



above&beyond

The King's School

ISSUE ONE
CO-EDUCATION
SPORT
DRAMA
SOCIAL MEDIA
DIVERSITY

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Welcome to a&b

Welcome to the first edition of Above & Beyond, a new magazine, written by members of the King's community, that sets out to highlight and discuss the key educational topics of the day.

Above & Beyond is for people interested in education and the development of young people. We aim to inform, entertain and, in many cases, challenge conventional thinking around these topics, and provide a fresh insight into how schools are rising to the challenges they present.

This inaugural edition kicks off with Headmaster George Hartley, who has worked in both single sex and co-educational schools, explaining why he believes co-education provides the best academic experience and preparation for adult life today (page 4). Deputy Head Pastoral Michael Harle discusses the

issues of children and their interaction with social media on page 6. On page 8, Dr Jane Byrne, Senior Deputy Head, explores the vital role sport plays in a modern school. Contributions on the importance of learning outdoors and drama in the younger years are written by Margaret Ainsworth, Head of Willow Lodge and King's Juniors (pages 10–13). Sarah Glass, Director of Learning Support reflects on how difference in the classroom can be a force for good (page 14). Finally, on page 16, Old King's Scholar Ben McLannahan reminds us that education doesn't come to a screeching halt at the end of school or university and highlights the great benefits of working abroad as part of a fulfilling, lifelong career.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Above & Beyond.

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BOYS AND GIRLS COME OUT TO LEARN

EDUCATING THE #METOO GENERATION

The wider world and the prevailing norms of society are constantly changing, so it seems only right that the environment within schools should change as well. In an era during which the issue of individual gender is gradually becoming less relevant and divisive, defining a school along binary lines – as purely a boys or girls school – seems to feel increasingly dated and irrelevant.

Single sex schools still have their supporters of course, within the educational establishment and amongst parents. The argument most commonly used in their favour is that they produce better academic results, but the truth of the matter is that none of the research done into the subject has ever backed up this assertion.


Whilst it might be accurate to say that many single sex schools do achieve excellent exam results, this is down to factors such as the highly selective admissions process, the amount of money the school has to spend and the quality of the teaching being offered. Once issues such as these have been stripped away, the fact that girls and boys are being taught without the 'distraction' of co-education is found to have little if any impact on the results achieved. For further evidence, we only need to look at Finland, a country where single sex education is virtually unheard of, and yet one which continually emerges at or near the top of international tables measuring educational excellence and attainment.



Looked at in purely academic terms, anyone who has ever taught co-educational classes will confirm that they offer a richer, deeper and more varied learning environment. Whilst it's important not to generalise, it does tend to be the case that boys and girls bring different viewpoints to bear on the issues being looked at in the classroom. This is particularly notable in subjects which encourage a discursive and exploratory way of looking at questions, such as English Literature or Philosophy, within which the widest possible range of views promotes a deeper learning experience. By the time pupils are studying for their A Levels a lot of the work being done has shifted away from binary, black and white, yes or no answers and onto more in depth explorations of the issues involved. Learning of this kind is optimised by input from the fullest range of voices, opinions and perspectives.

Leaving aside questions of learning and academic performance, it's a fairly basic fact of human nature, and in particular of growing up, that girls and boys working and learning together from an early age are building a healthy and stable foundation for relationships later in life. This is something which is also having an increasing impact as the world of work alters. Recent reports by organisations such as Deloitte, PwC and McKinsey have predicted a shift across the entire spectrum of employment, toward activities which call for problem solving and creativity and are more collaborative in nature. In order to offer the most varied possible input, the teams put together for this kind of work are likely to be mixed gender, and a co-educational environment is geared toward producing individuals who are comfortable when dealing with a range of varied and diverse perspectives.

From the point of view of parents, the stance in favour of single sex schools is often driven by parents who attended a single sex school themselves, and feel that what was good enough for them will be good enough for their children. It sounds like a reasonable enough point of view initially, but what it fails to take into account is the fact that the world of education, running in tandem with the wider world beyond the school walls, has changed massively in the 30 or 40 years



since they attended school. This is reflected in the clearest possible manner by the drop in the number of pupils attending single sex schools. According to an April 2018 report in *The Economist*, the number of pupils attending single sex schools now stands at 509,910, or just 6% of the wider school population. As recently as 2010, this figure stood at 542,125. Parents, to be blunt, are increasingly voting with their feet.

There is always an argument to be had on the topic of whether there are fundamental differences between the genders, particularly when it comes to learning. Anyone who has spent any time teaching mixed gender classes will say the same thing, however; that there is as much variety of thinking, personality, ability and learning styles within each gender as there is between the genders. Research has also shown that there is no single learning technique or teaching approach which is better suited to boys or girls across the board. Even more important to note is the fact that any differences that might manifest themselves become far less important when each individual child is given an educational experience which is tailored specifically for them. The best schools and teachers will always focus on getting to know each boy or girl individually, and offering them the education which is most likely to see them achieve their full potential development as a genuinely rounded person. That means recognising the variety the average classroom contains, and learning to identify and nurture types of intelligence such as emotional intelligence, spatial intelligence and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. Concentrating on drilling cognitive intelligence may lead to the 'right' kind of exam results, but a genuinely inclusive educational environment is about producing happy, well-rounded, balanced individuals – boys and girls, in short, who go on to become fulfilled and contented men and women.

Making the Connection

Kids,
Parents,
Schools
and
Social
Media_

Written By: Michael Harle
Deputy Head Pastoral



Mobile

When I was a child I watched a programme called *Space 1999*. This was a science fiction series about the colonisation of the moon, and it featured all the clichés you’d expect; Star Wars style spacecraft, aliens, laser guns and so on.

What it also featured, rather than the high tech communicators favoured by Star Trek, was good old hard-wired landline telephones. Leaving aside this slightly anachronistic detail, it’s sobering to remember that most people under the age of 25, besides not knowing much about *Space 1999*, have never even used an old style hard-wired telephone.

Most children, meanwhile, would think of a landline as an inconvenient means of connecting to the internet, rather than the local telephone exchange. Within that historical context there are two undeniable facts which have to be faced. The first is that mobile and smart phones are here to stay and they will only get more powerful as time passes.

Indeed, within the next 10 years such technology will advance to include more wearable and even biologically integral components. From a smart fridge making a shopping list to a device which monitors blood pressure and heart rate, smart devices will play a part in virtually every aspect of life.

The second fact is that we want these devices. We can’t blame the phone designers, the software engineers, the app designers or even the internet service providers. Bodies of this kind are not – despite occasional hacking or data gathering scandals – inherently malevolent, they are simply providing us with a product. We buy, they deliver. They innovate and we willingly consume.

Accepting this places us in a position of real power and it is important that our children understand their position in this market, and the degree of control which it offers. Once they do, then they can make choices based on their own moral leanings, rather than simply placing responsibility with ‘market forces’ and viewing themselves as hapless or even helpless victims. In turn we, as adults, need to take a lead and be the change that we want to see. We can look up from our screens and engage with our children. We can take a positive interest in their online lives. We can become more tech savvy than our children and help them to navigate the world as it is, rather than as it was when we were young. In other words, we can take the kind of protective lead which we do in all other walks of life.

Lifelong learning is a reality and we are preparing our children to enjoy the challenges of multiple careers. Is it too much to ask of ourselves that we take the same approach to learning and ensure that we maintain a level of knowledge that keeps us ahead of our children? Mobile technologies are seductive and their power to addict is both psychological and physiological. Children have always needed care and commitment and we should not shirk our responsibility when the stakes are so high.



**HEALTHY
BODY,
HEALTHY**

WHY THERE SHOULD BE A SPORT FOR EVERY CHILD

Think of sport and you naturally tend to think of the elite end of the spectrum. You think of winners, champions, world cup finalists and Olympians going faster, higher and further. Any school which takes the time to teach sport properly knows that it has much more to offer than simply fostering the very best, however. Approached in the right way, sport can be tailored to each and every individual child, boosting not only their physical health but also their psychological well-being and self-esteem.

The key to delivering sport in an educational setting is realising that excellent, state of the art facilities definitely make life easier but they're only ever going to be as good as the lessons being delivered and the people delivering them. The real foundation of a successful

school sports strategy is built on a combination of attitude, enthusiasm and inclusivity. That means providing the opportunity for all the pupils in a school to find and take part in a sporting activity at which they either excel or, perhaps even more importantly, which they actively enjoy. On the simplest level, sport which is taught properly will, in the first instance, provide a solid grounding in what might be termed 'physical literacy'. For younger pupils this can be as basic as teaching them how to catch and throw a ball, and later on this will extend all the way to learning the rules and regulations of the world's most popular team sports. A large part of ensuring and maintaining the enjoyment of pupils with varying degrees of natural sporting prowess is founded on allowing them to compete at an appropriate level. This means having an A team for those who excel at a

certain sport, but also B and C teams, offering pupils the enjoyment of competing as part of a team against those with a similar level of skill. As well as the exercise and pleasure this provides, it also means that the widest possible range of pupils learns another of the vital lessons of competitive sport – how to be gracious in both victory and defeat. Schools can sometimes gain a reputation for focusing on elite pupils when it comes to sport, but providing access to a range of activities like archery, dance and weights means that every pupil can find some sport which they enjoy, taught at a level which is comfortable for them.

An early grounding in sport not only opens the door to valuable social benefits, such as joining the football, rugby or netball team at work or university, it can also help to foster the mind-set needed to be successful in virtually any walk of life. As more and more employment becomes collaborative in nature, so the value of teamwork will increase. When being ‘good’ at a job is less about what you know than how you deliver, the lessons taught on the playing field or in the sports hall could become priceless. Do you go for the individual glory of a spectacular long range shot or do you pass to the team mate who’s in a much better position? It’s the kind of critical choice which could make or break projects across virtually every sector.

The hard work which the teachers of a school have to put in – often working above and beyond the standard school day – hardly needs stating. What might not be as obvious, however, is the way in which sporting activity can often strengthen the bonds which develop between teachers and pupils, taking both out of the classroom environment and showing them sides of each other which they otherwise might not see. A pupil

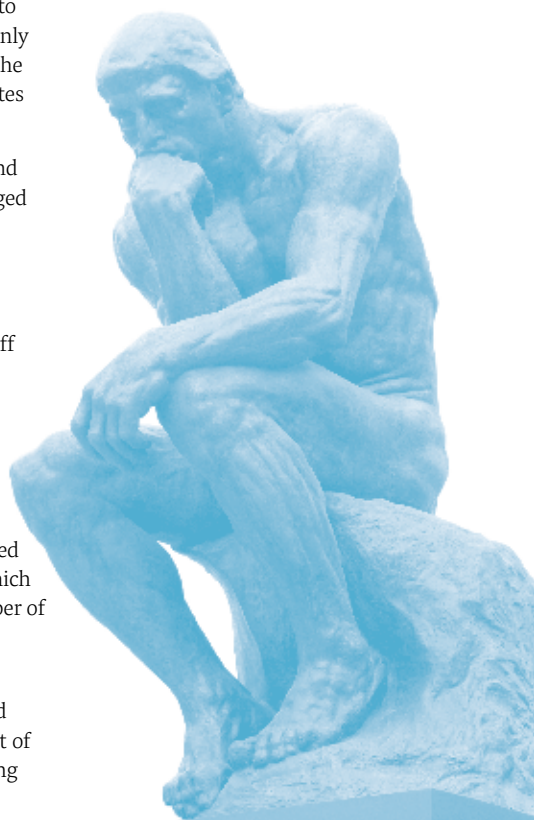
SIMILARLY, A TEACHER MIGHT SEE A DIFFERENT SIDE TO A PUPIL IN THE SHAPE OF COMMITMENT

who struggles with a particular subject may think much more positively of the teacher in question if they both find themselves involved in a sport which they enjoy. Similarly, a teacher might see a different side to a pupil in the shape of commitment, effort and work which can then be extended throughout the rest of school life. A sense of joint responsibility is also part and parcel of much sporting endeavour, with pupils quickly learning that agreeing to play for a team means making a promise to turn up for every practice and every game, not least because to fail to do so would mean not only letting down themselves and the school, but also their team mates and friends.

Nor is it simply the teachers and pupils who become fully engaged when enjoying sport, because it’s capable of impacting upon the entire school community. Parents and siblings play their part, from dropping children off for early morning practice through to helping provide refreshments at events or simply standing on the side-lines shouting encouragement. Few things can replicate the sense of shared endeavour and community which sport can bring to every member of the school ‘family’.

Many parents may think back to their own sports lessons and shudder slightly at the thought of hours spent bored and shivering

on the touchline while the talented kids got all the attention. That’s an old-fashioned approach which the best schools now have nothing to do with. The first aim of modern school sports teaching is always to make sure the pupils enjoy the lesson and see a purpose in it. For the elite few, sports may well go on to be a dominating factor. For the rest, if taught and used correctly, it can still play a vital role in ensuring that the whole of their life is lived to the fullest.



LEARNING IN THE GR OUTDOOR

We all have treasured memories of those long summer days spent playing outside as children; making dens, playing games in the park or riding our bikes for hours on end, with our only curfew seeming to be the dwindling light.

Written By: Margaret Ainsworth
Head of Willow Lodge & King's Juniors

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However, a typical child's experience of leisure time today is likely to be very different from these recollections. It has been well documented that modern children spend less time outside than ever before and there are clear reasons for this. One factor is a growing fear amongst adults that children won't be safe if left to play outside unsupervised, whilst the other major reason is the rise of the kind of technology, in the form of video and computer games, which tends to encourage a sedentary lifestyle. What is also clear is that this lack of activity is impacting on children's development.

A groundswell of evidence supports the view that outdoor play increases children's fitness levels, general well-being and educational development. Whilst technological ability can be enhanced with the help of the latest app, opportunities for creativity and problem-solving skills are in abundance in the outdoor environment.

Outdoor learning is just another tool and technique which a modern school can utilise to enhance and enrich the learning experience and environment, and a welly rack full of bursting with muddy boots is as much a sign of a good day at school as a neatly piled stack of exercise books. Forest School sessions teach respect for nature and the environment and demonstrate, in a real-world, real-time scenario, the interdependence of all living creatures and plants. The seemingly old-fashioned joy of den-building supports children's problem-solving skills and develops teamwork, communication and leadership skills at the same time as being fantastic fun, while woodland crafts nurture creativity,

imagination and inventiveness. Amidst the happiness and laughter of a class of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children busy playing outdoors, it's easy to forget that the skills they are picking up will stand them in good stead throughout the rest of their school lives and beyond.

A carefully designed and adapted outdoor environment provides the opportunity for children to play safely and freely whilst they learn to assess situations which are constantly changing and develop the skills to manage these new situations. The Forest Schools programme gives pupils the opportunity to take risks in a planned and structured environment, learning to handle tools safely, for example, or following the fire safety code around the campfire. All the while they are effectively learning through trial and improvement, using the timeless medium of play and the pleasure of discovery to develop a multi-layering of skills. It's a type of learning which does more than most to help younger children begin to grow into rounded, confident, capable individuals.

It is wonderful to see an outdoor classroom change as the seasons progress. Story time under the shade of the trees on a hot summer's day can be replaced by mud kitchen play when the rain starts to fall. Conker art from the horse chestnut harvest makes way for drawing frost patterns and making bird feeders in the depths of winter. Learning that flows seamlessly between our indoor environment and the outdoor spaces builds interaction with and respect for the natural world, dispelling once and for all the myth that education can only take place in the classroom.

WHY TEACHING DRAMA IS ABOUT MORE THAN RECITING SHAKESPEARE

A stylized illustration of a woman's head in profile, facing left. She has blue hair pulled back and is looking upwards with an open mouth, as if speaking or singing. She is wearing a pink garment. The background is a light blue gradient.

Written By: Margaret Ainsworth
Head of Willow Lodge & King's Juniors



**Like the best sports teaching,
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pupils; it enables all pupils to try
something a little bit different**

It's tempting, particularly when the world of education is often spoken of in terms of league tables and market places, to view teaching drama as something of a luxury. The truth however is that, if taught well, it provides key skills and attributes. Any good school aims to take children and turn them into well-rounded, balanced and above all happy young adults. These are all abstract concepts which are, by definition, difficult to quantify, and there's nothing the educational establishment likes more than being able to measure, weigh up and collate the results of their efforts. That's why so much emphasis is always placed on the exam results of a particular school, and on fundamental skills such as reading and writing. These are vital things to learn, clearly, but they are also the kind of skills which any school worth its salt will have set in place as the very foundation of their methods.

What marks the best schools out from the merely good is the way in which they build on this foundation by making sure, for example, that their pupils can communicate just as clearly and confidently when they are speaking as when they are writing. You only have to think for a few seconds about the number of times a day when effective verbal communication is absolutely vital, from the simple pleasures of interacting with friends, colleagues

or loved ones, to the slightly more fraught matter of making yourself understood to a complete stranger in a call centre, to realise just how vital clear spoken communication is. Indeed, the importance of the ability to communicate well goes far beyond the everyday and social. The world of work is becoming more and more collaborative, and much of that collaboration takes the form of conversation. It's difficult to think of many 'dream jobs' which it would be possible to land without being able to express yourself clearly at an interview, and even more difficult to come up with any which don't count good communication skills as a top priority. Schools which think of each pupil in the round realise this, and that's why they make a point of providing the very best drama teaching, in terms of both facilities and personnel.

All too often, drama teaching is thought of as older children learning Shakespeare or honing their skills via a production of *West Side Story*, but the value of drama to younger children can't be overstated. Watch a group of young children play together for any length of time and you'll see them engaged in deeply immersive 'let's pretend' games. Good drama teaching merely takes this naturally imaginative approach to the world and uses it to hone and develop a range of skills.

These skills begin with things as simple as speaking clearly, loudly and with confidence, while drama games played for fun also teach the importance of instigating and maintaining eye contact with others. Get kids rapping, racing through tongue twisters or singing, and you're encouraging clear diction and strong voices. Engage them in role plays and you have them acting out situations and interactions which they might never have experienced before, which not only encourages empathy, but also prepares them for the possibility of facing similar situations for real one day.

Like the best sports teaching, the best drama teaching doesn't merely pick out and concentrate on the most gifted pupils; it enables all pupils to try something a little bit different, challenge themselves and gain the kind of confidence which performing in front of an audience offers like virtually nothing else can. It could be 'acting' in the accepted sense, but it's just as likely to be singing, telling jokes, dancing, reciting poetry or anything else that fires a child's imagination. Build a theatre in a school and you build a place where parents, teachers and pupils can come together to celebrate talent, overcome fears and have a massive amount of fun.



WHY INCLUSIVITY MATTERS: CELEBRATING LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Every child has their own individual range of strengths and weaknesses, but for some children simply being at school can be a challenge. It is important for a school community to frame this challenge in a positive way and think in terms of differences rather than disabilities or deficits.



All children, whether they have a learning difference or not, face their own individual challenges at some point in their school career; some subjects will be preferred to others, the work which needs to be done outside the classroom may prove to be difficult and the complexity of an active social life (whether on or off line) can often be overwhelming. On top of all of this, children with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia and autism will undoubtedly find the school environment a huge challenge unless adjustments can be made which allow them to learn in a way which suits them best.

The good news is that the attitude toward children who don't learn in a conventional manner has shifted massively during the last ten years. Educational institutions like schools and universities are now much better at recognising the need for a framework which allows incredibly gifted people to express their gifts without using the 'standard' methods of writing down or explaining their thoughts. Similarly, some industries are actively recognising the value of employing individuals capable of providing a neuro diverse point of view. This is likely to become more and more commonplace in the future, building on the foundation created

by schools which increasingly seek to adapt to a child's needs rather than trying to force that child to adapt to the so called 'norm' for learning.

It's not going to be a quick or easy journey. Educators, as a whole, still don't know enough about creating a teaching space varied enough to bring the best out of all of their pupils. One example is recognising the importance of the physical environment. The kind of brightly coloured, visually 'loud' backdrop which would normally be seen as symptomatic of a vibrant and exciting school could prove to be over-stimulating to some children, making it vitally important that the alternative of a calm, quiet space is also readily at hand. Similarly, schools which might traditionally have regarded children who don't behave typically as being 'naughty' will have to adopt the viewpoint that so called 'bad behaviour' could be a way of communicating something else, and will have to work to identify what that something else is.

The responsibility doesn't rest entirely with teachers, of course. Starting from the viewpoint that every teacher sets out wanting to do the best for every child, we need to alter the systems that are in place in order to provide the breathing space that makes this

possible. In the modern climate of league tables, tests, assessments, exams and endless marking, it can be difficult to embrace new ways of working and different ways of doing things. Similarly, parents have to be persuaded to take the right approach to a child with a less than typical approach to school and learning. The ideal scenario is one in which the child is placed at the centre of a network including teachers, specialist agencies and parents. By actively discussing difference, tolerance and acceptance with all of the children in a school, teachers will be playing a vital role in helping to create a community which, as a whole, is a supportive place which celebrates difference.

That there is still work to be done in this field is undeniable. Recent TV programmes such as drama *The A Word* and the autobiographical documentaries of Chris Packham and Rory Bremner have played their part in informing the wider public about specific learning difficulties and what they mean for people and their families in everyday life. What is most interesting about Chris Packham and Rory Bremner in particular is that they actually both put their own success down to their neurodiversity. Significantly, even though both faced challenges in school, neither would go back and change who they are.

GLOBALISATION – WORKING IN AN ENVIRONMENT WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

WHEN I LEFT KING'S IN 1992 I KNEW I WANTED TO TRAVEL. SO I DID, ON A GAP YEAR, TO THE ARCHIPELAGO OF SVALBARD, ABOUT HALF-WAY BETWEEN THE TIP OF NORWAY AND THE ARCTIC CIRCLE. I WAS THERE AS ONE OF 30 OR SO "YOUNG EXPLORERS", SPONSORED BY THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, WHICH WANTED US TO DIG SNOW PITS TO SURVEY THE MOVEMENT OF A GLACIER. THERE WAS ALSO A LOT OF KAYAKING, A BIT OF BIRDWATCHING, AND TONS OF CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING. ONE LONG DAY'S TREKKING TOOK US TO BARENTSBURG, AN OLD RUSSIAN COAL-MINING SETTLEMENT ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE MAIN ISLAND, WHERE A WAITRESS WEARING HEAVY EYE MAKE-UP SERVED US THE GREATEST HOT CHOCOLATE I'VE EVER TASTED.

When I came back – very tanned and rather smelly – I was more determined than ever to see as much of the world as possible. My career as a journalist for a global financial newspaper has been a good choice, in that respect: I've worked for long spells in London, Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York. Next week I'm off to Billings, Montana, for a story about blockchain, the technology underpinning digital currencies like Bitcoin. I'll be on the road for about a week, taking in little towns like Sundance, Wyoming and the state capital, Cheyenne. I can't wait.

Living and working abroad gives you more and better ways of looking at things. I can write about macroeconomic policy having covered the Bank of Japan in 2013, when a guy called Haruhiko Kuroda launched an unprecedented burst of monetary stimulus with the apparent aim of banishing deflation, once and for all. (It didn't work.)

My coverage of financial regulation reflects my three years in Hong Kong, which struggles to balance the Chinese urge to move fast and break things with a more British sense of propriety and restraint. I've done a few days' work here and

there in Mexico City, in Taipei, in Singapore, in Manila, in Sydney, and all around Europe. Is my writing deeper and richer than it would have been, if I'd spent almost all of my professional life within the M25? I like to think so.

I can write about the culture at big banks, for example, having seen up close the damage done by the aggressive sales practices at Wells Fargo, the number three bank by assets in America. I spent a few days last year in Beverly Hills, California, touring Wells branches where staff were fired for straining to hit targets which the bank now accepts were illegitimate. The year before I took a quick trip up to Bedford, New Hampshire, where a couple of guys were literally laying the foundations of Primary Bank, the first full-service commercial bank to emerge since the Lehman crisis.

If I have to write about property I can look back on a couple of long weekends in Toronto, where low interest rates, lax lending and waves of foreign money – particularly from China – combined to create one of the biggest real-estate bubbles the world has ever seen. And if it's the sudden or subtle effects of regime change, then what better source material than the 2016 election which put Donald Trump in the White House?

The life of a foreign correspondent can be tough. In Japan the language was a constant struggle, even though I had a base level of competence after spending a couple of years after university living on a small island a couple of hours by ferry off the coast of Kyushu. Hong Kong was exhausting for different reasons; mostly the pollution (which appeared to lead to breathing problems for my younger daughter, then a baby), and the sticky summers.

And all this time away from home has had a cost. I'm barely in touch with a lot of people I knew from school and university. I've been a Facebook brother to my siblings and I hardly know my nephews and nieces. I've seen my father about half a dozen times over the past few years. And all that goes double for my wife, who has basically put her own career on hold for the past decade while we bounced from country to country.

If we'd stayed in one place I'd probably be richer, too. I might be within sight of paying off a mortgage, rather than still owing hundreds of thousands of dollars on our Cape Cod cottage in Montclair, New Jersey, about 45 minutes from Manhattan.

Never mind. In a couple of months I'll be back for another stint in the UK, starting a new role at the FT, hoping my two girls (now 12 and 10) settle at their schools in southwest London. It could be a wrench for our cats, too; one of them rescued from the streets of Osaka and the other from a shelter here in New Jersey.

When I'm back I'll be sure to take the family for a weekend in Chester, showing them where I sang, at the cathedral, and the spacious school campus on the outskirts of town.

As my daughters get older they don't need me to tell them always to say "yes" to the chance to jump on a plane. But I hope they do.

“
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”



Above & Beyond is brought to you by The King's School, Chester. This magazine enjoys contributions from leading authorities within the school as well as from students and alumni.

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THE KING'S SCHOOL

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If you are considering education options for your child, we welcome you to take a look around our facilities, talk to our teachers and pupils; to understand why **#WeLoveKings.**

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