each year.

Also a plea to empty your cupboards of non-perishable foodstuffs for our Senior School House winter food collection for local families in need. We donate these to the food bank supported by the Ally Wylie Tower Foundation, in memory of a former Channing pupil. Students can bring in items next week and place them in the House bins in Reception. Thank you in advance for your support of this important community initiative.

And at the very last moment, breaking news! I am delighted to report that Channing has once again been ranked as one of the top 50 independent schools in the UK by The Sunday Times

[Parent Power guide](#). Slipping in at number 48, we are also ranked at number 24 in London. My enormous thanks to the dedicated staff who ensure that our girls really do enjoy success at GCSE and A level, on which these results are based - and of course my thanks to you, discerning parents, for choosing Channing and your unstinting support of the school.

Finally this week, Happy Chanukah! I hope all our Jewish families are having an enjoyable holiday.

With warmest wishes for the weekend,

Lindsey Hughes
Headmistress

The Week Ahead

Year 11 Mock Exams continue

Year 13 Autumn Term TAG Assessments

Monday 6 December 2021

09:00 ABRSM examinations MSI

16:00 Drama Musical Rehearsal AC

Tuesday 7 December 2021

15:20 Drama Musical Rehearsal AC

15:30 Y12 Volunteers - Reading Session at Brookfield Primary School

15:30 Minimus Latin Club at Brookfield School

Wednesday 8 December 2021

11:30 Year 7 ESFA Football vs Thomas Grant School

16:05 Brookfield Primary School - Maths Problem solving Activity

16:05 Brookfield Primary School - Science Club activity

Thursday 9 December 2021

09:00 Carol Concert rehearsal St Michael's Church

11:35 Year 10 Careers Speakers: Dr Michele Orini in the AC

12:00 Years 7-9 Christmas Lunch

16:30 Carol Concert, St Michael's Church

Friday 10 December 2021

Christmas Jumper & Mufti Day

12:00 Years 10-13 Christmas Lunch

Forthcoming Events

Channing School Carol Concert - Thursday 9 December at 4.30pm

A reminder that attendance at our annual Carol Concert at St Michael's Church is compulsory for all Senior School students (except those in Year 11 who have mock exams on Friday 10 December). Please note that due to space restrictions in the church, only a selected group of guests and Year 13 parents have been invited; no tickets are available for other year groups. We will be recording the concert.

Second Hand Uniform Sale - Monday 13 December at 3.30pm

The second hand uniform sale will be on Monday 13 December between 3:30 and 4:30pm in the Senior School Dining Room. Card payments can be accepted. If anyone has any uniform they would like to donate which is clean and in good condition, please leave this with Elaine Ingram in Reception.

A Neuroscience Lecture by Dr Guy Sutton - Monday 13 December at 5pm

Dr Guy Sutton, Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Nottingham Medical School Psychiatry division, will be conducting a workshop at school about the history and assessment of mental illnesses, differing aspects of the brain and a live brain dissection for Year 12 and 13 Psychology students.

Dr Sutton will stay on to deliver a special lecture to parents and students at 5pm on 13 December entitled 'The Present and Future of the Brain' and you are warmly invited to attend.

"The talk will explore some recent developments in neuroscience, together with emerging technologies such as the 'cerebral organoid' - growing human brain in a Petri dish - and the brain computer interface. We will deal with big themes - the nature of consciousness, the possibilities of telepathy and mind reading, control of electronic devices with the mind - and possible timelines. Brain-nerd heaven!"

The talk will begin at 5.00pm and last approximately one hour. We encourage you to arrive at the school a little earlier to enjoy some refreshments.

Please sign up using the Google form at the latest by Wednesday the 8th of December.

<https://forms.gle/LWfSDaovn9AeG8Nm9>

DECEMBER 13TH 2021 5-6PM AT CHANNING

'THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE BRAIN'

An interactive talk by Dr Guy Sutton

Dr Guy Sutton, director of Medical Biology Interactive and honorary consultant assistant professor at the University of Nottingham Medical School

Want to learn more about this talk?

Contact Ms Rehmat
nrehmat@channing.co.uk

Sign up form
<https://forms.gle/7WuzVomV5QUcYQrD6>

Reminders

Temporary Extra Curricular Programme for Sport

Due to examinations taking place in the New Sports Hall, there will be a temporary extra curricular timetable from Monday 29 November to Wednesday 8 December.

Please find it here: ■ Extra Curricular Timetable Exam Period 29_11 - 08_12.pdf .

Podcast: Chatting with Channing

We are delighted to launch the first episode of our brand new podcast series: Chatting with Channing. Chatting with Channing lets the listener find out more about our wonderful school by hearing from people throughout the school community. Each episode, they'll hear real stories from staff, pupils, parents and alumnae, to give a true reflection of life on Highgate Hill.

And in our very first episode, we're speaking to our Headmistress, Mrs Lindsey Hughes. Mrs Hughes explains what it means when you hear the phrase 'Girls enjoying success', she talks about the importance of being 10% braver, and we also hear about pastoral care and the educational research the staff get involved in.



We also get to find out a little bit more about Mrs Hughes herself and how she might choose to spend her time when she's not in school. We hope you'll listen along and sign up so you can receive alerts when a new episode launches.

Please let us know what you think and if you have any great ideas for future episodes, or even if you'd like to be interviewed yourself!

Listen here: <https://channing.buzzsprout.com/>, or search Chatting with Channing in your favourite podcast app!

Charity Reminder

Year 7 students are collecting this year for 'Beyond the Streets', a charity that supports homeless and vulnerable women in London. Beyond the Streets aims to help women off of the streets and into safe housing and employment. They help to provide access to things such as counsellors, addiction services, and housing support. They also provide a space during the day where women can receive a hot meal, and access showers and washing facilities. Beyond the Streets supports many women who have had to leave abusive households, and who are now facing a Christmas either in a hostel or on the streets.

Year 7 students are putting together gift boxes that can be given to the women supported by Beyond the Streets this Christmas. We are collecting the following:

- Nail polish
- Make-up products
- Bath and shower products
- Adult colouring/activity books and pens/ pencils
- Sanitary products
- Chocolate

Please support Year 7 with their donations if you can. Thank you!

Online Safety Update

Thank you to everyone who attended yesterday's [Digital Awareness](#) Webinar for parents in Years 7 to 11. For those who were unable to attend, please click [here](#) to view the recording. This week we're sharing a resource from National Online Safety - [What Parents Need To Know About TikTok](#). For more information, guides and videos, download the free NOS app [here](#).

Girls Enjoying Success

Chemistry News: Year 10 RSC Chemistry Challenge

The Chemistry Challenge is a competition run by the Royal Society of Chemistry's South East Region for schools and science clubs. It is open to teams consisting of four Year 10 pupils. The Chemistry Department were delighted that four teams of Year 10 pupils chose to take part in the preliminary stage of the competition during lunchtime on Monday 29 November. 'Ion the Prize' (Tabi, Kitty, Bella C and Iona) battled it out against 'Positive as a Proton' (Sophia T, Maddie S, Charlotte C and Chiara), 'All the Good Names Argon' (Eve, Tacy, Jess E and Elsie) and 'Barbaric Borons' (Sophie D, Ava, Eloise and Rose) to complete odd-one-out questions,

connection-based questions, anagram puzzles and calculations. The pupils worked well within their teams to solve the puzzles and showed excellent problem-solving skills and a strong understanding of chemistry. Their papers will be submitted to the RSC South East Region for marking and we will have to wait and see whether any of our teams make it through to the next round. Dr Spinks would like to thank all of the competitors for their excellent company, good humour (there was much laughter!) and interest in Chemistry.

Classics News

34 Year 8s made the short journey by tube yesterday to visit the Museum of London for a Latin/Classics trip. We played 'photo bingo' in the London before London' gallery before moving onto the Roman gallery to create illustrated journals based on 5 artefacts. We enjoyed the poetry created by visitors to the museum before heading off to the Roman amphitheatre underneath the Guildhall. There we performed excerpts from the Cambridge Latin Course, complete with running deer and growling wolves. Thanks to the Classics Department for running this trip.



Latin News

Mrs Elliot and three Year 12 students, Emily, Anna and Anika, have begun a Minimus Latin club at Brookfield School. This week Anika had prepared exciting activities on the story of Perseus and Medusa. We're looking forward to our Saturnalia party on 14 December!

Economics News

Last Friday, the Year 12 and 13 economists attended an online Economics in Action Conference. The event was live streamed and Bobby Seagull (author, TV personality and Maths teacher) was the chair. He shared his personal experience of the financial crisis of 2008 from the trading floors of Lehman Brothers and explored financial derivatives and some of the weapons of math destruction that caused this chaotic recession.

Other keynote speakers included: Dr Spielmann (Professor at University of Bristol) who discussed policies for a greener future; Lindsay Judge (Research Director at Resolution Foundation) provided an insight into what it is like working at an economic think-tank and she also discussed the current living standards crunch; Anna Bird (Principal Advisor, Behavioural Insights Team) provided examples of how behavioural economics is applied to policy and social problems; Ayeisha Thomas-Smith (Broadcaster) questioned "Is the UK economy really growing?" and the final speaker was a Principal Examiner who gave valuable examination advice.

Drama and Theatre Studies News

On Tuesday 30 November Year 13 Drama and Theatre Studies students staged extracts from 'Brontë' by Polly Teale, using Shared Experiences' unique blend of naturalism and expressionism to present their scenes. The Component 3 examination showcased their physical theatre skills,

characterisation and sought to explain the three Brontë sisters' lives, which were often misunderstood. The audience were invited into their struggles to make their mark on the literary world as women (they wrote under the nom de plumes of Currer, Ellis & Acton Bell) and the impact of their father and brother on the choices. The piece flits between the fantasy world of the sisters' novels and their lived experience - period costume and striking design choices made this a memorable interpretation and a visual treat for the audience. Congratulations to Nura, Sasha and Lucie on their performance.



Careers In Sport Week

Daniel Geey, Lawyer

“As we (Year 9s) approach the time where we will choose our GCSEs, many of us dread the thought of closing off our options and having to choose, eventually, one field of study. Mr Geey, however, has combined two of the things he is the most curious about, sport and law. When asked, someone in the audience said that she enjoyed playing sport, but was also interested in medicine, and wanted to combine the two by being a team medic. Many of us have interests that we don't want to let go, and Mr Geey has given us insight into how to combine them into a productive career path. As well as this, he talked about 'success'



and destigmatising the word 'failure', which was especially important for us to hear, as Channing students are prone to worrying a lot about test scores!

After telling us about his job, he described how he juggled parenthood and working full time at a law firm. This being already incredibly impressive in itself, he also had only 18 months to write a manuscript for his book, 'Done Deal'. Rather than explaining his success, he inspired us by describing the amount of pressure he was under, and how resilient he had to be."

Eve & Opal, Year 9



Emma Goldberg, Sports TV Presenter

"Yesterday afternoon on 1 December, Ms Goldberg came and talked to us about her job. She works behind the scenes in Sports TV. This was really interesting and she answered many of our questions such as "why does live TV have a lag time before being broadcast?". The answer is that when it is sent via the fibres, it takes 3 seconds to travel to your screen. Also, we wanted to know how races are filmed. She told us that months before the race they go to the track and set up cameras from all the edges to film from every angle so they don't miss any of the action. I am really glad she came to talk to us, and I hope she visits again in the future."

Elodie, Year 7

Claire Missingham, Yoga Teacher, wellbeing writer

"Today we learnt about how we can choose whatever career we want and how yoga is great for mindfulness. We also learnt that we should devote ourselves to the things we love and 'find our people'. We would like to thank Mrs Missingham for coming to talk to us."

Anne, Year 7

Geography News

Year 10 had a fantastic day of Geography fieldwork at the Olympic Park on Wednesday looking at whether the regeneration of the area has improved quality of life. We looked at two sites outside the Olympic Park and two within it. Year 10 carried out their fieldwork in great spirits and produced excellent quality field sketches, field notes and data collection despite the December weather.



Politics News

In Politics Society, Anika in Year 12 led a discussion on the rise in anti-immigrant sentiments in the UK. The students looked at how these sentiments presented themselves in the past, in the form of far-right parties, before examining how Brexit contributed to an increase in anti-foreign sentiment. The group also specifically focused on the government's current response to the migrant crisis and how that linked to our topic. In their final discussion, they talked about what role we as individuals must play in solving this issue, as well as the importance of people being educated about topics such as immigration.

TeenTech News

Last Wednesday our Year 9 and Year 12 TeenTech students went to the Science Museum. The students were able to see lots of amazing inventions and how science has helped to develop technology over time. This experience will hopefully give them some inspiration as to what is possible and contribute to the creative thinking needed to develop their own TeenTech ideas. We also had the opportunity to visit Imperial College London and take in a bit of university life.



Music at Lunchtime

Friday's Music at Lunchtime saw a concert with a difference. Grace W who is taking her ABRSM diploma shortly, treated us to her entire programme. My, what an undertaking! The legendary 'Sonata Quasi una Fantasia' by Beethoven, known more readily as the 'Moonlight', completely captivated us with elegantly paced and technical assuredness. The infamous 1st movement had exquisite dynamics; the graceful Allegretto had beautifully controlled tempi.

Claude Debussy's 'Sarabande' transported us with the magical range of colours that Grace exploited from the juicy clusters of notes and coaxed from our piano. A selection of vignette-like 'Visions fugitives' by Prokofiev were at times delightful, mischievous or agitated and provided a whimsical, effervescent snapshot of sounds which perfectly complemented the Debussy.

It was, however, in the wonderfully rich and luxurious Intermezzo in A Major by Brahms that Grace excelled. This gloriously delicious romantic piece allowed the audience to bathe in the warmth that Grace exuded.



Teaching & Learning News - Parental Behaviours and Attitudes

Our weekly look at the most up to date educational research that will help students, teachers and parents understand the attitudes and behaviours of Fearless Learners.

Researchers reviewed 36 studies on the effect of parental behaviours and attitudes on childrens' grades, They then made suggestions about what does and doesn't work. You can read a simple summary of some of that research [here](#).

Tip: Starting simple and small, such as regular conversations with your children about their learning and setting clear boundaries about homework and screen time, seems to be a good launchpad for success. Children often learn from what their parents do and not just what they say, so it stands to reason that if we model the desired behaviours (i.e. good reading habits), they are more likely to replicate it themselves.

Thanks to [Inner Drive](#) for their support with this initiative. [#fearlesslearners](#)

News from the Junior School

Please see our social media accounts to keep up to date with what's going on at the Junior School. Follow us on: [Channing Instagram Account](#), [Channing Twitter Account](#), [Channing Facebook Account](#) and [Miss Dina Hamalis Instagram Account](#).

Channing Archives

As the school is filled with festive cheer in the run up to Christmas, we would like to share this lovely piece of needlework from the Channing archives (circa. 1960s), which depicts the First Day of Christmas - a Partridge in a Pear Tree, to get us all in the Christmas spirit! Have you put up your decorations yet?

