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ROYAL ALEXANDRA & ALBERT SCHOOL



16 September 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great pleasure that I write to you as Headmaster of this great school. It has been an exciting start of term with many joining us for a new start, and many returning after their summer break to remember what a special place this is. On the first day, I spoke to the pupils about my wish for them to take great pride in being Gattonians, in how they conduct themselves, how they aspire to do well and to get involved, both in and out of the classroom, and how they contribute positively to our community. It was excellent to see a fine array of young men and women looking smart in their Royal Alexandra & Albert School uniform and I asked them to continue to make an effort to look the part – putting to them that pride starts with how they present themselves.

On this term's first assembly, I showed the pupils a video-clip of the wonderful school grounds, as taken by a video-drone. This was done for us by the son of Mrs Jones last summer. It was a great reminder to all of us of how fortunate we are to come to this site every day, and for many of us to live here. As activities start, my hope is that many will make good use of the grounds as well as enjoy the scenery for its calming inspiration to what we do. A link to the video-clip can be found by [clicking here](#) and I do recommend that you watch it (with sound turned on, because the accompanying music adds much to the editing).

Towards the end of our second week of term it has been fantastic to see the large range of clubs and activities now in action, and pupils taking such an active part in them. We have been treated to mid-summer weather and this led to a good-sized crowd cheering on the 1st XV rugby team as they started their season against St Bede's on Wednesday on the bottom field. In their first match as an emerging new team they played well and with real passion – the highlight for me being the staunch and determined defence that they gave towards the end of the first half.

The final score went against them, but it was a good first match and it was great to see so many supporting, including some parents and families. Please do come and support our teams in these matches when you can – it means a lot to the pupils and is a special part of the life here.

Much has been done around the site over the summer. The main item of news to this end is the continued work to improve ICT – with the aim of it being both reliable and fast. Many computers have been replaced, in houses and in school, over the year; and the connections and networking infrastructure has been improved. The next phase is to improve the Wi-Fi across the site so that it is working reliably in all the houses. We have completely refurbished and enlarged the two main ICT rooms in the school as well, and these have already established themselves very successfully. Other works have been the redecoration of Alexandra House and Rank-Weston in our plans to bring general improvements to the houses, and the installation of a new classroom in the Bothy Music Centre.

This summer's exam results were a credit to the pupils and to the teachers. The Junior Department produced outstanding results, in particular in comparison to other schools, across each of the three KS2 areas of Maths, Reading, and English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (EGPS). These were new assessments on a new curriculum and the pupils and staff deserve every congratulations on their hard work, over a couple of years in particular, to get to these. Moving to the top of the school, the A-level results were pleasing with a very good number of students getting what they required, or better, for their University places. We are rightly proud of them as they move on from the school, and wish them all the best. As you may have read, the GCSE results slipped nationally, but I am pleased to say that this was not the case here this summer, with more than two thirds of the pupils getting A*-C in English and in Maths.

As you may well know GCSEs and A-levels have changed and, after 16 years, have returned to a linear approach. The qualifications now rely on assessment at the end of the two year-courses, which test knowledge and understanding of both years of study. Our U6th return halfway through their journey on these new courses. They still sat their AS exams at the end of the L6th year, and did very well in general, which bodes well for their second year. I wish them all the best for their preparation towards the exams this summer that test both years' content. It will take much work for success to come – both from pupils and staff.

As a group of staff we have been reflecting on what our aims are for our pupils – what do we want them to be like as they develop through the school? We have come up with a suggestion of these aims, together, and the pupils have been asked for their view. I share these with you below and would welcome your comments. Once we have agreed on the aims, we will be asking for your help in establishing them in our young men and women as they work through the school.

Suggestion For Our Aims As A Community:

At Gatton we aim to:

- **take ownership** of our lives
- **respect** ourselves, others and the environment
- **aspire** and **persevere**
- **be courageous** and **honest**
- **contribute** to our community and to society

We have a number of new staff joining us this September, as well as lots of new pupils. I have been very impressed with the quality of the new appointments we have made, and hope you will be too. I am sure you will join me in wishing them all the best for their time here.

A change in the Senior Leadership Team has occurred with Mrs Ross taking over from Mrs Hobbs, in the capacity of Acting Deputy Head (Academic) for the year. During this time, Mr Shaw will be Acting Head of Sixth Form.

What has struck me most of all about Gatton Life so far is the warmth and friendliness of the community here. The pupils have a polite confidence about them and I have been enjoying getting to know them. I look forward to getting to know more of you during my time. I must thank the whole community for how welcoming it has been. My two daughters have started in Year 7 and Year 4 and they have had an excellent fortnight and have certainly felt welcome too.

With all best wishes.



Mark Dixon