

10th January 2023

To Parents and Guardians of All Children

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that you have enjoyed the Christmas holiday season and that the children have managed to recharge their batteries in readiness for the Spring Term. Ending last term with snow on the ground certainly brought a festive, if rather chilly, feel to proceedings. I thank our Estate Manager, Ross Brown, and his team, for their extraordinary efforts to ensure that the children could return after four inches of snow fell in a matter of hours overnight on the Sunday leading into the last week of term. It was lovely seeing the children enjoying some old-fashioned snow play at break-times with their friends in a winter wonderland!

After the last couple of disrupted years, I was delighted that we were able to complete the Autumn Term with the various celebrations of Christmas taking place, with parents in attendance, throughout the school. Nativities, plays and concerts were all superbly performed and warmly received and I was particularly pleased that we were able to return to St. Dunstan's Church for our Carol Service by Candlelight to mark the end of term. Despite losing rehearsal time in the Church, owing to the snow and the fusing of the church organ whilst being played as the congregation arrived, the children sang and read beautifully and I thank everyone involved in enabling this special occasion to happen in challenging circumstances.

During the course of last term, we welcomed a number of new members of staff. Hannah Minnock joined the Marketing and Admissions team as Content Manager, Amelia Curtis joined as our new Place2Be School Project Manager and, after having provided assistance last summer, Michelle Sandys returned to the role of HR and Compliance Administrator on a part-time, permanent basis. Hannah Goldsmith joined our Housekeeping team and we welcomed Benjamin Smith as an interim IT Technician.

This term, we welcome Sophie Bradshaw as our new Head of Senior School and Head-elect. Many of you will already have met Mrs Bradshaw on one of her previous visits, but she is looking forward to getting to know children and parents throughout the school, whilst focussing initially on the set-up and promotion of our Senior School over the next two terms. During this phase she will be working closely with Georgie Labram, Head of Marketing and Admissions. Mrs Labram would be very happy to arrange some time with Mrs Bradshaw for any parents who wish to meet her.

We also welcome new members of our Catering and Housekeeping teams: Luke Peirce joins as Sous Chef, Marie-Louise Humberstone as Commis Chef and Molly Hill and Tiffany Smith join as Housekeeping Assistants. We say a sad farewell to one of our Chefs, Ghiby Thomas, but look forward to seeing him back working at functions in the future.

During the Autumn Term our Gap students were three former pupils: Isabel Bruce Lockhart, William Johnson, and Eliza Semmens. We thank them for all their contributions last term and wish them well for the rest of their Gap year as they embark on their travels. This term we return



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to our usual arrangements of welcoming Gap students for a full year from across the globe. Lochlan McClean and Imogen Gill join us from Australia and Bella Foster has travelled from New Zealand. An exciting year lies ahead of them and we hope that they will settle quickly into school life and enjoy being part of the Dulwich family.

Following an extensive recruitment process, I am delighted to announce that we have appointed Mrs Diana Rabot and Mrs Katharine Lawrence jointly to the position of SENCO and Learning Strategies Manager. Mrs Rabot is currently Head of Learning Development at Farringtons School and has previously held the roles of SENCO and Head of Learning Support at Eltham College and Cobham Hall. Mrs Lawrence is currently lead teacher of Science at Greenfields School; a small, specialist school which supports children with complex needs. She has previously taught at Invicta Grammar School and Monkton Combe Senior School. Mrs Rabot and Mrs Lawrence will join us permanently in September 2023 but we hope that they will be able to spend some time with us during the Summer Term on a part-time basis. I look forward to introducing them to you and to the children in due course.

Last term, relevant staff completed training as follows: Designated Safeguarding Lead Refresher Training, Food Hygiene Level 2 Early Years; Anxiety and mental health Supporting secondary students; Fire Warden Training; Preparing for a Boarding Inspection; Understanding the Writing Journey Years 5 & 6; Webinar Representations of neurodiversity in children's reading; A Guide to whole-school Sustainability by WWF UK; GCSE Drama A Complete Guide for New Teachers; Pearson GCSE Maths Conference; Type 1 Diabetes Awareness Training; Auditory Processing Difficulties/Disorder; Autism and Girls; 12 hour Paediatric First Aid Training; Webinar Exploring EYFS; How to Observe and Assess Children's Learning and Progress in the EYFS, Early Years ASD Awareness training, Autism PDA Positive and practical strategies, Drawing Club Encouraging writing and communication in Early Years, Intensive Interaction. I was a member of an ISI Inspection team and have now completed the Institute of Leadership and Management Level 7 Executive Coaching Qualification.

We begin the new year with a focus on wellbeing and I hope that you will take the opportunity to join an event which we have arranged for parents. On Friday 20th January, we have a Mental Health First Aid Awareness training session for up to 25 parents, run by Michelle West from the Sam West Foundation. The course will take place between 9.00 am – 1.00 pm, with coffee on offer for parents from 8.30 am in the John Leakey Foyer. More information will be provided in Mrs Whiting's letter and you will be able to sign up on SOCS during the Clubs signing-up window.

With a focus on self-care and wellbeing, our theme for this term is a simple reminder. **Be Kind.** We often talk about kindness as a value. It's a quality we look out for in our friends, colleagues and partners. And research suggests that kindness can also provide health benefits. We know, for instance, that when we carry out an act of kindness for another person, the brain's pleasure and reward centre lights up releasing serotonin, the feel-good hormone, which has a calming effect and stimulates positive feelings in the body. But we very rarely talk of self-kindness. Perhaps we find the word "self" off-putting – it seems selfish or self-centred somehow. However, the truth is, self-kindness is an essential component of good mental health and we shall be encouraging the children this term not only to be kind to others, but also to be less critical of themselves, recognising that making mistakes is an important part of the learning process. Overriding negative inner dialogue and replacing it with a kinder, more compassionate and forgiving voice is one of the most transformative steps we can take for our own mental and emotional wellbeing. I hope parents will support us in such an approach, particularly as we move into a period of school assessment and examinations!

Returning to Upper School this term, parents and children will see that work has started reconfiguring the Coursehorn building to provide the exciting new teaching, learning and social spaces that we have planned for our extension to GCSE. We are delighted once again to be working with Coleman and James, the contractors who worked so collaboratively with the

school in the development of Nash House. Work has begun creating the Henley Café, breakout spaces, new Science lab and senior classroom facilities on the ground floor. Progress to develop the first floor classrooms and break-out study and social areas will take place after half-term in the Summer Term. What we had initially envisaged as a two phase development has now been revised. We will take occupancy of the ground floor as planned, in September 2023, with the development fully completed by mid-October 2023. We continue to receive strong interest in our Senior School for September 2023. In the next couple of weeks, we will be running our Scholarship assessments for internal and external children currently in Years 6, 7 and 8, in addition to further internal and external Open events later this term.

As always this term, the shortest of the school year, is very busy. Please do look at the Calendar and make a note of all the Parents' Evenings and any events in which your child will be participating. On the 9th February, just before half-term, I will be leading an Information Evening which will focus on entry routes to senior schools. This will also include information on progression into our own Senior section; I would suggest that this is particularly relevant for parents of children in Years 3, 4 and 5 and I hope that many of you will attend.

Children in Years, 5, 6 and 7 will have their mid-year examinations in the week beginning 23rd January. Whilst slightly less formal than the end of year examinations, these play an important part in our assessment of progress mid-way through the academic year. Year 8 students will sit their examinations commencing on Tuesday 7th February, immediately prior to half-term, with the Tuesday start reflecting the arrangements for Common Entrance Examinations in the Summer Term.

Finally, back to school advice has recently been issued by UKHSA amid high levels of flu, COVID-19 and scarlet fever. This advises:

- Parents to keep their child at home if they are unwell and have a fever until they feel better and the fever has resolved.
- To help children to learn about the importance of good hand hygiene; practising regular handwashing with soap and warm water or, if necessary, by using hand sanitizer.
- Catching coughs and sneezes in tissues then binning them as another simple way to help stop illness from spreading.

Please could I ask for everyone's cooperation in ensuring that children remain at home if they are unwell, displaying flu-like symptoms and /or a temperature, to ensure that we maintain a healthy population of children and teachers throughout the term. We will be encouraging the children to maintain good respiratory and hand-hygiene whilst they are in school.

I look forward to seeing you at what I hope will be a full programme of Parents' Evenings, concerts, plays, coffee mornings and fixtures throughout the term.

With all good wishes from Nicky and me for a happy and healthy 2023.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul David". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Paul David