



Vinehall School

August 2010

Dear Parent

Welcome to the academic year 2010-2011. This will be an exciting year in the school's history as we await the arrival of our new Head, Richard Follett, his wife Jo and their daughters Hannah and Rebecca in January. Mr Follett will be in school for the week before the start of this term and will be taking assembly on the 18th September. Please do feel free to come and meet him. He will be attending a number of events through the term and is keen to meet as many of you as possible.

I am delighted to report that the number of children starting at Vinehall this September is an increase on last year's total and there is a buoyant atmosphere as we look forward to a period of growth as the economy stabilises. Boarding numbers are also strong and they are of course augmented by the many children who temp board during the week. If you wish to have a tour of the boarding house, Mr & Mrs Caithness will be delighted to show you around.

As you will know, Bodiam Manor closed suddenly during August leaving its children and staff stranded without a school for September. We are delighted that some of their children will be starting here and I am sure, like all new families, they will be welcomed into the Vinehall family.

Over the summer there have been two lets and a number of sports courses. Our maintenance and grounds teams have been working hard to ensure that the school looks as smart as ever, ready for September, and we are looking forward to having the children back so that we can launch into another busy year's learning at Vinehall.

Cranbrook School contacted us at the end of term to say that they had awarded scholarships to Jamie Lerpiniere, Isabelle Powell and Chloe Jeremy. Congratulations to all three and I hope, like all our Year 8 leavers they will settle in quickly and happily to their new schools.

Staff

In the Prep school we welcome Ms Laura White who takes up the position of Head of Girls Games following the retirement of Miss Gorrie. In the Pre-Prep Mrs Lynn Harding takes up a position with a Reception class and Miss Emelia Stapley will be working with Year 1 and 2 as demand has grown for these year groups. Mme Florence Buet joins the French Department. We have a new gapper, Mr Ben Westcombe, who has just finished his 'A' Levels at St Bede's and joins us for the year.

Prefects

Congratulations to the nine Year 8 pupils who have been selected as prefects this year: Head Boy Jasper Piper; Head Girl Ruby Russell; Deputy Head Girl Katie Orr; Deputy Head Boy Henry Long; Lydia Butler, Ivo Elliott, Ursula Horton, Jesse O'Shaughnessy, and Tom Winchester. I am looking forward to seeing how the rest of Year 8 settle in and hope to add to this number during the term.

Calendar and Events

The school calendar will be available for you as usual in the Front Hall (subject to delivery) for the term ahead, listing the main events of the term. The calendar is posted on our website and weekly updates and reminders will be published in our e-newsletter, *Vinelines*. An invitation to Grandparents' Day to pass on to your extended family will be sent out shortly.

Clubs

A list of clubs will be available on the website. Please discuss with your child which they will be doing. The Form Tutor on the first day of term will then help the children with their selections.

Sponsored walk

For those of you wondering what has happened to the sponsored walk, fear not! It has been rescheduled for later in the year.

Saturday matches

Please note the dates of Saturday matches and keep them free. We run the Saturday matches to give your children more opportunities to represent the school and to enable working parents to have the chance to watch their children. Therefore, it is extremely unfortunate if teams are weakened or matches have to be cancelled because children are absent. Please remember to ask permission for absence from me (by email or letter) and to do this well in advance and for only completely unavoidable reasons.

Carol Service

All prep school children are expected to attend the Carol Service. To make the timing more convenient for all, the service has been moved to Saturday 11th December at 3.00 p.m. rather than the usual Sunday evening. We hope to maintain the special feel that the Carol Service has always had and Dorm Decs will take place as usual for boarders afterwards. Full details will be sent later in the term.

Form Placement

As we have now decided to send all the beginning of year letters by email, it has proved overly complex to send individual form lists. If you wish to know your child's form prior to the first day of term then you are welcome to consult the lists which will be displayed in the front hall from Monday 6th September or alternatively to phone the office from that day. Form placements have been considered with immense care and are based on internal assessments, teachers' experience and observations of friendship groups and with the intention of achieving a fair balance in each class. We have done our best with the lists and if you have any serious concerns about groupings, please contact Mrs Kawai-Calderhead (known generally as Mrs K-C ,for Juniors) or Mrs Redstone.

Medical

If there is any medical information that we need to know, please ensure that Sister Victoria is informed. Any new medical conditions or updates on existing ones should be made known to Sister Victoria in writing, please, including a need for pupils to wear glasses. If your child requires medication during the daytime, you will need to sign a consent form in the dispensary (or at the Pre-Prep office).

If your child is suffering from any illness we ask that you keep her/him off school. If your child is ill, please let us know by phoning the office after 8.15 a.m. or the Pre-Prep office after 8.30 a.m. We will require a note giving the reason for the absence. If you wish your child to miss school for any reason other than illness, then you should write to me well in advance to request permission. Please check your calendar in order to avoid making appointments at the same time as important school events, including Saturday matches.

Pupils who are unwell may miss games and if you write in to request off-games, please state whether you feel that your child is well enough to go and watch games inside/outside rather than sit-out the session in the library. Where possible, we would prefer the children to watch.

Child Protection and welfare

In all of the work that we do at Vinehall, we see the safety and welfare of children as paramount. This means that sometimes we have to take actions which some parents could find threatening. In such cases we will work towards mutual understanding. We will explain our professional responsibilities and we will give every reassurance as to our motives but we will always stress that, for us, children's needs have to come first.

It is not our intention to overplay this important and statutory aspect of our duty of care to the children but in order to ensure that we cover child protection efficiently we have a Welfare Team of staff representing children across Vinehall. For your information, I am our Child Protection Officer and Deputy Child Protection Officer is Mrs Quelli Coles. The Heads of the Prep School and Pre-Prep Department and the School Nurse also sit on this Welfare Team with the support of a Governor, Mrs Liz Goodman, who has special responsibility for Child Protection and together we share the responsibilities of child protection at Vinehall.

Safety on the Drive

Please take extreme care to curb your speed and watch out for children on the drive. As the evenings become darker, it is imperative that children wait in the porch, by the front door or in the front hall/rec room at the end of the school day and nowhere else.

Saturday School and Saturday assembly

As you are aware, Saturday school now exists for Year 7 and 8. However, there is a full programme of activities for Years 3-6 and parents involved will receive a separate letter concerning this. Drop off time on Saturdays should be from 8.00 - 8.15 a.m. as we will have our assembly at 8.20 a.m. Assembly on Saturdays will not be for parents unless we have a speaker, such as Mr Follett on September 18th. If we have a speaker, then details will be provided in advance.

Sunday Services and Catholic instruction

Father John presides over our Sunday services for boarders and we hope very much that many families will choose to join us. Dates are published in the Calendar and extended families are extremely welcome to join us too.

Mrs Sally Chaplin has kindly agreed to restart Catholic Instruction and details will be sent as soon as she has returned from Rwanda.

Friends of Vinehall

The Friends of Vinehall Committee will be happy to receive your support and contact details are printed at the back of the calendar. We hope that parents will be able to support the various school events that the Friends organise. Please ensure that you book your bonfire tickets.

Communication

Staff are always happy to see you to discuss any concerns you may have although we would request that you allow the teachers time in the morning to prepare for the busy day ahead. Form teachers are the first port of call for pastoral or general concerns. We recommend that you request a telephone call through the office or make an appointment to see a member of staff after school when they will have more time to talk to you. Form teachers will write to you at the beginning of term with details of the best way to stay in touch with them. Most staff have a school email address which is now shown in the school calendar. Please do stay in touch so that we can address any problems at an early stage. As a rule of thumb, if you are considering getting in touch but feel unsure, do contact us.

Prep Diaries

Pupils in Year 5 and above are issued with their own prep diary which should come home daily and should be signed every weekend by parents/guardians or boarding tutors. Please help us to encourage the children to use these books to note down and organise their prep. Parents/boarding tutors should sign the book every weekend.

Juniors have home-school contact books in which they keep a reading log. Mrs K-C (Head of Juniors) will be in the de Beer corridor each morning to speak to parents. Year 3 parents will also wish to stay in close contact with Mrs K-C or Mrs Everist as new pupils settle in.

School Uniform

Second-hand uniform is available from the matrons. Requests can be left in the school office. The Simmonds uniform shop can be contacted on the school shop number 01580 881597. Uniform can be

ordered on line on www.simmonds-ltd.com. Please make sure that uniform is named and looped as necessary. Children may wear summer or winter uniform until half term, dependent upon the weather.

Girls' shoes

Please remember to buy girls' shoes with a solid sole/small heel. Pump style shoes do not support the feet and encourage the wearer to shuffle along instead of walking normally. I am afraid that you will be asked to replace them immediately if your daughter has artfully persuaded you to buy the wrong type.

Tours for parents and the Open Days

Please do not miss out on a tour of Vinehall if you have not yet had one or feel that your last full tour was too long ago. Our Registrar, Mrs Parry, will be delighted to book you and/or friends in for a tour of the school with me at a mutually convenient time. You might also like to come along to our open mornings on 17th and 18th of September when Mr Follett will be here. Please contact Mrs Parry for details. One parent has suggested to me that parents might like to bring a small group of friends for a special tour/talk around the school. If you think you would like to invite a few friends who are might be interested in this then please let Mrs Parry know. It is your enormous enthusiasm for the school that interests other parents and kindles the interest of the next generation of Vinehall parents.

Beginning of term arrangements

Day children should arrive at school between 8.00 a.m. and 8.15 a.m. on Thursday 9th September (Pre-Prep 8.20 a.m. – 8.40 a.m.). Boarders return on Wednesday 8th September at 4.30 p.m.

The first day of term is always busy. We would appreciate it if you would please take care on the drive and complete the drop-off as quickly and safely as possible. Guardians for new pupils should aim to meet their charges upon arrival (so please ensure they are early and ready in the front hall) and new parents are invited to coffee in the rec. room.

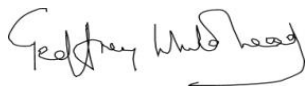
To ease congestion on the drive on the first day, you are welcome to bring PE kit, wellingtons, etc. into school before term starts. School will be open for staff meetings on Monday 6th, Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th September and you will have access to pegs during office hours.

Finally....Getting your child ready for term

Remembering to do everything necessary to get a child prepared for school is always a headache! I have therefore attached a checklist of essential things which need to be done before the start of term. For those of you who are perfect models of efficiency then please ignore it but for those who have greater difficulty getting everything ready then I hope it will be of help.

We welcome our new families and welcome back established families. Those of you who attended the Prize-Giving at the end of last term will have seen how much Vinehall children develop and achieve during their time here and we look forward to continuing the same process with your children this year.

Yours, with best wishes for the academic year ahead,



Geoffrey Whitehead
Acting Head

Enclosure: Start of term check list