

24 August 2007

Dear Parents,

I trust that you have enjoyed the summer break and, like me, are looking forward to a busy and exciting year ahead. Over the summer our maintenance and grounds teams have been working hard to ensure that the school looks as smart as ever, ready for September.

When you come in to school, you will find that all of the bursarial staff including Mrs Perry and Mr Webster have moved into what was Mr Hudspeth's flat at the end of the Front Hall. Mr Webster's office has become a gappers' room and Mrs Lambourne is moving into Mrs Perry's office. We will be advertising soon for a new Registrar to take over from Mrs Lambourne when she reaches a significant birthday later this academic year. Mrs Lambourne will continue in a key administrative role so we will not be losing her. Mr Lewis's office is now the Foundation office with Mrs Wood based there as Foundation Administrator and the large bursary room is a board room with the long table for meetings. The rec room is given over to children's games and television and will serve as a waiting room for prep school pupils at collection time.

Upstairs, the matrons' accommodation and sans have become a three-bedroomed houseparents' family flat and the kitchen door opens onto the landing. It has been designed to support the warm family atmosphere that we enjoy in the boarding house. The sans are now situated either side of the dispensary and the day room on that same corridor is now the boarding staff office.

Meanwhile, in the Pre Prep, Mrs Richardson has had a move around in the entrance and library area where Ms de Havilland is based.

Interactive whiteboards have arrived for Year 1 and the French department this year and new gigabyte switches have been installed to enhance speed of computer operations. In the grounds, we have invested in vertidrainage and sand-dressing on the main field which we hope will aid drainage there.

The next edition of our annual school magazine is to be published later this term and you will be sent a complimentary copy. If you have any special reports or photographs for the magazine, please let Mrs West know and please let me have information for Vinelines if your child achieves anything out of school that you would like mentioned. If you ever need further copies of school magazines for friends and relations, please ask in the office.

Staff

The Caithness family has moved in and will be running boarding. Mrs Caithness will teach maths and Mr Caithness teaches science and games. We also welcome Mr Phil Young who is the new Head of Drama and Mrs Lesley Raymond our new Head of French. Mr Jeremy Reid, a Vine, joins us as a gapper and Miss Boyu Xu, a qualified teacher, comes from China to join us as a House Tutor. She

will be offering a Mandarin club. Mr Roger Newman, Mr Mark Stapley and Mr Kit Claughton join us in the PE department this term. Other staff changes were detailed in your end of year letter.

Sister Kate rejoins us after maternity leave, as does Mrs Winn in the Pre Prep. New to the Pre Prep is Miss Clare Sanderson.

Mrs Nicholls, a TA in the Pre-Prep, is taking a P.G.C.E. course and she will be joining Year 3 this term, working alongside teachers and undertaking some teaching practice.

Sadly, Mr Hudspeth has decided that after ten years at Vinehall it is time for him to move on and he will therefore leave us at Christmas. Change, however, provides opportunities and in this case, whilst we lose Mr Hudspeth, we will regain Mr Yeats-Brown full-time as Head of History. Mr Y-B will take over the department at Christmas, with Mr Whitehead's support and guidance, and Mr Whitehead has kindly offered to teach 8L through to the end of their scholarship history course.

Mrs Radford has had a hip replacement over the summer break and we must remind her that she is not to rush around at the beginning of term!

Calendar and Events

I enclose a school calendar for the term ahead, listing the main events of the term. Please note the parents' Forum on Friday, September 14th. There is a response slip relating to this enclosed and results of our recent questionnaire might inspire you towards questions for that evening. The Forum is an opportunity for staff and Governors to respond to issues raised by parents and also to describe the school's current aims and plans. Please do support the evening if you are able to.

Assessments

Prep School children will receive effort grades on individual assessment sheets twice this term. These should come home on Friday 5th October and Friday 9th November.

Grandparents' Day

Grandparents' Day is becoming a popular and firm institution and this year's event will be combined with our Harvest Festival assembly on Thursday 4th October. Two invitations are attached for your children to give to their grandparents, and if the grandparents would kindly respond by phoning or emailing Mrs Lambourne, we will be able to plan and cater accordingly.

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. Make sure that you book your bonfire tickets early.

The Prep School day

Drop-off for day pupils is 8.00 to 8.15 a.m. in the Prep School. Children should be at school by 8.15 a.m. in order to be in their classrooms on time for registration and form time.

Year Groups

Year 3 pupils finish the day at 4 p.m. or continue with clubs till 5.20 p.m. (On Wednesdays they finish at 3.15 p.m.) There is no Saturday school for Year 3.

Year 4 pupils begin Saturday morning school and this is the first opportunity for parents to join their children for Saturday assembly.

Year 5 pupils will have prep diaries. Please will parents remind their children to bring these home daily so that they can provide a close link between parent and form teacher? The tracksuit pegs for Year 5 are in the peg area where the children queue for lunch rather than in the de Beer block.

Year 6 pupils are streamed into a top academic form and two parallel classes, with setting in maths, French and Latin. The top form is not, however, a scholarship class and there is always movement at the end of the year.

Year 7 pupils begin the CE/scholarship syllabus. Classes are organised into a scholarship class and two parallel CE classes and again there can be movement into and out of the scholarship class across this year.

Year 8 pupils begin their final year at Vinehall. They all have exams at the end of the Michaelmas term. Scholarships begin in January and then there are mocks for the CE candidates in the Lent term. All exams are over in early June and the Year 8s can look forward to an exciting post-exam timetable incorporating preparations for the summer musical and their trip to the Lake District. The highlight of this term for Year 8s is the formal Christmas Dinner and a letter about this will be sent to Year 8 parents in due course.

Photos

Individual photographs will be taken by Peter Whyte Photography before half term so the children will need to be at their smartest on Tuesday, 16th and Wednesday 17th October. This means white shirts and ties for the Prep School children. Sibling group photographs will be organised.

Saturday Assemblies, Sunday Services

Parents are very welcome to join us for Saturday morning assembly in the theatre from 8.20 a.m. and for coffee afterwards. Father John will preside over a family Eucharist service regularly on Sunday mornings in our theatre and we hope very much that many families will choose to join us. Dates are published in the Calendar and extended families will be extremely welcome to join us too.

Contacting School

Staff are always happy to see you to discuss any concerns you may have but we would request that you allow the teachers time in the morning to prepare for the busy day ahead. We recommend that you request a telephone call through the office or make an appointment to see them after school when they will have more time to talk to you. There is a Year 3 parents' evening on Tuesday 9th October. Form teachers will write to you at the beginning of term with further details of the best way to stay in touch with them. Most staff have a school email address. Please do stay in touch so that we can address any problems at an early stage.

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/tutors should sign the book every weekend.

Juniors have home-school contact books in which they keep a reading log.

Absence

If your child is ill please let us know by phoning the office after 8 a.m. or the Pre-Prep office after 8.30 a.m. We will require a note on the child's return 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.

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.

School Uniform

Second-hand uniform is available from Mrs Osborne-Brown. Notes can be left for her in the school office. The Simmonds uniform shop can be contacted on the school shop number 01580 881597 or, before term starts, appointments can be made by calling on the Tunbridge Wells shop number 01892 510123. The uniform can also be ordered on line on www.simmonds-ltd.com. Please make sure that uniform is named and looped as necessary. Children may wear summer uniform until half term but please make sure that they have a winter coat.

Pupils should not wear nail varnish, hair braids or tattoos to school. Jewellery should not be worn, other than small crucifixes or crosses and plain silver or gold studs for girls with pierced ears (which must be removed or taped for games).

Hair

May I remind you how important it is to have checked your children's hair several times before the start of term, using a nit comb? We would be grateful if you would ensure that your children return to school with hair cut and tidy! Pupils' hair should be of its natural colour and cut to a sensible length (above the collar for boys).

Medical

If there is any medical information that we need to know, please ensure that Sister Kate is informed. Any new medical conditions or updates on existing ones should be made known to Sister Kate 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).

Tours for parents

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. Mrs Lambourne will be delighted to book you in for a tour of the school with me at a mutually convenient time. You might also like to come along to our open morning on October 13th. Please contact Mrs Lambourne for details.

Beginning of term arrangements

Day children should arrive at school between 8.00 a.m. and 8.15 a.m. on Thursday 6th September (pre-prep 8.20 a.m. – 8.40 a.m.). Boarders return at 4.30 pm on Wednesday 5th September for afternoon tea with the new houseparents and supper will be at 6.00 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. To ease congestion on the drive on the first day, you are welcome to bring PE kit, wellies, etc. into school before term starts. School will be open for staff meetings on Monday 3rd, Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th September and you will be able to hang belongings on pegs during office hours.

We welcome a number of new families to Vinehall this term and are delighted that some pupils are returning to us from other schools and abroad. Established and new, we hope that you will all enjoy a close and positive relationship with the school.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Robinson