

## End of term letter to parents – July 2017

13<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Parents

The year may be ending, but much of the community has been a hive of activity; half the School has been involved in our first end of year Activities Week. Year 10 have produced a musical theatre performance in just two days, enjoying preparing a fight scene based on West Side Story, singing songs from other shows, making all the scenery and lighting, as well as recording a documentary of it all. By contrast, the Lower Sixth planned a charity extravaganza, raising money for the British Red Cross UK Solidarity Fund, amongst others, and also took part in a Dragon's Den exercise on Monday. Meanwhile, the Year 8s and 9s engaged in a diverse range of extra-curricular activities including a trip to Coventry University. In tandem with this, the Junior School were busy preparing for their annual Speech Day in Big School. At the same time, we have trips out to the Somme, Chase Water Valley and the Lake District for a Duke of Edinburgh Gold expedition. If that were not enough, let's not forget that this year's expedition to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands leaves this weekend! It has been, and is, an exciting end to a tremendous School year.

As well as the successes I have informed you of before, there has been much change. You will have heard about the raft of reforms that are taking place at both A Level and GCSE. This summer the first cohort of students to have taken the new linear and harder examinations will receive their results. Nationally, results will be broadly similar to last year, as at both A Level and GCSE the cohort's prior attainment (at GCSE and Key Stage 2) is used to predict the proportion of students who receive each grade. It is widely thought, though, that there will be variability at school level and Ofqual, the examinations regulator, has written to all schools to warn of this. Of course, it is normal for a school to see small changes in results, year on year, for a variety of reasons, but when qualifications change whole-scale, at a national level, students tend to perform less well in the first year. What this will look like for WGS remains to be seen, but I can assure you that our teachers have been adapting for the new style examinations for some time now and we are confident our students have been better prepared than ever.

As is usual at this time of year, it falls to me to tell you of our fantastic teachers who are leaving: Dr Chris O'Brien is retiring after 30 years of unstinting service to WGS: he will be sorely missed. He is a true scholar, with exceptional mathematical ability, such that it is admired by his colleagues. It takes some confidence to run a Maths Department consisting of most of the Senior Management, including me, yet he has done this skilfully. Moreover he has a wealth of general cultural knowledge too, which will leave the quizzers in the staff Common Room feeling bereft by his absence! From Scout Leader to, latterly, timetabler extraordinaire, he has served our School faithfully.

Alison Causebrook, who was a pupil at WGS, has been here for 10 years, most recently as Head of Girls' Games. She leaves us from her full time position to look after her very young son, Jack, but I am pleased to say she will keep in touch with us as a coach to the netball teams next year. Like Chris, Alison has been a tireless and loyal servant of the School.

Francis Murton leaves the Music department after two very busy years to rejoin his family in the South. In his short time here he has made a real impact. His particular contribution has been to grow the number of individual instrumentalists in the School, and to introduce what has become the popular WGS annual music competition. We wish him every success in the future.

Katie Gilchrist, who joined us just for a year as maternity cover, has had a fantastic time and will also be missed. She has proved immensely popular with our pupils, possessed as she is with real warmth of character and personality. I am convinced she has a great career ahead of her, and again I wish her well.

With regard to next year, an introduction to our new teachers is appended to this letter. They are all excited to be joining our community and I know you will welcome them.

At the recent Prizegiving ceremony in St Peter's Church, I was pleased to take the opportunity to thank the School's Board of Directors for their expertise and unstinting service to WGS. During our recent ISI inspection, they were commended for excellence, which is indeed the case. Sadly, some Directors, after years of faithful service to our community, wish to stand down from the Board because their term of office has come to an end. I bring this to your attention in the hope that some of you may feel this is a way you can serve your School. We have vacancies in a few skill areas and you would join an experienced and excellent team; please let me know if you would like to be considered for such a responsibility.

May I conclude by wishing you all a fantastic summer and hope you enjoy a well deserved rest. School will remain open as usual with admissions, administrative and finance staff on hand to help with any queries that you may have. Our Estates Team will also be busy this summer with a full programme of maintenance and restoration planned, including refurbished Physics Laboratories in the Merridale building to look forward to.

Thank you, both students and parents; enjoy your holidays.

With best wishes.

Kathy Crewe-Read  
Head

## **Biographies of New Staff**

### **Academic Year: 2017-2018**

#### **Melanie Cuthbert**

##### **Head of Academic Music**

Melanie is currently at Hereford Cathedral School as Head of Academic Music with responsibility for planning and delivering the Academic Music programme, running co-curricular ensembles with the Department and assisting with the management of peripatetic staff and teaching colleagues. She graduated with a Degree in Music in 1998 from Birmingham Conservatoire. Melanie enjoys singing and plays Oboe and Cor Anglais. Other interests include: walking in the Malverns and Black Mountains; keeping fit and she is a prolific reader of journals and fiction.

#### **Nick Brown**

##### **Head of Mathematics**

Nick is relishing the opportunity to come back to WGS, having attended here for his secondary and Sixth Form education. He will join us from Ounsdale High School, where he is currently Assistant Headteacher and Head of KS4/5 Mathematics. His role means he is a member of the School's Leadership Team, as well as leading the Maths Department. He graduated with a Degree in Mathematics from University of Exeter in 2003. Nick enjoys puzzles (which he encourages his students to try, to improve their maths outcomes) and cooking. He also enjoys running and is currently landscaping his garden.

#### **Rebecca Bradley**

##### **Head of Girls' Games**

Becky (as she prefers to be known), is currently at Newcastle Under Lyme School teaching PE and Games. She graduated from Cardiff Metropolitan University with a Degree in Sport and Physical Education and has many coaching certificates including in Hockey, Netball, Tennis and Mountaineering. Her main sport is hockey, which she has played since the age of 11, and currently plays for Cannock Ladies Hockey Club. Becky also enjoys running and the gym, as well as watching live sports as much as possible.

#### **Sophie Hill**

##### **Trainee Teacher of Art**

Sophie is an alumna of WGS, having studied for her GCSEs here. She went on to Sixth Form at King Edward VI College, before obtaining a 1<sup>st</sup> BA (Hons) History of Art Degree, and then MRes Art and Design both at Liverpool John Moores University. She is now undertaking her PGCE at WGS, teaching Art. Sophie is a keen artist, writer and photographer, contributing to an online arts magazine and independently publishing a series of 3 books with fellow alumni of Liverpool John Moores. She also enjoys visiting art galleries and playing the guitar.

#### **Andrew Austin**

##### **Music Teacher**

Andrew graduated with BA (Hons) in Performance from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 1995. He has been working as a Teacher of Music, and before this undertook freelance music and education work including: funding applications for music Hubs, planning and setting up new build department and recording studios and developing student Assessment for Learning. Andrew is also

an experienced conductor, composer and arranger of music for all levels of ensembles. He also enjoys cooking and computer strategy games.