

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

Dear Parents,

With the excitement of Friday's end of year celebrations fading, I wanted to take a moment to thank you all for your continued support in helping us navigate these challenging times. We arrive at the end of another school year able to look back with satisfaction at all that your children have managed to achieve. Whilst we have had to overcome many hurdles and adhere to the ever-changing Government guidelines, the pandemic has not beaten us and we have had many highlights this term including a wonderful Nursery production of The Hungry Caterpillar and Nursery Pirate Day, Prep and Junior Sports Mornings, a brilliant Year 6 production of Annie, a number of informal musical concerts for individual bubbles and the PTA's Break the Rules Day which was enjoyed by everyone across the school.

We are now able to reflect back upon the year gone by and feel a degree of satisfaction that we were able to stay open throughout the pandemic without shutting down a single bubble. There is obviously an element of luck involved but it also comes down to a great team effort. I want to recognise the Bursary team for unpicking the considerable government guidance to the SLT for putting plans in place and then it being executed by every member of staff – cleaning, catering, site, teachers, teaching assistants, admin and the lunchtime and after school care supervision team. We also want to recognise your contribution and that of your children for following the rules and ensuring that any symptoms were dealt with efficiently. While on the topic of efficiency I also wanted to take a moment to recognise the efforts of the car park team who helped usher you in and out each day regardless of the weather. Mrs Hayman always contributes so much behind the scenes and I know many of you have been in awe of her ability to keep the traffic flowing.

As we now look forward we start to think about what adaptations we may want to keep as we return for the new school year. We are looking at drop off and collection, as well as the dining hall, school uniform and After School Club and clubs and activities. We will be sending you the Autumn Term Clubs list and the Autumn Calendar as soon as they are ready. We will also be sending you the specific plans for the new term by the week of 23<sup>rd</sup> August. We want to be sure we know the latest guidance before we send that out and we hope that gives you ample time to prepare. I have been asked by some parents in the Juniors about uniform. My intention is that until half term the Juniors will wear school uniform two days a week and games kit three days a week. If they have a sports club on a uniform day they will have to change for it. We will trial this until half term to minimise the disruption and the potential for lost property.

**Reports:** You should all have received a copy of your child's report to conclude this year. If you have not received the report as yet it could be in the post. I have had the pleasure of reading through all 295 reports and I have been impressed with the children's progress. You will see that we have changed the format slightly with the Junior reports showing whether a child is working at levels below, working towards, expected or at greater depth in each subject area. We hope this gives a better reflection of their development than the previous report format. The overall development through this pandemic has been very impressive and is a collective success of the children, their teachers and of course the parents at home.

**Final Assembly:** We held a Leavers' Assembly on Friday morning with a limited number of parents in attendance and all the other classes and those unable to join in person joining via Zoom. We were sorry not to be able to allow all parents into the hall but having taken so many precautions to keep people safe we felt we should not add further risk on the last day of term. This Year 6 has been a tremendous group of children excelling in music, art, drama, sport and academic studies. They have coped so well with the challenges of the past 17 months and despite missing out on a number of opportunities they have taken it all in their stride. They leave us for 15 destinations each of which are fortunate to welcome them in September. The following is a breakdown of their next destinations:

<b>Grammar Schools = 16</b>	<b>Independent School = 10</b>	<b>Comprehensive School = 10</b>
Pate's Grammar School = 5 Sir Thomas Rich = 5 Denmark Road = 3 Marling = 1 Stroud High = 1 The Crypt = 1	Cheltenham Ladies' College = 4 St Edward's = 3 King's = 2 Dean Close = 1	The Cotswold School = 3 High School Leckhampton = 3 Winchcombe = 2 Balcarras = 1 Bournside = 1

**Year 6 Performance:** Normally we would hold our Year 6 production at the end of the Spring Term but we knew that was impossible. We scheduled it for the last week of the school year in the hope that we might be able to stage it for the other children and the Year 6 parents. Thankfully last Monday we ran the show twice in the daytime to let Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 see it live. We then held performances on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings for parents from each class to come and enjoy. It was a fabulous performance and the children entertained us with some amazing singing, dancing and acting. I am indebted to the extensive team of staff who made it possible and in particular to Mrs Hayman for choreographing the show, to Miss Crompton for introducing the beautiful harmonies and to Mr Chesworth who coordinated the entire project. A huge amount of effort goes into the planning and execution of such a show but it was most definitely worth it!

**Prep and Junior Sports Day:** It was also brilliant to be able to hold our Prep and Junior Sports Days although we were disappointed not to welcome all our parents to share in the excitement. The Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children enjoyed a relatively new format which saw one year group running the track events, one year group cheering on and one year group taking part in the field events. They rotated so that each year group enjoyed each experience. The sportsmanship was brilliant and everyone had great fun. The Junior Sports Day was postponed until the final week but the weather cooperated and the format allowed us to keep all the bubbles separate while everyone enjoyed the plethora of competitive events. We were pleased to welcome a small number of Year 6 parents to cheer on their children. Thank you to all staff who supported but particularly to Mr Jones and Mr Edwards for organising the proceedings.

**Staff Leaving:** As this school year comes to an end, we see three valuable members of the team sadly leaving us. **Mrs Conner** has been with us for the last three years firstly as a wonderful Year 2 class teacher and most recently as our SENDCo. Mrs Conner has done a brilliant job of introducing intervention strategies with our TAs supporting children and her excellent work will be carried on by Mrs Ellis from September. Mrs Conner will be returning to Cheltenham College to run their SEND department and they are very fortunate to have her guiding this aspect of their provision. **Mrs Powell** finishes her recent maternity cover (note: having officially retired two years ago!) and we are indebted to her and Mrs Upton for doing such a great job with our Year 3s. Mrs Upton will return to her role as Games teacher and TA in the Junior Department from September and Mrs Powell assures us that she will continue to be available for the odd day here and there for supply. Miss Mighten has been working as a TA in Reception this year and she leaves us to concentrate on her gymnastics business. She will stay on as a lunchtime supervisor and will be offering a Gym Club for our Year 3 and 4 children. We wish all three of these lovely ladies the best of luck in their new endeavours.

**New Staff Joining:** As we say goodbye to the above members of our team, we are also lucky to have some great people joining us in September. **Mrs Thurston** will be joining Year 3 and is very excited to be working with Mrs Argyrou. Mrs Thurston will be covering Miss Ingre in her maternity leave but I have made the decision to keep Mrs Thurston with 3T for the entire year. Miss Ingre will return in January and will be supporting some exciting initiatives for the Spring and Summer Terms before returning full time to class responsibilities in September 2022. **Mrs Ellis** will be replacing Mrs Conner as SENDCo and we were delighted to have her join us for two days this term to begin the important handover of responsibilities. We have also reorganised our TA deployment for September. Mrs Hunte will be supported by Miss Gould, Mrs Markham, Mrs Warner and Mrs Holt in the Nursery. Miss Williams will move from the Nursery to work alongside Mrs Finnikin in RF. Mrs Rowe and Mrs Norris will maintain their winning partnership in RN. Mrs Hannam and Mrs Kotecha will be the Year 1 TAs and Mrs Crowie and Mrs Fisher will be supporting Year 2. Finally Mrs Upton and Mrs James will be working across the Junior Department.

**PTA:** I would like to thank Lisa Hall and her fabulous team for all they have done to work around the restrictions throughout the year. The finale of the Break the Rules Day and the Friday lollies have been thoroughly enjoyed by all and have raised money for extras, which will allow us to send the children to the Literature and Science Festival and the younger ones to the pantomime. You can see Lisa's final PTA newsletter with my latest correspondence.

**Uniform:** When we return in September, the children will be allowed to wear either summer or winter uniform until half term and this reflects that the weather can vary widely during these autumn months. The second hand uniform team will hopefully be running a sale at some point before the start of term and details will follow. We have taken a decision to continue with the Junior Department coming dressed in Games kit for the days where they have a Games or PE lesson. We will have them change if they have a club or activity on a particular day that requires games kit. We will trial this until half term at which point we may revert back to coming in to school every day in uniform and changing for games if they need to. There will be a separate correspondence explaining which days your child will require games kit.

**Smart Appearance:** We have been quite understanding over the recent period regarding the children's uniform and general appearance as we have been aware of the challenges involved in shopping and visiting the hairdresser/barber. As we look to return in September I would ask for everyone's help to make sure that the boys have their hair cut to no more than collar length and the girls have longer hair tied up with a school hair tie. The children are often noted for their smart appearance and this is a reputation we are proud to uphold.

**Further Investment:** We are very excited at the next round of investment in the School. We have brand new computers for the computer suite and the library waiting to be installed. We have also ordered new computers for the classrooms. We are putting together our plan for new touchscreen interactive white boards over the next academic year and these will be trialled in several classrooms from September.

**School Places:** As always we have the odd place throughout the School available, and in particular Nursery and Year 1 for September so if you have friends or colleagues who are looking for a place do let them know.

**Bursary:** The Bursary will remain open over the holidays and can be contacted on 01242-522052 or at [bursar@richardpate.co.uk](mailto:bursar@richardpate.co.uk).

**Final Thanks:** I have just completed my 15<sup>th</sup> year as Head of the Richard Pate School and my 32<sup>nd</sup> year in teaching. The last 17 months have been some of the most challenging I ever recall. What has sustained us throughout has been the sense of teamwork and family. I am so grateful to my colleagues who have worked long hours, been wonderfully creative and flexible and always put your children first. I am also indebted to the parental community who have stood by us through so much. In two successive lockdowns you became at-home teachers and kept the children's learning on track. Finally and most importantly I want to thank your children. Their good humour, hard work, creativity and sense of fun sustained us all. On a personal note their messages on Showbie kept my spirits up while I was trying to run the school from home. Their physical fitness challenge to help Reggie and me make a virtual return to Nova Scotia was an inspiration. I am delighted to say I will be returning to Nova Scotia to see my mother for the first time in almost two years.

To those who leave us I wish you all the very best and hope you will continue to stay in touch and let us know about the next adventure. For those returning I wish you a wonderful holiday and look forward to an exciting start to a new school year. I am hugely optimistic that it will be a return to normality with a hope that we never forget how lucky we are to enjoy so many freedoms.

Yours sincerely,



**Robert MacDonald**  
**Headmaster**