

October 2011

Dear Parents

It has been a pleasure to meet many of you during the first few weeks of term, on the touchline or after chapel, or at the evening get-togethers we have held for various different year groups. I hope to have the chance to meet the rest of the parent body during the course of the next term or two, but do please remember that you can always make an appointment with my secretary if there is anything you want to discuss with me one-to-one. A number of parents have already taken up this opportunity, and I have been very pleased to hear what they have had to say about Wrekin and about their children.

### **Communication with parents**

Over the last few weeks we have been rethinking our communications with parents, and this letter is by way of a trailer for our future arrangements. What is planned is a regular eNews publication coming out to parents twice a term, about one third and two thirds of the way through, with a paper newsletter following at the end of each term. We are very keen to make greater use of electronic communication to keep you up to date, and hope that our upgraded IT system will make this run seamlessly. Please do ensure that we have a functioning email address for you, as without this we won't be able to send you anything! We are also reviewing the school website, which will be improved over the next few months. Meanwhile, we are using it increasingly to share information and material about the school, such as my sermon at the Whole School Service before the ascent of the Wrekin.

### **Market research**

You should all by now have received the letter about the market research we have commissioned from RSAcademics. We very much hope that all parents will complete the online questionnaire – this is your chance to have your say about the school, and from our point of view, the higher the response rate we get, the more sure we can be that we have canvassed a representative majority of the parent body. If you have any difficulty with the questionnaire, do please let us know and we will route your query on to someone who can help.

### **Academic matters**

Many of you will have heard that last year's Fifth form and Upper Sixth chalked up record-breaking results at A level and GCSE. We are working hard with this year's cohorts to ensure that they too perform to the best of their abilities. As you may know, our new Academic Committee is reviewing many aspects of teaching and learning in the school. We have already introduced special progress reports for pupils who have extra ground to make up this year, and all departments have developed new strategies for supporting these pupils. We are also looking at a new system of rewards and sanctions for pupils who produce work that is particularly good or not quite good enough, and are creating an honorary scholarship board to acknowledge pupils whose academic achievements merit public recognition. Our other projects include a review of our gifted and talented programme and of our learning support arrangements. Meanwhile, I am reading the personal statement and reference for every member of our Upper Sixth who is applying to university this autumn.

### **Contacting teachers and tutors**

Do please contact teachers or tutors directly if you have any questions about your child's academic work and progress. All teaching staff email addresses will be on the school's website from the beginning of the second half of term at [http://www.wrekincollege.com/index/teacher\\_contacts.shtml](http://www.wrekincollege.com/index/teacher_contacts.shtml). It goes without saying that senior staff and housemasters and mistresses are also contactable via email.

## Sport

I'm also delighted to be able to report on some excellent sporting results so far this term. It was a pleasure to see our under 14 rugby teams winning their match against Ellesmere a week or two ago, and our first XV winning their first round Daily Mail Cup fixture after a nail-biting finish to their match against a combined Stafford team. Unfortunately they lost the subsequent Daily Mail Cup match against a strong Adams' Grammar School squad.

The gymnasts were particularly successful at the recent West Midlands Championships. Georgina Hockenull and Charlotte Rumsey took first and second place respectively in the junior section, Eshe Bernard and Elle Lavelle, came first and fifth at espoire (Under 13) level and Beth Lavelle won the under 11 silver medal. In September, Georgina and Sarah Strawbridge were selected to represent Wales and Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Youth Games.

Elsewhere in girls' sport, Hanna Cadwallader has been selected to join the Welsh under 19 netball squad. The Wrekin under 14 team won the Telford Schools' Championship and the under 16 netball team once again became county champions, qualifying for the West Midlands Finals in January. The girls' first team hockey made the semi finals in the Wrekin Sevens competition against some particularly strong opposition.

We also hosted a highly successful prep schools' netball and football competition on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October with Newcastle-under-Lyme Prep and Packwood Haugh winning the girls' and boys' competitions respectively.

## Other activities

Our pupils have been fortunate to have many opportunities already this term to take part in outdoor activities with the CCF and Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. The Third Form cadets have experienced their first CCF field day and the Fourth Form have completed their bronze Duke of Edinburgh expedition.

Rehearsals for the school play, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, are already well underway, and I'm looking forward very much to seeing the results of the pupils' hard work. The choir has been in good voice this term, and sang at the civic service for the High Sherriff of Staffordshire on 4<sup>th</sup> October. Everyone else has been warming up their vocal cords ready for the House Singing competition! Our new school council met for the first time last week, following this year's elections. Perhaps the UK government could take a leaf out of our book, encouraging a high voter turnout by rewarding everyone with a doughnut at the polling station.

## School uniform and school shop

Enclosed with this letter is a separate mailing about changes to the School Shop, which will come into operation after half term. We hope the transition will be a smooth one. Mrs Clarke and I are beginning a review of the school uniform, taking soundings from different quarters, including the pupils. Please be assured that we are very mindful of the investment parents have made in the existing uniform; we are also aware of the concerns some of you have about the girls' skirts, both summer and winter. Do get in touch if you have anything to contribute to the debate.

## Plans for the future

You'll gather from this letter that there is change afoot at Wrekin already this term. As I have said at a number of gatherings in the last few weeks, I have no intention of tampering with the school's core values, but I am clear that there are things we can do better, and I am determined that Wrekin becomes an even better school than it is already. I have set in train a systematic review of everything the school does – including the pastoral and co-curricular spheres as well as the academic. Parents, pupils and staff will all be involved in shaping our development plan: we are in a strong position to build on past successes, and I am very excited about the next phase in Wrekin's history.

I want to sustain Wrekin's enviable reputation for fostering confident young people who care about each other and the wider world, but I also want us all – pupils and teachers – to strive for the highest standards in everything we do. I am delighted that the pupils are already looking smarter and more business-like around the campus. Above all, I want them to remember that a first-rate education is a great privilege, and to make the most of their talents and of the opportunities available to them.

May I wish you and your children a very happy half term.

With best wishes



Richard Fleming