

Wednesday 11th July 2018

Dear Parents

What an extraordinarily busy few weeks we've had since my last letter! The summer term is always a hive of activity across School, ranging from Year 3, 4, 5 and 7 residentials, to Sports Days, Art exhibitions, concerts, plays, the Jazz Spec, expeditions, Junior Speech Day and the senior Prizegiving: no pupil can have escaped this frenetic activity. As I walk around School, students are happy ... and tired. Thank goodness the end of term has come!

Of course, work at School doesn't stop once children and teachers go home to rest. As students depart, contractors will arrive on site to embark on the annual round of summer works: the Chemistry laboratories and Sports Hall changing rooms are to be refurbished; a new reception area is to be created for the Junior School; there is all manner of routine maintenance to undertake, too. There is much for students to look forward to when they return in September.

Those of you who know me well, will know that I am not one to shy away from a political debate – even if it is – if you'll excuse the pun – a 'football' that has been kicked around for some time. I write this reeling from hearing that the Culture Secretary, Matt Hancock (er, stop press: make that the Health Secretary!) said he admired schools which did not allow mobile phones, adding that more Heads should "follow their lead". The Chief Inspector of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, has chipped in too with her penny's worth, opining that the place of mobile phones in the classroom seems to her dubious at best. She went on to add that sanctions such as writing lines were entirely appropriate for any child found with a phone in school. It seems her ideas of discipline are as outdated and Dickensian as her views on technology. And just plain daft.

Something many adults grapple with is the understanding that technology (and by that I include mobile phones) is already completely changing the nature of teaching and learning, just as it is revolutionising other workplaces. As educators, it's part of our responsibility to ensure our children are as prepared as they can be for the digital world ahead of them. My personal experience of education (and those of Spielman and Hancock) is irrelevant now; what's key is adapting our approach, so that children are equipped to communicate and work seamlessly amidst the technology that permeates our lives now. In what way does banning the most accessible form of new technology that they have, their phones, help them do that?

A colleague talked recently to Paul Howard-Jones, Professor of Neuroscience and Education at Bristol University whose research over the last few years has focused on the use of mobiles and the internet in schools. He has noticed a worrying trend towards a societal demonisation of mobile phones in education, often in schools that were struggling to provide any alternative connectivity for students. He is as baffled as we are as to why schools would not embrace the obvious advantages to using mobile devices to help support learning. I wonder if Matt Hancock, Amanda Spielman and other naysayers would be able to function effectively in their day to day roles without their smartphone or tablet? For me, the mobile phone debate stifles something far more important - the role of emerging technologies and how they might change the way we teach, train and guide our students. I say 'Bah humbug!' to them!

If they won't look forward I must. As is now customary at this time of year, an introduction to new teachers who will be joining us in September is appended to this letter. One of the reasons they chose to join WGS is our progressive approach to teaching and the way we embrace technology. They are all excited to be joining our community and I know you will make them feel welcome.

Also as is usual at this time of year, it falls to me to tell you of those teachers who are leaving us for pastures new. Diane Birt, Head of Classics and inspirational leader of the Coast2Coast Challenge, Callum Underwood, our brilliant French teacher, and Kartar Uppal, who has overseen the School's charitable work for many years, and musician Andrew Austin, leave us to further their careers in other places of learning. Mary Howard retires from OpAL, where countless students have received tireless individual guidance and tuition from her over many years and James Millichamp, moves on from being Head of Art, to establish himself as a practitioner of his art – literally – in the commercial world.

And lastly, Peter and Helen Hills retire, after giving 51 years, between them, of dedicated service to WGS. Mrs Hills has been an amazingly professional and outstanding Head of Biology, whilst Mr Hills, as you will know, finishes his 31 year stint at WGS as a mathematics teacher of considerable talent. That he has, in his time, also been Head of Lower School, Head of Middle School, coach of the Year 7 football team (who have this year reached national ESFA semi-final), and Deputy Head gives you something of the measure of the man. I was lucky enough to cut my headship-teeth benefitting from his wise tutelage. I owe him tremendous thanks.

Also looking ahead, please look out for the latest edition of *The Independent*, our school magazine which will drop through your letterboxes very soon. As well as providing a visual taste of the term, it includes a summary of the Parents' Survey findings. Thank you if you were one of the 311 parents who completed the survey earlier this year. Your views really do make a difference, and we shall be acting upon them over the next few months.

For now though, good luck to our Year 11 and Upper Sixth students who will receive their GCSE and A Level results in August, as well as to the students and staff who are about to embark on their India Expedition. I hope you make great memories together.

Have a great Summer.

With all good wishes,

Kathy Crewe-Read

Head

PS. Is Matt Hancock PM yet?

Biographies of New Staff

Academic Year: 2018-2019

David Matkin

Teacher of OpAL

David graduated from Coventry University with a BSc Applied Biology (Hons) degree, completing his PGCE at University of Warwick and his post Graduate Diploma Dyslexia and Literacy at the Dyslexia Institute and University of York. He currently works at The Dorothy Goodman School as a SEN Class Teacher, supporting students in Years 7-10 with SEN and responsibility for Science across KS3. Outside of work, David is a member of Derby Magic Circle, enjoying performing magic tricks; along with circus skills and escapology. He also has experience of creating lighting sets and has undertaken a sound engineering course.

Gemma Guest

Teacher of Art p/t

Gemma graduated from University of Central England with a BA Hons Art and Design by Negotiated Study degree, completing her PGCE in Art and Design at Birmingham University. She is currently a p/t Teacher of Art at Sandwell Academy (Thomas Telford Trust), having worked at Thomas Telford since 2004, with responsibility for Sixth Form. She has also worked across KS 3,4,5. Gemma's main interest outside of Art include bakery and cake making. As a National Trust member, she also enjoys visiting gardens and houses with her family; and enjoys trips to galleries, museums and exhibitions.

Rachael Davies

Teacher of Art

Rachael is currently a Teacher of Art and Design KS3-5 at Thomas Telford School, teaching a range of disciplines including: painting, ceramics, craft, photography and mixed media. Her specialism is oil painting. Rachael currently also runs a 'Business Enterprise' project for Year 8, where students are set a brief (as an artist/craftsperson would be) to design/make crafts for the school summer fayre. Outside of Art and Design, Rachael was a dancer from an early age, having performed at The Royal Albert Hall and whilst she no longer dances in her spare time, still likes to keep fit and is now a keen gym member.

Scott Li

Teacher of Maths (Head of KS5)

Scott graduated from University of Warwick with a BSc Mathematics, then completing his PGCE Mathematics at University of Oxford. He is currently Head of KS5 Mathematics at Saint Olaves Grammar School in Orpington. He is relocating to the area with his fiancée. Scott has a strong love for learning about other cultures across the world, enjoying travel abroad with family and friends, particularly China and Japan. Scott has a keen interest in forging international links with schools outside the UK, and has been involved in exchange programmes at his current School with both Chinese and Indian schools.

Adam Jones**Teacher of Maths (Head of Monitoring and Intervention for Maths)**

Adam is currently at Lordswood Grils' School as Teacher of Maths KS3-5 and also currently overseeing A-level maths and further maths, GCSE resits and functional skills as maternity cover. He graduated from University of Birmingham with a BSc (1st class hon) Degree in Mathematics. Aside of maths, Adam's other main passion is sport, having competed at a national level in cycling, and more recently completing the 100 mile velo ride in Birmingham. He is also a keen footballer, holding an FA Level 1 coaching badge. Adam also has a passion for problem solving, using these skills, along with his maths, in STEM activities at his previous schools.

Elizabeth Duncan**Teacher of Maths p/t**

Liz (as she prefers to be known) graduated from University of Warwick with a BEd (Hons) Maths Teaching. She is currently at Chace Community School in Enfield as Second in the Maths Department (including KS5). Liz is relocating to the area to be closer to her children who live in the Midlands. A trained Duke of Edinburgh Co-Ordinate, her other interests include making her own greetings cards, reading mathematical books, spending time with her granddaughters, and a love of theme parks quoting herself as a "bit of a roller coaster nerd".