

March 2005

Dear Parents,

Those of you who receive Vinelines each week will be aware of the many and varied Lent term events enjoyed by our children. Certainly, there are too many to list here and I urge parents to 'sign-up' to Vinelines by sending in your email addresses. We would like to include email addresses in our Social Calendar, too, for your convenience.

Scholarships

Vinehall's scholarship record is outstanding and again we celebrate a very successful group of Year 8 pupils. With the scholarship season nearing its end, I am happy to report the following:

ACADEMIC

Imran Iqbal	Eastbourne College	Top Academic Scholarship
Felix Keeling	Eastbourne College	Academic Scholarship
Sophie Pugh	Benenden School	Academic Scholarship
Sarah Williamson	St. Leonard's, Mayfield	Top Academic Scholarship

MUSIC

Felix Canetty-Clarke	Tonbridge School	Music Scholarship
Peter Everall	Hurstpierpoint College	Music Exhibition
James Harmer	Llandoverly College	Music Scholarship
Gabriel Harriman	Eastbourne College	Top Music Scholarship
Poppy Smallwood	Benenden School	Music Scholarship

ART

Christopher Goldsack	Sherborne School for Boys	Art Exhibition
Sarah Williamson	St. Leonard's, Mayfield	Major Art Scholarship

ALL-ROUNDER AWARDS

Calum Bowie	Lancing College	Ken Shearwood Award
Max Spedding	Lancing College	Ken Shearwood Award

In addition, Lucy Blackstone attained a place at Tonbridge Girls' Grammar School.

Buster Russell and Tristan d'Agar also passed their 11+.

House Events

Paxton won the inter-House trophy this term and enjoyed a special cinema trip in the last week of term. 4C won the Form Shield across the term and in the final week. Ashton won the GK competition in fine style.

Friends of Vinehall School

The Friends Committee organised a highly successful whole school cake sale for Easter on the last Tuesday of term. The Friends also arranged for the Easter Bunny to visit and that caused even more excitement than the pancake race! These events were much appreciated by all. The Friends' wine-tasting evening earlier this term raised over £400 for Rwanda and there is much excitement over the forthcoming dog and pet show in May. The main focus of The Friends' activity in the summer is the annual Vines' Day fete and this year there will be an additional event; a family picnic and entertainments, including a disco, is planned for the Saturday evening preceding Vines Day. We are extremely grateful to all members of The Friends Committee for their hard work and enthusiasm. The Friends have also established a Form Representative system this year to boost communication between parents and they seek ideas from all parents towards an 'unofficial school guide' for Vinehall. Please contact members of the Committee (listed in your calendar) if you feel able to help them in any way.

Music and Drama

We celebrate the ongoing success of our music department. It has prepared five scholars this year and there have been opportunities for the school to admire performances at assemblies and concerts. The woodwind evening was a particular highlight, organised by Mr. Farley and Ms Leake, showcasing clarinet, flute, saxophone and recorder ensembles. Our brass evening was postponed owing to the snowy weather but a great effort at the Hastings Festival brought back several individual awards including the Junior Brass Ensemble Trophy (for the second year running), against tough and much older competition in some cases. Many of our instrumentalists have recently taken Associated Board Examinations and we await the results.

Year 5 performed a musical *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the end of term. The entire Year group took part and it was a spectacular production. Despite illness and time lost from rehearsals for snowy weather, the children performed with confidence. Well done to them, and many thanks to all the staff and parents who contributed to another highly professional production in our theatre. The set was created by Mrs. Bolt, with the help of several of our artistic parents, and our wardrobe mistress, Libby Waters, organised the costumes. Parents ensured that our children had extremely professional make-up and Tim Sampson, our new theatre technician, made an impressive debut, too. All this helped the Year 5 children to rise to the challenge of their first full-scale production and they gained plenty of useful stage experience. Mrs. Gearey and Mrs. Harmer worked wonders yet again.

Next term, the theatre moves forward to the Fifties for our summer production, the school version of *Grease*.

Sport

The rugby season has ended for most boys. All of Year 3 and 4 were involved in a tournament at St. Andrew's last week. The U/8 team played a tag-rugby match against Claremont which ended in a draw with good performances all-round.

The netball season was disrupted by snow and ice in March but in spite of this, the teams practiced hard and played a number of matches. The senior teams have been particularly successful, winning the majority of their games, and the U/13 A squad is to be congratulated on an undefeated term, with five wins and one draw.

The boys' and girls' teams of all ages took part in a cross-country event at Claremont and came in fourth overall. Vinehall also hosted a judo tournament.

Our short hockey season was cut even more owing to adverse weather conditions. The boys' first XI did well, however, with two strong victories over St. Bede's and Bethany. Mr. Hill is optimistic about the potential in next year's squad. The Colts A and B teams have made encouraging progress this season and sustained only one loss in five games. The U/10s had only three games and the As defeated St. Bede's in a tense indoor match.

An informal afternoon's hockey for Year 3 and 4 girls at St. Andrew's was much enjoyed by all and our first lacrosse match ended in victory for Vinehall.

In swimming, eleven of our girls have won places in the IAPS nationals and we have high hopes for our boys following a good time trial. We won our gala against St. Andrew's and narrowly lost to Benenden. Swimming cups were awarded to Hannah Boshier and Calum Bowie and team captains are Catriona Flint and Calum Bowie.

Our U/13 gymnasts travelled to the Blue Coat School in Birmingham for the GISGA National championships. They came fifth in the team event, winning the Tormead Shield, and second in the group sequence to win the Newport Trophy, against eighteen other teams. Sophie Pugh was placed fourth overall for her combined floor scores and Marie Cotton-Rhein came second in the set floor routine, against ninety gymnasts. Sarah Williamson also gave a wonderful performance. Congratulations to the whole squad.

Staff changes

Mrs. Gearey has decided to step down from the position of Head of English for personal reasons and in order to devote more time to drama. With effect from September 2005, she will teach English and head the drama department and I am delighted to report that Mr. Yeats-Brown will take on the English department. Mr. Y-B will continue to run the RS department too, for the academic year 2005-2006.

I have appointed Mrs. Michelle King to teach in Year 3. This is an additional post, created by the formation of a third stream in Year 3 from September 2005. Mrs. King has a BSc in mathematics with computer science, physics, chemistry, zoology and botany. She has taught in South Africa, up to High School level, and in English Prep Schools. She lives in Hawkhurst with her husband, the Head of Maths at Marlborough House, and their eight year-old son. Mrs. King will take a form, 3K, and will teach English, maths, Science, art and girls' games (she is a level 1 hockey coach and she is very interested in netball) as well as supporting junior drama and music.

Message from the School Nurse

Sister Julie asks that parents/guardians ensure that you advise her of any medical concerns (especially newly-developed ones) for your children so that she can send out another medical form and keep her records up-to-date.

Please ensure that any inhalers or medicines that come into school are clearly named.

Sister Julie thanks all parents for your support in the treatment of headlice. We still encounter cases but there has been a distinct improvement in the situation. Should you require further information relating to this perennial problem, then Sister Julie will be delighted to provide you with copies of information sheets including the latest research findings and advice. She can mail this on request and she is happy to discuss such things with parents in the dispensary, should you wish to call-in and visit her there.

Missing School

If children are off school for any reason, a written explanation needs to be provided to the Head. This is a statutory requirement. It is of great help if off sick or off-games notes include details of the nature of the complaint, likely length of time for which it will affect the child and the kinds of activities that parents wish children to partake in or avoid. If you have not instructed us that your child should not take part in an activity such as Games, then we shall assume that all is well unless Matron advises otherwise.

If your holiday or family arrangements cut across term-time and you therefore need to take your child out of lessons, then again we need to receive a written request in advance and I hope that parents will understand that both Jan Hannan and I are loath to lose the children on school-days. Please do all that you can to minimise disruption to your child's schooling. It is a great shame when our children prepare for special in-school events and then miss a final performance or the final part of a project: indeed, if they miss an important aspect of the curriculum. We are keen to offer you value for fees!

Severe Weather/Snow

In the rare event of snowy or otherwise severe weather, we aim to keep parents informed of sudden school closure via radio announcements on Southern FM, notices at the school entrances, also on our website and by telephone. We always do our very best to remain open and the staff make every effort to get to school, but we were caught-out by a terrific fall of snow between 7.50 a.m. and 8.10 a.m. on Wednesday, 23rd February, which closed the A21 as we were preparing for school. Apologies to any of you who set off for school and then had to return home. As you know, we have boarders as well as resident staff at school so if you need to and are able to get your child to school, we are able to offer supervision along with our boarders. At the same time, we would never encourage parents to take any kind of risk on the roads and there is no compunction to battle with icy conditions. Parents might need to drop-off late and/or collect early, according to your geographical situation, vehicle and even the gradient of your driveway. We aim to be flexible and understanding and it is only in the event of a lack of staff that we would turn your children away. Incidentally, we DO allow snowballing at Vinehall (within certain, simple safety guidelines!).

Reports

Prep school parents will find this term's report enclosed. As usual, a full set is written for all Year 8 pupils and for overseas boarders and a reduced version for all others. All parents are welcome to contact the school to make appointments to see members of staff in order to discuss the progress of individual children and we trust that you will feel comfortable doing so.

Good Person's Tea

The much-appreciated tradition of serving a special tea to those individuals who have earned a certain number of points continues on Tuesday afternoons in the Prep School. Children must earn 15 points or multiples of 15 to qualify.

Mobile Phones

As you will know from page 23 of your parents' handbook, we do not allow mobile phones at school except by special arrangement. Some of our boarders lodge mobiles with matron so that they can travel with phones. However, we do not believe that any of our children need to carry mobiles at school. Text bullying; damage to or loss of expensive phones; the use of mobiles to take or carry inappropriate photographs; contacting parents before staff to deal with in-school situations...these are some of the pitfalls which we would rather avoid and I trust that parents will support us in enforcing this policy.

Boarding

Mrs. Marris and Mr. Hudspeth's letter is enclosed for the parents of boarders. A boarding inspector conducted an interim visit during the final week of term and spoke of our boarding provision in glowing terms. Due to popular demand, there will be a taster boarding week in the summer. Please contact Mrs. Marris to book temporary boarding.

Uniform

Mrs. Booth is happy to advise parents on uniform matters. A number of items are now available from school and there will be a second-hand uniform sale as well as representation from Ward's at our sale.

Please ensure that your child has a navy coat or cagoule (for Years 7 and 8), a school jumper (not cardigans in the prep school), wellingtons, appropriately coloured hair accessories and that all clothing is marked and looped, according to the uniform list that was published at Christmas (further copies are available from the school office). Form teachers will be checking the children's kit at the beginning of the summer term and I hope that parents will forgive me for sending out standard reminder letters if your child is missing an item or if their uniform needs attention. A checklist will be sent out in my beginning of term letter.

We have been having a smartness drive in the prep school over recent weeks, encouraging the children to take care over their appearance. The care they take is reflected in general manners and respect for others as well as school property. Again, I trust that parents will support us in ensuring that the children tuck-in their shirts and have neat hair.

Food

School dinners have become a national concern in recent months and parents might be interested to hear that we have registered interest in Jamie Oliver's initiative. We feel that as a school we are considerably ahead of the game on this issue since Brookwood provides our school community with fresh, well-balanced and exciting meals.

We also support the Children's Food Bill, which aims to curb the advertising and promotion of 'junk' food to children along with the introduction of measures "to improve children's food, diets and their current and future health."

Parking

I would be very grateful if parents could park especially carefully on match days. We are encouraging visiting coaches and minibuses to park alongside the front of the main building and we also have a member of staff to help police parking, although this proves difficult when parents arrive early and take up the visitors' parking bays. I apologise for the inevitable difficulties in parking caused by our site and the space available.

When collecting children from the Prep School, please encourage them to wait by the front door only. This is entirely for their own safety and protection.

Swimming Spectators

Please will parents ensure that if you attend a school event with young children, you take special care to supervise them. This is particularly important for parents with young charges at the swimming pool. The school staff need to concentrate on their classes and so parents must ensure that your guests and young children are looked after safely.

Calendar

Assuming that all goes well at the printer's, you will receive next term's calendar at the end of the Easter holiday.

Communications

We are happy to hear from parents by email, by letter, by 'phone and in person! Our recent telephone survey may well throw up a few ideas towards making communication between school and home more effective and whilst we feel that we are as good as other schools, we are always looking for ways to make your contact with us as easy and helpful as possible. Vinehall is as busy as ever and with so much going on, we understand that you need plenty of up-to-date information on the whiteboards, in various publications and on the website, which will be updated over the next year.

The school office will be closed from Good Friday until Tuesday, 29th March and will operate reduced hours through the holiday. Parents are welcome to drop-off bags and kit on Tuesday, 19th April.

I would like to thank you for your kind letters of thanks and support which are most appreciated by the staff.

With good wishes for a happy and healthy Easter time.