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I do not believe I have ever heard of John Cotton Dana, but I did read an interesting quote attributed to him which reads, "Who dares to teach must never cease to learn".

Working day in day out in an environment that is fundamentally based on teaching and learning makes being a teacher, and Headmaster, a unique experience. As parents we all marvel at our children's ability to absorb the world around them and learn, especially when they are very young. Even having spent my adult life working in schools, it was not until I became a parent that I could truly see and understand firsthand the miracle that was taking place as my son learned and continued learning. I visited a Year 1 class earlier this week and enjoyed listening to a young girl read her story to me. It wasn't very long, but it was written in her phonetic style. While I wasn't entirely sure what she had written, she was. It reminded me of those days when my own son wrote and read gobbledygook and I wondered whether he just didn't get it, and, dare I say, whether I needed to worry. But - and it is a big but - he developed in his own way, and at his own speed and is now a fine reader and writer. Of course, the point, which I as a parent nearly forgot, is that individuals learn in their own particular way. As parents we sometimes find that very difficult to accept, especially when 'the others' appear to be faster or better.

This week Mrs Rowlands took the staff through an exercise where we were required to answer a number of questions, choosing our answers from four options. These answers provided an indication of our preferred learning styles. It proved to be revealing as to 'who learnt how' and how this influenced our teaching styles. In essence we all learn through seeing, listening and doing. However, most of us tend to have a preferred style that dominates the others. In educational speak, you are a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learner. For example, if you are required to memorise a Science experiment, would you prefer to listen to the teacher talking about what to use, how to do it and what happens? Would you prefer to see the explanation written down under headings 'apparatus', 'experiment' and 'result' listed in bullet points and steps (maybe even underlined in colour)? Or would you learn by actually doing the experiment and not reading or listening? The challenge for teachers is not simply to teach in their own learning style, which, to be honest, feels most natural to them. Teachers face the challenge of adopting multiple strategies to engage all learners and stimulate their preferred learning styles. Not an easy task, I can assure you.

Over the next couple of weeks, all children in Years 5 to 8 will be completing the same questionnaire that the staff did. It will help them to identify their preferred learning style(s). It will give them techniques on how to study according to their preferences. It will also encourage them to use a variety of strategies that will engage the brain in different ways and so encourage them to improve their learning. Please do speak to your child. Ask them to show you the 'test' and the information. And if you want to see how you learn, try it on yourselves.

Two boys recently took their **Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music** exam outside school through their private teachers. Congratulations to **Luke Seymour**, Piano (Grade 1 Merit) and **Benjamin Reynolds**, Piano (Grade 1 Merit).

The **U13** girls started off the **Hockey** season very well this week by sharing a trophy with St Francis' after drawing the final match, and also the extra time and 'golden goal' time. This followed fine wins against Highfield and Hitchin Girls'. Congratulations to all involved; a fine result indeed.

SPORTS FIXTURES

BOYS' RUGBY: v Haileybury – 1st XV **WON** 40-0 (**Ben Kight**(3), **Jonathan Carragher**(2), **Alex Sporton**, **James Oliver** (5 conversions); 2nd XV **WON** 27-17 (**Kieran McGowan** (2 and a conversion), **Robert Holden** (2), **Robert Brown**); U11A v St Edmund's - **WON**15-0 (**Kamau Ndumu**, **Oliver James**, **Theo Reintjes**).

BOYS' HOCKEY: v Great Houghton – U13 **LOST** 2-3 (**Edward Moye**, **Sachin Ranjan**).

GIRLS' HOCKEY: County Cup - v Highfield **WON** 3-0 (**Georgina Luders**, **Polly Jones** (2)); v Hitchin Girls' **WON** 1-0 (**Georgina Luders**); v St Francis' **DREW** 0-0.

GIRLS' NETBALL v Heath Mount – U13A **LOST** 11-22, U13B **LOST** 2-24, U13C **LOST** 5-11; v Stormont – U9A **WON** 6-5, U9B **LOST** 0-11.

I sincerely hope that I am not simply preaching to the converted, but I would like to make a special plea to parents that you reply to letters and other information, as applicable, by the stated deadline. Staff are finding it increasingly difficult to plan events, trips and functions when there is a very poor response. Without wanting to wag a finger in any particular direction, if the shoe was on the other foot I dare say my inbox would soon be overflowing.

As mentioned in last week's newsletter, we have now erected a mirror as you leave the staff car park. Please stop and check the mirror for traffic before turning the corner.

It's been windy and now it's wet. For those brave souls who fancy a cycle on Sunday morning in the wind and wet rather than being tucked up under a warm duvet, please feel free to join us. Crazy, I know.

Enjoy the weekend

Iain Gilmour

BIRTHDAYS

To the following who celebrate in the next week, we wish you a very

HAPPY BIRTHDAY:

Rupert Bartlett, Angus Few-Martin, James Fox, Marton Howe, Henry King, Benjamin Sporton, George Knott.