

Assembly 18 February 2008

The Global Classroom tours 2008 (Last Assembly)

It is that time of year when we start planning the Global Classroom tours over the summer vacation. The Heads of Department have given me a list of the tours they propose to organise and will soon be publishing details about each of the trips.

As you are aware, we aim to have eight to ten tours each year under the umbrella of the Global Classroom. We believe very strongly that students in Hong Kong need to look beyond their own borders and see themselves as part of the global citizenship. In 2008, nine educational overseas tours will be organised by the College to promote global awareness. These tours fall under a number of categories including subject, sporting and community service trips. Some are available to all students while others are restricted to particular groups of boys and girls. This morning, I would like to tell you a little about each of the tours on offer this year.

The first tour is the English Language Enhancement tour to London. This programme, held every summer holiday, is organised by the English Department and is our longest running overseas trip. The tour provides an opportunity for boys in Forms 1-4 to spend three weeks at Bromley, in London's southern suburbs, honing their English language skills. The programme has been highly successful over the years and the feedback from the boys is always very positive. Of course, there is also time to visit London and see the major attractions that the city has to offer.

The next three tours are open to all students. This summer the Geography Department will be off to Europe and to spend ten days in Switzerland. The tour is called Walking in the Swiss Alps and will provide a wonderful introduction to Europe's most famous mountain range. The Swiss Alps have many high peaks, covered in snow all year round. It is home to a unique range of flora and fauna and provides a spectacular setting for studying Geography. Many of the features you will cover in Geography classes can be found in the Alps and I am sure that you will really enjoy the experience of the spectacular mountains and the small villages dotted along the valley floors.

The History Department is also off to Europe but this time further south to Spain. Spain is one of Europe's most interesting countries with a rich and varied history. The tour will last nine days and focus on the country's most important cities; the capital Madrid and the coastal city of Barcelona. It is hot and dry in Spain in the summer months, perfect weather for visiting the key historical sites, museums and galleries. Spanish architecture is unique and stunning, such a contrast to what we find in Hong Kong. This is a must-do tour for all aspiring historians particularly those with an interest in European history and art.

The third tour that is available to all students is the Christian Union tour to Australia. This is also one of our longest running tours and also one of the most popular. This

year's destination is Sydney in Australia and will focus on a Gospel Camp. There will also be an opportunity to see the main attractions of Sydney.

The next two tours are being organised by the Physical Education Department and will be open only to the team members. The Archery team is off to Taipei and the Badminton team off to the mainland at the start of the summer holiday. These tours will focus on training and involve working with specialist coaches in each of the sports. It is our experience that these training camps result in a higher level of performance from the school teams the following season. There will of course be time for sightseeing.

The seventh tour sees the Music Department's return to Europe, this time to participate in the 5th World Choir Games being held in the town of Graz in southern Austria. This event, known as The Olympics for Choirs, will feature choirs from around the world. It will also provide opportunities for our Choir members to meet and interact with students from many countries. We have enjoyed a number of highly successful music tours in the past and I am sure that this year's trip will keep that tradition going.

The last two tours for this year are a little different to those normally included in the Global Classroom programme. The first is open to only five students, who will be invited by the College to participate. The five senior students will travel to France in late April to take part in a Political Science Conference being organised by the Institute of Political Sciences in the town of Le Havre to the west of Paris. Only ten schools from Europe and Asia, each sending 5 students, were invited to attend and we were the only school in Hong Kong to receive an invitation. The focus of the week's conference will be on the major issues that will influence European-Asian relations in the future. This is an exciting new development in our Global Classroom programme; one that I believe reflects the type of student who attends our College.

The final tour is the most different and certainly the most challenging. In late June to early July, we will be sending a group of senior students to Hulan Province near Harbin in north-east China. Our students will be living and working in a small agricultural village in the countryside. During their stay they will be involved in physical work around the village and also some teaching of English in the village Primary School. This community service tour will be the first of what I hope will become an on-going activity for St. Paul's College students in Hulan Province. This tour is different, tough and challenging but extremely rewarding for those who participate. It will be an experience of a life-time.

Full details of each of this year's Global Classroom tours will be available shortly. I encourage you to sign up for one of the trips being offered.