

18 December 2009



Dear Parent

You will be up to date with school news through *Vinelines*, our weekly newsletter, and will know that it has been another busy Michaelmas term. Those of you who have been to the special Pre-Prep Nativity performances over the last few weeks or who squeezed into Salehurst Church for our Carol Service on Sunday will already be feeling full of Christmas spirit! The Nativity was special. It was wonderful to have all of the Pre-Prep together to retell the Christmas story with music: memorable, classic and traditional by any standard, and we are full of praise for the Pre-Prep in achieving such an amazing celebration.

Our juniors entertained us with a light-hearted Red Riding Hood, led by a Year 4 cast and the Year 3s supported the singing very well indeed. Our senior dramatists pulled off a technically challenging Willy Wonka production which included plenty of action, even dance. The Carol Service was atmospheric and harmonic with some outstanding solo and small group pieces as well as wonderful readings and junior and senior choir pieces for Christmas.

The House Competition this term was won by Saxton with an average points score of 41.88 across the term. The winning form over the term was 3D with an average of 41.90. Winner of the Good Copy Prize this term was 4G with 465 good copies. The Credits Prize goes to 3D with 197 credits across the term.

STAFF

We say goodbye to our team of Gappers and we wish them well for the future. They have been an outstanding team and Miss O'Riordan was a worthy addition this term. She has agreed to help us settle in at the beginning of next term, too. Four new Gappers arrive in January. They are Kevin Ingram-Gillson (Australian), Tim Middleton (British), Kelsey McIntosh and Kristy Robertson (both Australian).

Mrs Raymond leaves us and moves to the Lakes over Christmas. She has been practically perfect in every way and we shall miss her but she promises to stay in touch. Mrs Lynda Hunter has already visited several times this term and is ready to take over the reins in January. She brings with her an enormous amount of experience and is well briefed. We hope that she will enjoy her time at Vinehall.

Mrs Atkins, Head of Learning Support, is changing her name. Over Christmas, she is reverting to her maiden name, Ms De Vine.

PRE-PREP

Mrs Richardson has written a separate end of term letter for parents of Pre-Prep children.

FRIENDS OF VINEHALL

The Friends of Vinehall have been busy throughout the term with a series of Committee meetings and Form Representative meetings as well as the superb family Bonfire Night and then the very professional Christmas Fair. The Friends discovered a superb new process for personalised Christmas cards which has been well-received and also raised funds for Rwanda. FoV raffled-off three pairs of concert tickets for a high profile concert at the O2 Arena on 22 December.

We are grateful for the supportive parental network that is strengthened and promoted through the Friends of Vinehall Committee and Form Representatives. Thank you for all of your support and to all parents who have provided cakes, gifts, time, effort and pocket money to support the FoV events.

BOARDING

Boarders' parents have been kept up to date through *Vinelines* and Mr and Mrs Caithness attach a special end of term letter. It has been a wonderful term for boarding, culminating in a special dinner and disco on Friday which was the busiest boarding night of the year!

If you have a Year 7 child who intends to board full time, please book him or her in for the 'taster boarding' experience from Monday 25 to Friday 29 January 2010. This is the best way to try out boarding life and there are limited places available. Places can be reserved by emailing houseparents@vinehallschool.com.

CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS

I thank you for your generous support of a number of charitable causes this term, from our Harvest Festival collection through to the Carol Service collections. Running totals are detailed below. We are grateful to staff, children and of course parents for providing the support which makes all of this possible. You are passing to your children a fine tradition of giving, from which many others benefit. Thank you.

EVENT	IN AID OF	AMOUNT £
SPONSORED WALK	RWANDA AID	3,382.31
PREVIOUS COLLECTIONS A/C	ST MICHAEL'S HOSPICE	491.24
JEANS FOR GENES	JEANS FOR GENES	385.75
CHRISTMAS CARDS	RWANDA AID	442.80
CHRISTMAS FAIR	RWANDA AID	4,600.00
PLAY	SAVE THE CHILDREN	278.38
DORM DECORATIONS	RWANDA AID	21.21
CAROL SERVICE	HELP THE AGED and FELLOWSHIP OF ST NICHOLAS	574.61
AFRICAN DRUMS	FAMILY SUPPORT WORK	157.91
ANONYMOUS DONATIONS	RWANDA AID	12.04
PREPREP-PRINCESS & PIRATES DAY	FELLOWSHIP OF ST NICHOLAS	58.00
GRAND TOTAL		£10,404.25

SCHOOL SHOP AND UNIFORM

Over the holiday, please check that your children's uniforms still fit and that all items are clearly marked. It will be very helpful if you could also ensure that the children return with well-stocked pencil cases with all items clearly named. Please also ensure that all uniform brought home belongs to your child and return any items that belong to another child.

The Simmonds school shop telephone number is 01580 881597 and will open at the beginning of next term on:

Thursday 7 January	10am – 1pm
Monday 11 January	10am – 1pm
Tuesday 12 January	10am – 1pm
Wednesday 13 January	8am – 9am & 3pm – 4.30pm

HAIR

Please ensure that your children have had a suitable haircut by the start of term. Boys' hair should be off the collar and tidy. If your child's hair is deemed in need of attention then either Mr Whitehead or Mrs Cooper will contact you. Mr Caithness will contact boarders' parents.

SATURDAY SCHOOL

The Vinehall Governors have confirmed that, with effect from September 2010, there will be formal schooling for Years 7 and 8 on Saturday mornings and activities for junior boarders with an optional programme for Year 6 pupils. This means that we will retain Saturday school in its current form for Years 7 and 8, and parents of Year 6 children can opt in to various activities (yet to be confirmed but we aim for a range of sporting, musical and academic activities, as detailed in my letter earlier this term). Many thanks to all parents who responded to my questionnaire on this subject and to those of you who attended the Parents' Forum this term so that the Chairman of Governors could hear your views. We feel that our plan will strike the right balance for juniors and seniors, and current and future parents, and will provide some flexibility as well as a means of safeguarding the special features of a Vinehall education which mark us out from other prep schools.

BOYS' PE AND GAMES CLOTHES

Mr Butler has asked if all parents could ensure that boys have their correct PE and games kit for the start of next term. We have experienced quite a few problems recently with boys only having one pair of games shorts. This has meant that muddy clothes have been worn indoors. Likewise, boys will need two pairs of trainers for games: one pair for the astro (hockey) and one pair for indoor use. Thank you for your co-operation.

HOLIDAY WORK

We do not wish to overload children with holiday work and whilst there are some suggestions from subject teachers in the end-of-term reports for, for instance, reading and number puzzles over the holidays, we are not expecting the children to work too hard over the Christmas break. This is with the exception of our Year 8 pupils who have imminent examinations and Year 7 scholars who have been set a number of tasks across the holidays. A few hours per day most days should cover this and we hope that parents will support a sensible balance of activities for the children over the break. There is also some Townsend Warner Competition work set by the history department. This is a national prep schools' history competition in which Vinehall usually does rather well and we will appreciate it if parents will support the children who are participating this year.

COMMUNICATION

The Lent term calendar will be available on the website from the end of term. A hard copy will be distributed at the beginning of term.

The list of prep school clubs available next term is available on the pupils' section of the website. Children can sign up in the front hall or de Beer block in the first week of term. Alternatively, parents can email clubs@vinehallschool.com with requests. If your child has been doing archery, judo, pottery or dance this term, his or her name will be carried over to the list for the Lent term automatically.

NEXT TERM

There are no clubs for day children on the first day of term. Collection on Wednesday 13 January will therefore be at 3.15 pm for Pre-Prep (unless booked in for ASC) and 3.50 pm for the prep school. On Thursday there will be ASC and swim squad and on Friday, ASC and gym squad.

You are welcome to drop off kit and children's bags during office hours from Monday 11 January and Tuesday 12 January. Boarders' parents are invited to afternoon tea from 4.30-5.30 pm on Tuesday 12 January so that boarders are settled in ready for supper at 6pm. Day pupils return to school on the morning of Wednesday 13 January.

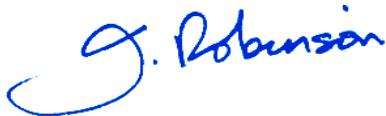
HOLIDAYS

The school office will be closed from Monday 21 December to Tuesday 5 January inclusive.

I join with all of the Vinehall staff in thanking you for your support and good wishes, your Christmas cards and generous gifts. We are delighted that you trust us with the care and education of your children and hope that you will make a point of recommending Vinehall to your friends and neighbours.

We wish all Vinehall families a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and we look forward to seeing you in January 2010.

Yours sincerely



Julie Robinson
Head