



RICHARD PATE

INDEPENDENT CO-ED SCHOOL 3-11
CHELTENHAM

Monday 17th February, 2020

Dear Parents,

The School has slipped into a much quieter state after the joyous activity of Valentine's Day and Charity Day rolled together last Friday. We enjoyed an extra special day here at School raising lots of money for our three worthy charities and having plenty of fun along the way. As you know we asked the children to put forth their suggestions for this year's selected charities and they proposed 26 fabulous groups to support. We then conducted an election which allowed everyone in the whole school to vote. After the votes were counted our chosen charities included the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Orphans in Need. We kicked off the day with a rousing assembly and a discussion of the work each charity does. The Prep Department enjoyed their disco and Bring and Buy sale and there was even the odd treat consumed. The Juniors prepared for the afternoon's stalls and once again we saw plenty of imagination in their fundraising and a tremendous attitude of cooperation. We should have a final total next week but I am certain the children have raised plenty of money which will make a difference to each of these organisations. We look forward to a visit by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust at an upcoming assembly and at the Summer Fayre as well.

Junior Exams: The children in Year 3, 4 and 5 completed their Spring exams this week and I have been pleased with the effort they have applied for the most part. These exams are all part of the preparation for their eventual move to senior and secondary schools. Last year we made changes to the exam system whereby the percentages were no longer shared with the children but rather they were given targets to work on for the remainder of the academic year. Having clear targets will help them to focus on essential areas of learning and will also help to develop their positive growth mindset. At the parent meetings we have scheduled for after half term the teachers will speak about these targets and how you can help at home to realise these areas for improvement. We have streamlined the exam system this year with Science removed from the Spring exam diet and replaced with on-going unit assessments. We will also be changing the Junior exams in the Summer Term by reducing the overall number of subjects the children need to revise for in total. We still believe that exams have a place in our preparations but we are always trying to find the correct balance.

PTA News: The PTA hosted an excellent Junior Disco on Thursday evening here at School and the Junior children seemed to enjoy it immensely. As always we are indebted to the PTA for putting on these events and to the number of volunteers who helped set up and serve the refreshments. As always I am indebted to the teachers who came along to help me with supervision on the night. These events are always great fun for the children and help the PTA raise funds that help us as a School in so many ways. We are very excited about the construction of the covered area that the PTA are part funding in the Prep playground. The second half of this term is very full of School events so the PTA is putting their energies into planning a busy Summer Term list of events. If you haven't already be sure to place the following into your summer diaries: VE Prep Celebration event – Tuesday 5th May, Summer Ball at the Pump Rooms – Friday 5th June, PTA Lido Event – Friday 19th June and PTA Summer Fayre – Saturday 27th June.

Year 6 Destinations: On the 2nd March our Year 6 children will discover their designated state school if they are pursuing that route to grammar or comprehensive schools in September. We have had a number of children pursuing places at various independent schools and all have been offered places. In addition the children have earned 23 scholarship awards for academics, sports and music and four girls pursuing Cheltenham Ladies' College places have been called back for scholarship consideration as well. This is a brilliant achievement and accounts for one of the best years ever in terms of results. We have been in discussion with 12 different schools this year which could eventually see this cohort go to Eton, Winchester, Radley, Harrow, Oundle, New Hall, Felsted, Cheltenham Ladies' College, Cheltenham College, Dean Close, King's and St Edward's. I am tremendously proud of all the children and how well they have handled this challenging process throughout. I am continuing to work with the Year 5 children in preparation for their next steps and have been meeting with their parents to discuss the many options available to them as well.

Curriculum Focus: We have been enjoying some lovely events under the latest curriculum focus looking at the creative arts. We welcomed a wonderfully dynamic individual last week who brought the wonders of Samba into RPS. He ran workshops for Year 2 to Year 6 and the corridors reverberated with the wonderful percussive sounds. Music took a different direction when we welcomed the Carducci Quartet two days later. They are a very talented, string ensemble based at Dean Close School and they managed to fit in a visit to RPS before taking off to Italy and Spain for their latest tour. After half term we look forward to visiting artists coming in to School and a special Prep Art Day that will see classrooms opened up after school for parents to see what the children have been working so hard to produce.

Our Year 6 Production is always a highlight of the Spring Term and we are looking forward to the performances of Seussical Junior at the end of this term. We have been using the Dr Seuss theme for much of our creative arts focus and the willow creations of Dr Seuss fish are a sight to behold in the Art Room. The Year 6 children will be busy painting the backdrop for the production on the floor of the Hall in the coming weeks.

Representing RPS: The children continue to impress us outside of the classroom as well this year. We recently sent a team of Yr 5 and Yr 6 children to a Maths Challenge hosted by Cheltenham College. We were delighted to finish joint 1st once again and we handed out the gold medals to our team members in Friday assembly. Our U11 boys had their chance to represent the School at the recent IAPS Southwest Hockey Regionals at Rugby School. The boys played fabulously in defence and throughout the pool competition conceded only one goal. It was rather unfortunate that the one goal we did concede was scored by one of our former pupils but the boys played well enough to go into the place offs regardless. We met a very strong side in the quarter finals and ended up losing 1-0 but it was an excellent effort by our boys. They get another opportunity as they play in the upcoming county championships. We finished the first half of term with another set of impressive results in the cross country which was contested at Cheltenham College on Thursday of last week. We posted several top 10 results and Maddie Thomson completed her domination finishing first overall. The second half of term features the cross country championships as well as football, hockey and netball fixtures across the age groups.

Change to the Junior Tuck Shop: In our continuing efforts to make RPS as healthy a school as possible we are making changes to the Tuck Shop that operates out of the dining hall each morning break. From the Monday we return the children can either buy Pom Bears or fresh fruit from Monday to Thursday. On Friday we will continue to sell the homemade cookies that have become a fixture. Lydia James and her team continue to provide wonderful meals each and every day managing a huge number of dietary issues and maintaining their impressive 5-star hygiene rating.

Recruitment: The second half of term promises to be busy in terms of recruitment as well with four different jobs needing to be filled. Today is the closing date for our Communications and Marketing Post and we will begin the interview process for this position shortly after we return. We will also be shortlisting and interviewing for the three teaching posts which seek a Reception teacher, a Key Stage 1 teacher and a Key Stage 2 teacher. There is still some time before the closing date for these positions so if you know someone who is interested please tell them to look at our website. While we are disappointed to be losing three fabulous teachers it is also an opportunity to look at our provision across the School and see where there might be areas where we can improve our offering. I will let you know as various appointments are finalized.

Lost Property: Half term as always is an opportunity to go through your child's uniform and sports kit to ensure that labels are securely affixed and that everything belongs to them. We have had a number of items go missing this term and I am hoping they might appear in the half term sort out. I would be grateful if you could return anything that might have inadvertently turned up in the wrong bag.

Car Park: We continue to have concerns about some behaviours we see in the car park. I would like to remind parents to reinforce the conversations we have repeatedly with your children about using care and attention in the car park. We often see children running out from between parked cars making assumptions that the driver will see them and respond. It is everyone's responsibility to exercise common sense in the car park. I also remind you to use the one-way system, refrain from using your mobile phones, use the spaces in the lower car park and please do not leave your engines idling once you arrive.

The first half of term has flown past and the second half looks even busier but there are a great many exciting opportunities for the children to look forward to in prospect. I hope to catch up with the vast majority of you at the upcoming parent meetings and the plethora of sport, music, art and drama opportunities as well.

Yours sincerely



Robert MacDonald