



# RICHARD PATE

INDEPENDENT CO-ED SCHOOL 3-11  
CHELTENHAM

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and I am sure you are all looking forward to the Christmas break. Despite us being unable to do many of our usual second half of term activities, we have continued to adapt to our 'new normal' and the collective, creative minds of the RPS team have meant the children have still been very busy. The final Zoom assembly this morning was an opportunity to thank the children for all their hard work this term. They may have shared the fact that we had a couple of surprises during that assembly that you may get a chance to see on Showbie soon.

I would like to say an enormous thank you to my fantastic team of staff who have worked so hard this term to make things as 'normal' as possible for the children. They have worked diligently all term (and since March when it all began!) to ensure we are all working in a COVID-secure environment, whilst still focusing on the importance of your children's education and maintaining our safe and happy atmosphere. The resilience of everyone, who I have seen working outside their comfort zones on many occasions, as well as having the ability to learn and perfect new skills around creative thinking and virtual technology, has never failed to amaze me. I have seen some outstanding support of one another throughout the team and I am very proud of each and every one of them. It may be wrong to identify any individuals because they have all been amazing but I did want to make a special mention of the "outdoor" team who have been managing through the cold, dark, wet days to ensure everyone's safe arrival and departure. Within that I make special mention of the multi-talented Mrs Hayman who has kept traffic flowing smoothly by matching every child to the appropriate car with an ever present smile. Track and trace could do with Mrs Hayman but they can't have her!

Your children have also been a credit to you all this term. I am constantly impressed by the way they have handled life throughout this pandemic. They have undertaken the full timetable and are very accepting of our new COVID rules and the changes associated with them.

I would also like to thank you for your continued patience and support throughout the term, adhering to our guidelines and in particular making the drop off and collection run as smoothly as possible given the government restrictions placed upon us. It is a collective success that we have made it to the end of the term without shutting down any year groups. We must not be complacent as we return in January but I feel we can take a moment to say well done to all.

COVID-19 update: Following my earlier correspondence, you will be aware we had two cases of COVID-19 amongst our staff community. I am pleased to report that the affected staff members have made a good recovery and having isolated for the required amount of time, were able to return to school. We have also had a small number of children with symptoms (many of them similar to the usual illnesses at this time of year) during the last few weeks and they have had their test results, which have all been negative. We remain vigilant as we move into the festive period and into next term. If your child displays any symptoms (high temperature; a new, continuous cough; a loss or change to sense of smell or taste) during the Christmas break and you are waiting for test results, please inform us **immediately** by sending an email to [bursar@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:bursar@richardpate.co.uk) and cc'ing [office@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:office@richardpate.co.uk) and [rmacdonald@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:rmacdonald@richardpate.co.uk). If your child or anyone in the household tests positive during the Christmas holiday then notify us immediately so we can contact Public Health England

to formulate our response. We will send a return email to confirm we have received it. This also applies if your child needs to self-isolate for any other reason during the Christmas break.

We continue to monitor the ever-changing Government guidance and we would like to reassure you that we are fully prepared for individual children, members of staff and families self-isolating. As before, Showbie is ready to be used. Fingers crossed it will not happen but should we find ourselves in a full lockdown situation again, we will revert to delivering a full timetable on Showbie and will share details with you as soon as we are made aware of any government decision. This will also apply to year group isolation in the event of a positive test result. I would like to remind everyone that Showbie is not to be used by children who are off sick. If they are not well enough to be in school they should not be following a full curriculum load. It is a huge commitment for teachers to populate Showbie whilst they are also teaching full time so it must be a tool we only use to support those who are away from school because of Covid restrictions. If your child is isolating we would also ask that you post the work back on Showbie as it is completed rather than saving it up to be marked on their return.

In this newsletter I will give a quick update on some of the exciting events and successes of this half of the term, as well as looking forward to the Spring Term. As I have said before, it has been impossible to replicate the normal December experience but we have been creative in finding new ways to celebrate. The children have had a lovely time and the Showbie Advent calendar, elf dancing and various other staff performances seemed to have been a big hit both in school and at home. Thank you to all the staff for willingly taking part! We will continue to populate the Showbie Advent calendar until Christmas Eve with Reggie popping one or two short videos each day for you to enjoy. You may want to pop in to today's offering as Tweedy the Clown has sent us a personalized Christmas message.

PTA News: Government restrictions have unfortunately put a stop to our usual Christmas fundraising activities but the PTA surprised us last week with a lovely collection of edible goodies and the team here were immensely touched. They have also generously donated Christmas trees for all the classrooms and the children have enjoyed decorating them. We want to say a special thanks to Lisa Hall and her PTA Committee for their kindness and to all our parents for their ongoing support through this challenging time.

Christmas Lunch and Christmas Jumper Day: this year's lunch was another great success thanks to Lydia and her amazing team. We continue to have a large number of children affected by particular dietary requirements and Lydia and her team make sure these children are safe and able to enjoy a rich and varied diet. It was a little different this year as we had to keep all the children in year bubbles but I can assure you there was certainly still a festive feel in the air with all the children wearing home clothes and Christmas jumpers! A little reminder here that if you would like to support our Christmas Jumper Day by donating to Save the Children, please visit our JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richardpatedonatechristmas2020>

Christmas Sleigh Visit: A special bonus for the children this year was a visit to all the classrooms by Father Christmas, his elves and his magical sleigh. The children's faces said it all and I would like to thank Mr Beckwith and Mr Rushworth for their tremendous efforts in making this all happen. You will see from the photo below, it required much creativity and many long hours of craftsmanship!



Prep Nativity: The Prep Nativity took place last week in various locations. As always, it was a wonderful performance but we were very sorry not to be able to have parents joining us this year. All credit to Miss West and the wonderful Prep Department for their efforts to stage this lovely Christmas favourite. Mr Hooper also worked his usual magic to create the finished product. No doubt by now many of you have watched it on multiple occasions on the DVD we sent home to each Prep family!

Junior Carol Service: As we were unable to stage our annual Carol Service this year, Miss Crompton has done a fabulous job of holding various performances that have been filmed and shared with the whole school on Thursday morning. I will be sending a link to all Junior parents so you can enjoy the concert through a Vimeo link once again courtesy of the ingenious Mr Hooper. This will be password protected and will not be downloadable. These arrangements have been put in place for GDPR purposes. If you enjoy watching your children perform in the Junior Carol Concert and feel able to support Cheltenham Open Door, our Just Giving link to help them is: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/richardpate2donatechristmas2020>

Curriculum Focus: We have had an excellent Languages Curriculum Focus this term, thanks to the hard work of Mr Chesworth. We have seen the children (and a few parents!) speaking an impressive number of words from different languages ranging from Arabic to Japanese to Welsh. We also had an overwhelming response to the Languages Poster Competition and we are very grateful to parents who have supported all of these activities. Next term we are going to focus on History and are already planning some fun activities for the children.

Junior Sport: The Junior children have been busy participating in the Cheltenham Schools Virtual Cross Country competition with some impressive times recorded. Years 5 & 6 have played in a mixed football tournament and Years 3, 4, 5 & 6 in inter-house matches. As we enter the Spring Term can I ask that Junior boys have shin pads, gum shield and trainers / astros, and a hockey stick if they have one, but school have enough to provide if not. The girls will do Netball to begin so no protective gear is needed. All pupils are advised to have a change of footwear and socks if the weather is bad.

Year 6 Destinations: I am delighted to share the Year 6 grammar school results. It was another successful year with 21 children qualifying for grammar schools with 7 qualifying for Pate's, 5 for Denmark Road, 5 for Sir Thomas Rich, 1 for The Crypt, 1 for Stroud High, 1 for Marling and 1 for Ribston. We are starting to receive wonderful feedback from the independent senior schools on our doorstep and should have written offers in the coming days. We will not know about Cheltenham Ladies' College until January as there are still assessments to sit. I am incredibly proud of all the Year 6 children for all their hard work and for how they have continued to enter into the spirit of this year's new and different arrangements. They are a wonderful group to have at the top of our school and we look forward to the next two terms of the Year 6 adventure.



Charitable Initiatives: We continue to feel very grateful for the generosity of the Richard Pate family and it was amazing to see the extraordinary amount of dried foods and canned goods that were donated for our Hamper Scamper at the beginning of the month. The produce was collected and will be given to a number of grateful recipients via Cheltenham Community Projects.

In other charity news, we have organised collections for both our Christmas Jumper Day and our Virtual Christmas Concert in aid of Cheltenham Open Door and Save the Children respectively. Please see the JustGiving links above.

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. As per my previous correspondence, I will also be arranging Zoom meetings with every Year 5 parent to talk about the options available to them and the children for Year 7. If you would like to book an appointment, please contact Mrs Hayman in January and she will confirm a time for the Spring or Summer Term. I will also be organising meetings with parents next term to discuss the transition to secondary/senior schools and will announce those dates next week.

Personal Hygiene and Handwashing: In addition to the ongoing COVID hygiene guidelines, we are conscious that the winter months can often bring a proliferation of colds, flu and nasty germs. We would be grateful if you could remind your children of the importance of washing their hands after visiting the toilet and before eating or handling any food. Reminding them of this message will help to keep everyone safe as we continue through the winter months.

Photo Galleries: Mr Hooper has been busy over the past few days with so many video projects but in his spare time will be adding galleries to the website. I would encourage you to have a look at the Nativity play photos which have recently been added. Other galleries will appear over time. You can download a high resolution photo from the website by clicking on that picture and entering the username and password provided in the version of this newsletter that was sent via email.

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 email to [absent@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:absent@richardpate.co.uk). I would like to remind everyone that children should be in school by 8.55am at the latest each morning. Late arrivals are extremely disruptive to the class and can be very difficult for your child as well.

After School Club: The After School Club continues to be very popular and as we continue to operate in Year bubbles, we 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 by contacting Mrs Hayman or Mrs Thornton. I would also like to remind everyone that the last collection time is 5.30pm.

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 26<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 Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April) I would suggest you book an appointment via Mrs Hayman to discuss this with me in the coming weeks.

Other Updates: I will be sending some more details to you on Monday as there is some information about next term's calendar and clubs and activities that are not quite ready to publish. I did not want to delay sending this newsletter to you.

All that remains for me to say as I close this final newsletter of 2020 is to wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday. As always, it has been a great pleasure for us to watch your children flourish this term. Despite the ongoing challenges, the School continues to come alive with their wonderful work, sporting and music activities and the many displays throughout the corridors show how proud they are of their efforts. I hope you all enjoy your children's company over the next three weeks and we look forward to welcoming you all back on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Yours sincerely,

*Robert MacDonald*  
**Robert MacDonald**

**Headmaster**