



RICHARD PATE

INDEPENDENT CO-ED SCHOOL 3-11
CHELTENHAM

Friday 16th December, 2022

Dear Parents,

It has been an interesting last week of term managing our weather challenges and ensuring we keep our whole school community safe and I would firstly like to thank you for patience and understanding. It is never an easy decision to close the School but safety always has to be our number one priority in times like this and I apologise once again for any inconvenience this may have caused you. The car park proved a logistical challenge in the drop off and pickup but we were able to use the lessons of Covid and the encyclopaedic memory of Mrs Hayman to ensure all the right children got in and out of all the right cars.

We were so fortunate to have enjoyed a couple of magical weeks prior to the snow with so many wonderful activities taking place across the School. The Year 4s performed their brilliant version of Strictly Come Dancing which was enjoyed by parents and other family members. This was followed by the wonderful Prep Nativity – A Miracle in Town! – where parents were also treated to some beautiful recitals from our instrumentalists whilst enjoying PTA teas and coffees. The week of festivities culminated in our delicious Christmas lunch with the whole school wearing Christmas jumpers and enjoying some very talented staff singing! We even had two visits from Father Christmas to put us all into the Christmas mood. I would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs James and her amazing 5-star team for preparing such a delicious Christmas meal for 350 people and to Mrs Hall and our fabulous PTA for their brilliant help and for allowing the staff to enjoy it too.

As always, your children have been a credit to you all this term and I have enjoyed seeing them involved in so many ways across the school. The corridors have certainly been alive with fun, laughter and friendship! I wanted to take this opportunity to also say a huge thank you to our team at School who have once again worked tirelessly to educate your children this term in a wide variety of activities. It has been lovely to see school back to normality post pandemic and a huge amount of work has taken place to ensure we are offering as much as we can both in and out of the classroom. Our clubs and activities list has never been so extensive or covered so many year groups. I know many of you have shown your appreciation directly to members of staff but I wanted to record my personal thanks as well. I feel very lucky to work with such a dedicated group of people.

School Trips: We have had some great trips this term with our Nursery children attending a magical performance of the 'Snow Queen' at the Everyman theatre, our Year 5s attending a brilliant full-day creative workshop at Dean Close School last week and only yesterday our entire Prep Department visited the wonderfully festive Clearwell Caves.

Prep Nativity: The Prep Nativity 'A Miracle in Town' took place with three performances last week. As always, it was a wonderful spectacle and I was proud of all the children who took part. All credit to the wonderful Prep Department team for their efforts to stage this lovely Christmas event. No doubt by now many of you have watched it on multiple occasions on the video – either the digital or DVD format! There are also photos on the website Gallery for all to enjoy.

Junior Christmas Carol Service: We were delighted to wrap up and battle the sub-zero temperatures to enjoy the Junior Carol Service last night. It was lovely to have everyone together at Christchurch and the choir, musicians and readers all performed brilliantly. I would like to say a huge thank you to Miss Crompton and her amazing team for doing such a fabulous job and to Mrs Hayman for her logistical brilliance in ensuring the evening ran like clockwork. If you were unable to come and would like to donate to the collection in aid of Cheltenham Open Door please click on the following link: <https://bit.ly/3gUFd2A>. We spoke about this again in assembly this morning and talked about how difficult it would be to be homeless in Cheltenham at any time but particularly now and over Christmas.

PTA News: Wow the PTA have been busy this term! The brilliant Christmas Fair with the added bonus of the reindeer visit raised just over £3,000 – our best ever total and these funds will be used so many lovely activities for your children including visits to Clearwell Caves, the Everyman Theatre, visits to the Cheltenham Festivals and the list goes on. We have also had the PTA Quiz, Prep and Junior Discos, the Christmas Wreath Making workshop and finally the invaluable support of the committee at the Christmas lunch and serving coffees and teas at the Prep Nativity. We want to say a special thanks to Lisa Hall and her PTA Committee for their ongoing support through this term. You will find their latest newsletter attached to the e-mail sending out this letter.

Curriculum Focus: We have enjoyed an excellent English Curriculum Focus this term, thanks to the hard work of Mrs Enston and Mrs Thomas. The virtual book fair, the visiting author and the poetry board have been just a few of the activities enjoyed. Next term we are going to focus on Computing and Mr Jones is already planning some activities for the children which will focus on enjoyment and awareness.

Junior Sport: It has been another busy term for our Sports department. All the Junior children have been participating in a number of hockey, rugby and football matches this term at all levels. We have also had several of our Junior pupils taking part in the Cheltenham Schools Cross Country competition with some impressive times recorded – more to follow next term! A key highlight of the term is when our U11 Girls' Hockey team recently faced stiff competition in the County Championship at CLC and emerged victorious. They will now be representing Gloucestershire at the South West Championships in March. This follows them also qualifying for the IAPS U11 National Hockey tournament at Cheltenham College earlier in the term. A phenomenal achievement - what a team! A big thank you to Mr Edwards and Mrs Knight and their team for their coaching and support for all years throughout the season.

As we enter the Spring Term, the major sport for boys will be hockey (Years 3/4 on Monday and Friday; Years 5/6 on Wednesday and Thursday). It is compulsory that all boys will need shin pads and gumshields in order to take part in lessons. Self-fit gumshields are adequate (Opro are a good brand) however ones fitted by your dentist may be beneficial. If you choose the latter, please make sure that your son has a fitted one ready for the start of the term. Please also bring in a hockey stick if they have one, but school have enough to provide if not. Gloves are optional but advisable particularly during January and February when it can get very cold on our astro. Parents and pupils will be notified in advance when football will be taught and football boots need to be brought in.

The girls will do netball so no protective gear is needed but warm layers are advised. **All** pupils should have a change of footwear and socks if the weather is bad.

Year 6 Destinations: From the grammar school result we have 4 children who have qualified for Pate's Grammar School, 7 who have qualified for Denmark Road, 5 who have qualified for Sir Thomas Rich and from this group they may choose to attend another grammar school instead. These numbers are down slightly on last year but there were fewer that elected to sit the grammar school test. We have also received some wonderful feedback from the independent senior schools on our doorstep and we have already been offered 11 scholarships for academics, music, sport, drama, art and various combinations. I am incredibly proud of all the Year 6 children for their hard work this term. 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 School Fair. The produce was collected and was given to a number of grateful recipients via Cheltenham Community Projects.

In other charity news, we organised a collection for our wonderful Junior Christmas Carol Service in aid of Cheltenham Open Door. Thank you for all the donations so far. If you were unable to come and would still like to donate, please click on the link below: <https://bit.ly/3gUFd2A>

As we look ahead to next term, please find below some important updates and notices:

Staff News: We have received news that three of our staff will be retiring at the end of this academic year. Our beloved Deputy Head Mrs Sue Wade will stand down at the end of this academic year. Mrs Wade is the only member of the team left that taught on the old site in the middle of town prior to our move to Southern Road. In that time, she has been a brilliant teacher, a hugely trusted Deputy Head, our Designated Safeguarding Leader, our ISI School Inspector and the list goes on. She will be greatly missed and the search for a worthy successor begins in earnest next term. The superlatives about Mrs Wade will continue to the end of the Summer Term but I can say from a personal point of view she will be tremendously missed. Sadly if you see one Wade retire you see two retire and so we will be saying farewell to Mr Wade, Year 5 and 6 Science teacher, as well. Mr Wade will have completed three years with us when he goes and in that time has brought chemistry to life! The children have very much enjoyed his practical lessons and his passion for the subject has been infectious. Finally Mrs Crowie, teaching assistant in Year 2, will retire as well. Mrs Crowie joined RPS the same year as I did and she was definitely the signing of the year! Her love and compassion for children along with her boundless positivity will be missed greatly as well. We will look to recruit for these three positions in the new year so if you know of anyone suitable point them our way.

Year 5 Preparations and Parent Meetings: I have been visiting the Year 5 classes this term to work on some exam preparation and discuss with them the process of transition and will continue to do this next term. I will also be continuing to arrange meetings (Zoom or face-to-face) 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.

Sports Matches: Due to the increased number of matches taking place and the increased demand for hall/dining hall space for after school clubs and provision, we have been trialling some different arrangements and routines post matches. The current takeaway biscuit and juice seems to be working well in place of the previous match teas and allows extended match/teaching time and we will return to dismissing the children via the classrooms unless the games staff tell you otherwise via email. We aim to have all matches finished by 3.50pm. We welcome your views, as always, and will review it for the Summer Term, when hopefully the weather will allow for some outside entertaining.

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. 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.

Breakfast and After School Club: The After School Club continues to be very popular and we do 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. Places can be booked for both Breakfast and After School Club via the SchoolCloud booking system: <https://richardpate.schoolcloud.co.uk>. If you do not require a particular session, it is important to cancel that booking via SchoolCloud or you may be charged. 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 31st 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 Monday 17th April) I would suggest you book an appointment via Mrs Hayman to discuss this with me in the coming weeks.

Next Term's Calendar and Clubs and Activities: Along with this newsletter I am sending out next term's calendar as well as the list of clubs and activities. As always we may find additional events appear once the new term begins.

Open Day: We are due to hold our next Open Morning on Saturday 11th February for prospective parents. This is an important opportunity for those parents to see our School facilities and to get a chance to meet our lovely staff. Please do share the date with anyone you know looking for schools in the area. I would also like the parents to meet some of our children in action and will be contacting some of you in the new year to see if they can spend the morning with us. I wanted you to mark it in the diary as I know how busy many of your weekends are.

All that remains for me to say as I close this final newsletter of 2022 is to wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday. As always, it has been a great pleasure for us to watch your children continue to flourish this term both in and out of the classroom. I hope you all enjoy your children's company over the next three weeks and we look forward to welcoming you all back on Monday 9th January. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Yours sincerely,

Robert MacDonald

Robert MacDonald
Headmaster