

October 2005

Dear Parents

Half term is already upon us and the children and staff are ready for a break before the countdown to Christmas begins in earnest. This letter includes some extremely important information relating to the rest of this term and the academic year.

Change to Term Dates

In response to parental concerns about the length of the school week, we continue to look for ways to help the children to pace themselves. So that the final week of the academic year can be better structured and in order to fit in another evening performance of the Year 8 play (again, in response to a significant amount of parental feedback on the subject), I have decided to add a day to the end of the prep school summer term and also to begin half terms on Friday evenings rather than Saturday lunchtimes. I apologise for any inconvenience caused by these changes to our term dates for the forthcoming year and hope that this will be early warning enough for those of you who need to make family travel arrangements. Our feeling is that, based on the experiences of recent years, the changes will be positive ones for the children.

Therefore, please will you make the following alterations to your Calendar and diaries regarding future term dates for the prep school:

Lent Term, 2006

half term commences at the end of school on Friday, 10th February (not Saturday 11th)

Summer Term, 2006

half term commences after school on Friday, 26th May (not Saturday, 27th)

term ends for the pre-prep at midday on Thursday, 6th July, as published.

term ends for the prep school at lunchtime on Friday, 7th July (not Thursday, 6th) following a single prize-giving morning in the sports hall, to which all families are most welcome.

Calendar

Events for your diaries in the second half of term include:

Individual photographs on 10th November (not as published in the Calendar) and prep school children need to wear their white shirts and ties on that day.

Non Uniform Day on Friday 18th November. This will be for both Pre Prep and Prep School. Children can wear their own clothes but also are asked to wear or bring a sunflower (homemade, real or bought) and to bring in at least £1. We are raising money for St. Michael's Hospice.

Our annual Christmas Sale for Rwanda on the 25th November from 5 pm in the front hall.

Forthcoming dramatic productions: the Junior Christmas Play, *The Snow Queen*; the Pre Prep Year 2 Play, *The Christmas Scarecrow*; Reception's *Assembly to Celebrate the Nativity* and our Christmas Production, *The Wind in the Willows*. Performance times are listed in the Calendar.

Children are invited to bring unwrapped gifts for needy children to our Gift Service on Saturday, 10th December.

Our annual Carol Service will be on Sunday, 11th December. Enclosed is a separate letter outlining arrangements for the annual Carol Service at Salehurst Church.

Term ends on Friday, 16th December, at lunchtime.

Messages from Sister Kate

Please check your children for head lice during the half term break. We have had a number of cases already in the Pre-Prep.

We are hoping to carry out the yearly influenza vaccinations on Tuesday 1st November. The consent form that you completed when your child first joined Vinehall School remains valid until they leave unless Sister Kate is advised otherwise.

Attached is a spectacles slip. Please return it if it is relevant to your child so that Sister Kate can update her records. I also enclose a special diets slip for new parents to complete.

I would remind you that we need to be fully informed, in writing, of any medical issues that might be relevant to your child's situation at school. Please ensure that you have updated Sister Kate as necessary.

Requests for absence

Please address any off-games requests to the front office and advance requests for absence to me. Any absence must now be accounted for in writing, so that we comply with national legislation. Games are an important part of the curriculum a child should only miss games if they genuinely need to. It helps us considerably if you can clarify which games you wish your child to miss and how long for. If your child is off-games for an unspecified period, a letter should be sent confirming when he/she is back on games. Children are usually very keen to start games again, and sometimes try to begin before you intend them to!

Friends of Vinehall

Mrs. Kowitz's busy and well-organised committee is preparing for its first big event already. A bonfire celebration with fireworks will take place at Vinehall on Friday, 4th November and you should have received details and a ticket request form for this.

Boarding

The front office will now be dealing with requests for temporary boarding. Spaces in some dorms are limited, so please put in your requests as early as possible, and at least a week in advance, if you can. The last night available to temporary boarders this term is Friday, 9th December.

After the recent and highly successful Little Canada trip, some Year 6 parents will have been approached again by their children, keen to convince you of the value of boarding! Mrs. Marris will be happy to arrange a trial boarding period for your child.

Staff

Sister Julie Maltman will be leaving us at the end of December in order to give more time to her hospital-based nursing career and continue a degree in nursing. Sister Julie kindly stepped-in last year to cover Sister Kate's maternity leave and we have been extremely fortunate to have such a well-qualified school nurse. This term, we are spoiled in that we have two qualified nurses on the staff. From January, the nursing role will be shared between Sister Kate, who will be part-time but on-call by telephone 24 hours per day, and our other established matrons who have first aid training.

Mr. Dave Luckhurst has finished his short spell of soccer training at Vinehall and we wish him well in his future coaching endeavours.

Mrs. Jan Hannan, Head of Pre-Prep, is signed off work for complete rest at present, following her recent medical treatment, and the pre-prep staff deserve much praise for the way in which they are not only managing everyday matters but moving the pre-prep on in accordance with its established development plan. Our staff work very hard indeed and it is easy to forget that extra hours, covering lessons for colleagues and time-consuming pastoral care are very much part of the teachers' day-to-day working lives. I am grateful to Mrs. Richardson for taking on the headship role in pre-prep at this busy time. Those of you who know her will not be surprised to hear that she has refused to compromise her core class teaching in the meantime and we are all sorry that we are unable to fix a time limit on Mrs. Hannan's recovery. Parents have been most understanding of the situation.

Uniform

After half term, the children should all wear winter uniform with long-sleeved polo shirts. Hardy boys may continue to wear shorts! White shirts and ties should be worn by prep school pupils on duty days, for trips and on the last day of term.

Half term offers an opportunity to ensure that the children's hair is cut, to see them through to Christmas. Please ensure that the girls' hair is tied back, if longer than shoulder length, using a hair tie or scrunchie rather than only an Alice band.

Now that the weather has turned colder, please remember that Years 3 – 6 should come to school in their coats and Years 7 and 8 should have their cagoules at school, ready for use on outings and similar occasions.

School Outfitters/Shop

For some time we have been aware that our uniform supply arrangements have fallen short of the standard that we would like. The Bursar and Mrs. Perry have been working hard to improve matters and have researched a number of options, seeking proposals from a range of potential school outfitters, including Wards, with the aim of establishing a 'one stop' shop at Vinehall.

We are delighted to announce that Simmonds and Son Ltd, of Tunbridge Wells, has been selected as the school's sole outfitter with effect from the end of this term. Simmonds will establish the Vinehall School Shop on site, selling all items of pre-prep and prep school uniform and they intend to open for business from Friday, 17th February, 2006.

Simmonds will write to you in December, setting out details of their service and as a temporary measure whilst the shop is being fitted in a partitioned section of the Year 8 common room, they will provide a telephone sales and mail order service, selling Vinehall uniform from their store in Tunbridge Wells.

I am grateful for the work that Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Osborne-Brown and others have done in helping to move us forward with this project. Mrs. Booth will continue to run the second-hand shop from the matron's day room as now.

Charities Update

Thanks to the generous support of the school community, family and friends, we have raised almost £3000 for the Laurence Barham Memorial Trust through this term's sponsored walk. The pre-prep raised £135 for the Fellowship of St Nicholas through their 'mad hair day' and the staff raised £107 on MacMillan Coffee Morning day.

Office

Please remember the alternative telephone number for school in case the main number is not answered, for instance at weekends: 07929 777945.

The school office will be closed during half term week.

I wish you a happy half term, during which the children should get plenty of sleep and rest.

ENCLOSURES

- Spectacles slip
- Special diets slip/new dietary considerations (new children only)
- Carol Service letter
- Magazine 2004 - 05
- Letter from Head of PSHE to year 6 boys