



Vinehall School

7th January 2011

Dear Parents

It is a great pleasure to be sending you my first letter at the start of the new year. It does seem to have been a long six month journey to actually starting here at Vinehall, but my thanks go to all the staff and pupils, as well as the large number of parents who have done so much already to help us feel at home here as a family. We look forward to many happy years here.

I am keen for there to be a 'business as usual' feel about things from the start of term, as there is of course a huge amount for all of us to be doing. The Lent 2011 Calendar should be here soon for you in hard copy, but until then the website is a useful source of reference as an electronic version can be found there. I am well aware, having been an avid reader of Vinelines in the last term, that Vinehall packs an immense amount into each week, so I am keen to maintain high levels of communication throughout the School in order to ensure we are all in the right place at the right time.

The Lent Term is traditionally when the weather is at its most disruptive, which will seem hard to believe given the fact that last month was the coldest December for over 100 years! However, I am aware that the School's infoline worked very efficiently through the difficulties of the last major snowfall, so if in doubt, please do telephone 01580 883058 for an update on weather and road conditions, as well as confirmation that the School is open or closed. The benefits of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) have already been felt by pupils and staff I am sure, so further work on this in our staff INSET day on Monday will provide an increased usability for occasions when pupils are unable to attend School in the future.

For our most senior pupils, the Lent Term is a challenging time, with scholarship examinations for senior school places dominating much of their time. We are already delighted to have received news about our successful Cranbrook candidates who have been offered places in Year 9 following their entrance examinations. My congratulations to them and I am sure we will be reporting on many more successful applications to other senior schools in the coming term.

There are few staff changes to report at this time. However, with the departure of Caroline Wood from the Library at the end of last term, I am pleased to announce that Annabel Newcomb has been appointed to take on this responsibility until the end of the Summer Term. Annabel will be familiar to many of you already, as she has worked at Vinehall for several years both in a Teaching Assistant capacity, as well as providing individual support to several pupils each week.

We welcome three new Gappers from Australia; Kristy Cummins, Matt Slade and Lucy Welsh all arrived this week, so should be somewhat less jet-lagged by the time the boarders return on Tuesday afternoon! Lucy already has some experience of Vinehall, having visited

her sister Mia who was a gapper here in 2007. I am sure all the pupils, staff and parents will join me in welcoming them to Vinehall for a busy year ahead.

The School Office reopened on Tuesday 4th January in order to get back to speed before the pupils return. There has certainly been much hard work going on as I have been acclimatising to the new environment. One slight surprise was the sheer quantity of clothing and property left in the coat pegs area near the Dining Hall. Please do come during office hours and check if you are missing items. If you would like to aid your own preparations for the start of term, please feel free to drop off kit bags on Monday 10th or Tuesday 11th January (again during office hours). Boarders' parents are of course invited to afternoon tea from 4.30pm to 5.30pm on Tuesday 11th January.

There is a slightly early finish for day pupils on the first day back, Wednesday 12th January. Pupils should be collected at 3.50pm, apart from those involved in matches who will make the usual alternative plans.

In my previous school, I was known to be a fan of smartly dressed pupils, with tidy hair, tied back for girls and for boys, hair of an appropriate length. For girls, a reminder that hair bands should be blue and earrings should be small plain gold or silver studs. For boys, to me this means hair which is above the collar, off the ears and out of the eyes – a lead I am more than happy to set! I am sure Vinehall pupils will be keen to impress both me on their return to School, as well as prospective pupils and their parents with their standards in the coming weeks.

Finally, it is with great pleasure that on behalf of all the staff and Governors of Vinehall, I wish you a successful and happy 2011. I have no doubt the year will be incredibly busy, filled with stories of fun and countless opportunities fulfilled by the children. I look forward to sharing in the joys with you in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

Richard Follett

Headmaster