

December 2011

Dear Parents

The end of term has come in a burst of winter sunshine, leaving the empty campus looking picturesque despite the chill in the air, and the events of the term lingering pleasurably in the memory.

I hope you and your children have enjoyed yourselves as much since September as I have done. It has been a real pleasure to see so many of you in the last week or so at the wonderful school play, Christmas concert and carol services, as well as at sports fixtures, parents' evenings and many, many other occasions earlier in the term. I've also enjoyed enormously getting to know your children and celebrating with them so many individual and collective activities and achievements. Many of these are detailed in E News, the second edition of which you should have received by now, so let me just say that I am immensely proud of what we have all done together this term, and that I am already looking forward to the excitements in store from January.

Rachel and I have enjoyed meeting all the Lancaster pupils this term over lunch, and hope to move on to the older year groups next term. We have also been warmly welcomed at several Old Wrekinian Association and Friends of Wrekin events. We are lucky to have such active support from these organisations, which play an important part in Wrekin life.

We bid farewell this week to our 2011 Gap students, Emma and Charlie, who have been invaluable members of the school community. We wish them both very well for the future and hope they will come back and visit us some time. We have also said goodbye to a number of international students from Germany and Spain who were with us just for one term, but who have enriched our school life over the last few months. Those of you who have been to our concerts and sports fixtures this term will know how much our overseas students contribute across the board.

Some important housekeeping issues:

Appearance: I have been very pleased with the general improvement in pupils' appearance this term, and am keen to sustain the higher standards we have achieved. A few pupils could still do better in terms of both tidiness and timeliness, and we are grateful to parents for their support in this area. We would like to take this opportunity to ask you for your continued support with respect to the following:

Girls:

- make-up or nail varnish must not be worn during the working day
- sensible black shoes should be worn rather than high-heeled or platform shoes
- hair that is below collar length should be neatly tied back
- jewellery should not exceed a sensible necklace, one simple ring and one earring in each lobe

Girls and Boys:

- in addition, please make sure your children have their hair cut before they return if they are looking unkempt after Christmas!

Uniform: We have been reviewing the school uniform this term and have taken on board comments made by parents, staff and pupils. We are mindful of the fact that any changes to uniform results in extra expense for parents, but there is a consensus that the girls' summer skirt is impractical and the winter tartan too long for the steps and staircases of the school. From this summer term there will therefore be one adjustment to the current uniform, which applies only to girls from First to Fifth Form: the replacement of the girls' winter kilt and light summer skirt by one all-year-round, below-the-knee MacKinlay tartan kilt. In the Christmas and Lent terms the girls should wear black opaque tights with the new kilt, and in the Summer term ankle socks. Girls new to the school this year should buy the new style kilt for this coming summer term: it will be available in good time from the school shop. All other girls will be allowed to wear their old style summer skirt if they wish to, but are encouraged to purchase and wear the new one instead. It will cost about £45. Next winter, girls will still be allowed to wear the longer skirts if they wish to; we appreciate that parents will want to get some wear out of them. However, we will expect all girls in First to Fifth Form to wear the new skirts all year round from the Summer term 2013.

Any further adjustments to uniform will not take place before the next academic year, and will be advertised to parents in the course of the Summer term 2012. Meanwhile, please continue to support us in preventing your sons and daughters from taking liberties with the uniform!

Parents' survey: The preliminary results of the Parents Survey conducted for us by RS Academics this term are now in, and we are pleased to say that they promise to be very helpful. We will circulate a summary of the results once the Governors have received the final report in the New Year. We are delighted with the response rate, and very grateful to all of you who took the time to let us have your views.

We are also grateful to all those who replied to our email about the change to timings on Saturday mornings. I would like to confirm that activities will start at 10am from January.

Pupil safety: We are in the process of reviewing safety and security around the school site. There have already been several improvements made to lighting (in and around the Memorial Hall and the Design Block) and to security in the Sports Hall. One particular concern of mine is the use (and abuse) of cars by pupils to drive to and from school. We have very clear rules on car driving and I will not tolerate any breach of them, especially when it risks endangering drivers or passengers. I would ask you to support us in maintaining safe driving behaviour: I'm sure I don't have to remind you that cars can be lethal.

A date for your diaries: On a related note, we are also concerned about our pupils' safety in the cyber world and beyond the school gates. On Thursday 8th March at 7pm we will be holding a Parents Forum on the topic of 'Keeping your child safe', run by Vicki Ridgewell, a local police officer, who does a great deal of work in local schools, particularly with regard to internet safety. The Forum will cover a range of topics including internet abuse, 'sexting', FaceBook, misuse of alcohol and rape. She will be bringing a video to show parents called 'Rape: short word, long sentence', which is aimed at young people aged 13 years and upwards and ties in with a new national drive from the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Personal belongings: Finally, in relation to security: please do remind your children to make use of the lockable cupboards / safes they have access to in House to keep personal belongings safe. As a general rule, valuable items that are not essential for school life should be left at home, especially by day pupils. School insurance does not cover pupils' personal items and unfortunately we cannot guarantee the safety of belongings left lying around, even in Houses.

Many of our pupils in the Fifth Form and above have GCSE, AS and A2 modules in January, and these pupils all need to make time for some serious revision over the holidays. I hope, however, that you all have a wonderful and restful holiday.

With best wishes,



Richard Pleming
Headmaster