

# PURCELL PARENT NEWSLETTER

18th October 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It has felt like a long and busy half term but, as usual, so many amazing things have happened and the students have achieved so much. The autumn term is always an exhausting one whilst everyone adjusts to a new year, new teachers and, for some, a whole new school, so the half term break is a good opportunity to have some well deserved rest and relaxation.

Aside from wishing you a good half term, this parent newsletter is specifically to provide you with some more information on the Government's forthcoming Autumn Budget:

## VAT etc.

As we approach the budget on October 30th, every news and media outlet is full of speculation about what it may, or may not, contain. The VAT on "private school" fees is still hitting the headlines and remains controversial amongst some sections of the press (and, indeed, those who stand to be impacted by it). Nonetheless, I think we can expect the budget to confirm that VAT will be applied to fee paying schools. The devil is, however, in the detail underneath the headline announcements and it may take some further time before it is clear how the policy will work with anomalies like the MDS schools. You will remember that I wrote a piece about this a little while ago: at that time there were no answers to any of the key questions surrounding MDS schools. And nothing has

changed: there are still no answers!

Both in my capacity as Principal of The Purcell School and (perhaps more pertinently) in my role as Chair of the MDS Schools Group (which includes the other specialist music schools), I have spent the last three months working with professional political lobbyists to engage with Government at every level (MPs, Peers, senior officials and ministers) to seek solutions to some of the anomalies posed by the MDS scheme as it relates to the VAT policy. The work has been relentless and every avenue has been explored. As the budget approaches, this work continues and intensifies: next week, in particular, will see a lot of work with officials and ministers to influence the final nuancing and implementation strategies associated with

the policy and the MDS. It is also likely that even when the budget comes and goes, there will still be work to do around these areas and there will still be the opportunity to influence how it will be managed and implemented for schools like ours. It is very clear to us that, currently, not even senior ministers have all the answers to all the questions and anomalies - so there is still scope to help them find the right ones.

It is therefore very likely that as we approach the budget, and for a little while after it, you may see more public speculation and comment about the position of some of the "grey areas" including MDS. This is all part of the political discourse and I would advise not paying too much attention to any headline announcements about MDS

schools which may or may not be made as part of, or around, the budget itself.

So please don't rush to judgements or conclusions about whatever you may see, hear or read in the coming weeks. As soon as I am in a position to explain to you how the policy will impact us here at Purcell, I will. That may

not be for a little time after the budget announcements, depending on what level of information and detail is available to us at that point. So I would ask that you bear with me and wait to hear any news directly from me rather than rely on speculation in the press.

What you can be assured of is that everything that can be done, is being done and we will continue to work behind the scenes until every avenue has been exhausted.

With all good wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Bambrough', written in a cursive style.

Paul Bambrough  
Principal

