



Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2019

Dear Parents,

The music has faded, the laughter has gone, the decorations are down and I'm sat in my office with memories of a wonderful term gone by. The final assembly this morning was an opportunity to thank the children for all their hard work this term. We were able to say well done to the Year 6s for becoming county champions in hockey as well as producing the finest English Speaking Board results we have ever seen with an unprecedented number of Distinctions. We handed out certificates for the Accelerated Reader Programme as well as the termly prizes. In this newsletter we will take a look back at some of the events of the second half of term as well as have a sneak peek at the next term's highlights.

PTA Events: It was another fabulous half term for our dynamic PTA and we will be sending their newsletter out with this correspondence as well. This year's Christmas Fayre was another triumph raising lots of money and providing great entertainment for the children. We handed out a large number of prizes for the Treasure Hunt, the Christmas Ornament Competition and the Bake Off. Judging these competitions is one of my most stressful responsibilities as they are all so marvellous. My thanks go to Lisa Hall and her wonderful team of volunteers who so selflessly give up their time weeks before in planning, lots of time in the days before setting up and in a huge effort to remove any sign they'd even been in the building by Monday morning. The Christmas cards were a hit again this year and I am very happy to look across my desk at a sea of RPS creations. We send a huge than you to Mrs Woolley and her team for doing such a great job on this initiative. We also thank the PTA for the five wonderful Christmas trees that have adorned various places within the School. They always add so much to the Christmas aesthetic. The PTA organised a lovely Movie Night last Friday where a number of children joined us for The Grinch Who Stole Christmas. The PTA's hard work culminated in a very successful Christmas lunch which I shall speak about in greater detail below.

Christmas Lunch: This year's Christmas lunch was another great success thanks to Lydia and her amazing team and a wonderful group of PTA volunteers. We continue to have a large number of children affected by particular dietary requirements and Lydia and her tremendous team make sure these children are safe and able to enjoy a rich and varied diet. Christmas lunch puts an additional challenge into this process but the combined efficiency of the catering team and the PTA volunteers means there is never a cause for concern. The meal was a tremendous success and the atmosphere was calm but joyous. The traditional rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas was followed by a visit from Father Christmas himself who brought me my usual collection of "high quality gifts". Check out the website gallery to see the 1970's version of me! The staff were able to sit down to a beautifully laid out Christmas feast in the Hall put on by our wonderful PTA. We are hugely grateful again to these super volunteers for making the day so incredibly special for us all.

Carol Service: The end of term is always a busy time of year so when we learned earlier this week that Cheltenham College was not able to accommodate us for our Carol Service because they had masonry falling from overhead it added an extra challenge to an already complex final week. We were able to make some very quick changes to the programme and thanks to our lovely friends at Christ Church we were able to stage our service in their very beautiful church. We were only able to fit in less of an hour of practice but on the night it could not have gone any better. Miss Crompton managed to produce the most beautiful music from all the children and her choir sounded heavenly. Mrs Board, Mrs Kingswood and Miss Shorland provided lots of musical support and Miss Ingrey helped our talented readers to add to the wonderful atmosphere. It was a great culmination to an excellent first term for our newest members of the team Miss Crompton and Mrs Knight who have made a huge impact already.

Charity Efforts: Once again you have been tremendously generous in your charitable giving this term. We were able to give a huge food donation to CCP (the Cheltenham Community Project) after your Christmas Fair donations. The PTA have also organised charitable donations through their cake sale at the Prep Nativity. At last night's Carol Service you exceeded yourselves and between the retiring collection, the children's donations and a collection from staff we were able to raise in excess of £1000 that will go directly to Cheltenham Open Door to help the homeless people of Cheltenham.

Clothes Donations: We are looking to organise another clothes donation in the Spring Term. Unfortunately the company we were using has gone out of business so we are looking at alternative options. We shall send out more information early next term.

Prep Activities: Christmas has been everywhere in the Prep Department since December arrived. All the children from Reception to Year 2 went to the Everyman Theatre to enjoy the pantomime Cinderella generously paid for by the PTA. This year's Nativity play was another brilliant highlight and our Reception children brought the story to life with their delightful acting. The Nursery also benefited from the PTA's generosity as they went to see "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" at the Everyman. The Nursery enjoyed a special celebration as Father Christmas visited the woodland to give all the children a present. This is a lovely highlight for the children and always brings a smile to the faces of our visitors as well.

Curriculum Focus: Our Religious Education Curriculum Focus has given us an opportunity to re-design the planning and delivery of RE across the School and was also a great opportunity to look at the 6 main world religions. Thanks to some wonderful parents and very confident RPS children we were able to learn more about each faith. We were fascinated to learn about the many differences between the faiths but heartened to learn how many similarities guide all these religions. It was a very informative focus and I am grateful to Mr Chesworth and Mrs Conner for all their hard work in presenting the focus to the School. The children's minds have been opened by visits to churches, cathedrals, synagogues, mosques and temples. Next term we move our focus to the creative arts and culminating with the Year 6 production, Seussical Junior, we shall focus on the works of Doctor Seuss.

British Values: Along with all the curriculum we cover we are always helping the children to learn British values which are outlined in the National Curriculum and expected to be covered when the ISI come to inspect. These include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and for those without faith. Our curriculum focus has been brilliant for opening children's eyes to these notions but Mr Lowe and Miss West have been covering these areas as well in their assemblies. These notions are hugely important to us and I hope your children are coming home and discussing these with you as well.

Year 6 Destinations: As you know we had plenty of success in our Year 6s pursuit of grammar school places and we are now receiving wonderful feedback from the independent senior schools on our doorstep and further afield in response to our children's applications. So far everyone has been offered a place where they have applied and we are aware of a number of scholarships being offered. We will not know about St Edward's or Cheltenham Ladies' College until January as there are still assessments to sit and I hope to hear from Dean Close in the coming days. I am tremendously proud of the children for all their hard work. We are in discussion with seven schools outside of the county who have also been giving us positive feedback about our children and I will let you know more about those schools later in the year.

Year 5 Preparations and Parent Meetings: I will begin visiting the Year 5 classes next term to work on some exam preparation and discuss with them the process of transition. I will also begin meeting with every Year 5 parent to talk about the options available to them and the children come Year 7. If you would like to book an appointment do get in touch with Mrs Hayman in January and she can book an appointment for the Spring or Summer Term.

Absence: In order to ensure your child's continued safety it is important that you report any absence to Mrs Hayman and Mrs Thornton in the office. You can do this either by ringing 01242-522086 and leaving a message or by sending an e-mail to [absent@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:absent@richardpate.co.uk). I would also like to remind everyone that children should be in school by 8.55am each morning. Late arrivals are extremely disruptive to the class and can be very difficult for your child as well.

Car Park: It wouldn't be a newsletter from me without some mention of the car park. I would like to remind everyone that we are an "idle free" school. I appreciate that it is cold this time of year just as it can be very hot in the summer. I am afraid neither is a reason to leave your engine running in the car park. The fumes from cars in the car park have a habit of making their way into school and often into the Nursery where our most vulnerable members of the community learn. If you feel unable to shut your engine off then I would recommend arriving later for collection.

After School Club: The After School Club continues to be very popular and despite hugely increasing the provision we still find the club oversubscribed on occasion. I would be grateful if all parents could look at their block bookings for next term, particularly the Junior parents once they decide which clubs and activities their children will be joining. If you do not require a particular session it is important to cancel that booking with the office or you may be charged. Places can be booked on a daily basis through the office by contacting Mrs Hayman or Mrs Thornton. I would also like to remind everyone that the last collection time is 5.30pm.

Database Updates: The School Office needs to ensure that all details held on the database are up-to-date and comprehensive. The information is held confidentially within School so that we can contact you quickly if there is ever an emergency and to comply with our legal obligations. Please advise of any amendments or additions, including any other information you feel is important to share with the School's staff (e.g. serious allergies).

Notice Requirements: We like to remind parents at this stage that if you intend to remove your children from the Richard Pate School at the end of the academic year then we need to receive notification by the last day of the Spring Term which this year falls on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March. Failure to give notice by this date could incur a term's fees in lieu of notice. For those Nursery parents who are waiting to hear about places at local primary schools through National Offer Day (which this year falls on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April) I would suggest you book an appointment to discuss this with me through Mrs Hayman in the coming weeks.

Photos and Videos: My only disappointment from this year's Carol Service was the fact that despite asking that no one videos the service or takes pictures a number of parents and grandparents ignored me and did just that. We make huge efforts to record various events but are always bound by privacy laws and of course ensuring the safety of our children. I would ask that no one who ignored my request last night puts any of those recordings on social media and that in the future everyone abides by these requests.

Photo Galleries: Mr Hooper has been busy over past few days and has added a number of new galleries of photos populating the website. These include the Nativity play, Christmas lunch, Strictly Come Dancing, Under 8 Tag Rugby and Hockey and many more. You can download a high resolution photo from the website by clicking on that picture and entering the username and password given in the email version of this newsletter.

Other Attachments: I am also including next term's calendar, the list of clubs and activities and the PTA newsletter with this final correspondence. Please check our website for any updates.

I close this final newsletter of 2019 with a wish for a safe and happy holiday. It has been a pleasure working with your children once again. I hope you enjoy their company over the next three weeks as much as I have this term. I will be in next week if anyone requires anything before having a quiet Christmas at home with my wife, Karen and daughter Hannah. After Christmas we help to move Hannah to Belfast where she is beginning a new chapter in her life. It seems like five minutes since she was here at Richard Pate so my advice to you is to enjoy every second with your children because it all passes very quickly. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Yours sincerely

*Robert MacDonald*  
Robert MacDonald