

3rd July 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians

Despite the heat and humidity we have had an outstanding **Explore Week**. Every day I have walked round different parts of the Park to see Years 7, 8 & 9 taking part in all sorts of challenging activities. You may be surprised to learn that I did not hesitate for long before refusing the cheerful offer "Come on Sir, join us on this raft. We're sure your suit won't get wet" !

At the same time Year 10 have been taking part in World of Work Week (*WoWW* !) and I am most grateful to the large number of local employers, parents and Governors who have given up their time to interview pupils, run activities or talk to pupils about their experience.

The Lower Sixth have been preparing to leave – in a year's time ! A day at Sussex University working on how to compose their personal statements and plenty of other stretching activities have closed what I believe to have been a very successful year for next year's Upper Sixth and I am looking forward to their AS level results in August.

We have said goodbye to the Upper Sixth and we look forward to seeing Year 11 pupils back again in September. Despite pass marks and grade boundaries getting even more difficult at GCSE every year I believe that this year's Year 11 pupils will do the School proud.

At this time we say goodbye to a number of colleagues, but I wish particular to write about three of them. Carl Bingham, Deputy Head with responsibility for Boarding joined us just four years ago. Under his wise guidance the boarding activities and trips programme has expanded massively and I have never known so many Flexi Boarders come in on Sundays to go on weekend trips ! What is more all houses now have excellent systems for monitoring presence in houses or at activities and Mr Bingham has also presided over the development of CCTV across the site which has significantly increased the safety and security of all pupils. We wish Mr Bingham, his wife Anna and Louisa, who is leaving Year 3, every success at their new school.

I am very pleased indeed to welcome Mr Mark Skidmore to the School as Carl's replacement. Mark is currently Director of Boarding at Pangbourne College, a well-regarded independent boarding school. Together with his wife Caroline and their daughter they will be resident on site in September.

Mrs Hartigan retires as Housemistress of Cornwall House after a mere twenty-one years at the school and she was also Head of English before becoming Special Needs Coordinator. Aimee Castles-Green is a name that fewer of you will recognize, but as Office Administrator she has cheerfully managed what must be one of the busiest school offices in Surrey **or even in England**. *Have you seen the number of people waiting in Reception at 8.30 am some mornings ?* Aimee is moving on to run the office at a larger school in Croydon and we wish her every success as well as welcoming Lyndsay Kilhams, her successor.

Governors have decided to postpone the appointment of a Director of Co-curricular Activities as they were not convinced they had the right applicant and they will be putting in place a temporary management structure until a permanent appointment can be made at Easter or September 2016.

Governors have also confirmed their view that conversion to Academy status currently offers no benefits to the school, so this change is very unlikely in the foreseeable future.

I am delighted that Governors have appointed Mark Dixon to follow me in Summer 2016 and, over the next twelve months, Jan and I look forward to welcoming Mark and Kirsten to the School and helping them familiarize themselves with Gatton Park.

I wish you the very best for these Summer holidays.

With my best wishes

Paul D Spencer Ellis
Headmaster