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ROYAL ALEXANDRA & ALBERT SCHOOL



7th September 2017

Dear Parent,

I do hope that you have had a good summer break. We have had a busy summer of works on the site but it has been great this week to see the pupils arrive back at school and the recreation of the buzz of activity around campus.



New Year 7s in Elizabeth House

It has been lovely to welcome all the new pupils joining our community, throughout our age-range, and the warm welcome that our 'old hands' extend to the new pupils is something to be very proud of within our community. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome all new parents to the school in this letter. We work best with your support and interest in what we do, and please remember that this community is for you as well. I very much hope to meet you at some of our events as we support our pupils.

For the benefit of parents new to RAAS, and also a reminder to all, we are very fortunate to have an active Parents' Association which we call 'The Friends of RAAS'. They support the school in a myriad of ways, and in a large range of events. The Association also offers good opportunities for parents to have fun working together for the benefit of our pupils and that is an important facet of our community. I very much appreciate their enthusiasm and involvement. Please, if you feel you could give something of your time to support this, and wish to get involved, then do contact the Chair, Ian Tombleson via PTAfriends@gatton-park.org.uk



Albert House in the first morning break



Senior Netball Tour to Barbados

At the start of the summer holidays we had two sports tours taking place: a Senior Boys' rugby tour to South Africa and a Senior Girls' netball tour to Barbados. Both tours were ambitious projects and my thanks go to the staff who organised and ran them. The trips went extremely well and as well as the sporting opportunities they brought, both groups had the opportunity to enjoy what the countries had to offer and to get involved with the

local communities there with voluntary work. They were excellent all-round education opportunities and were shining examples of how participation and engagement with the co-curriculum can bring with it lots of benefits, in the widest sense.

As a school we absolutely recognise the benefits of an all-round education for the pupils whilst they are here. This week we welcome Mr Czerpak, joining us as our new Deputy Head to complement Mrs Ross as Deputy Head (Academic) and Mr Skidmore as Deputy Head (Boarding & Pastoral). Mr Czerpak will take charge of our co-curriculum, in all of its varied facets, and will also be responsible for our community links. I am extremely thankful to Mrs Vaughan for all she has done to run our activities programme, and to set that system



Senior Rugby Tour to South Africa

up. I am grateful to her for continuing to be in charge of our Boarding Trips Programme, which offers such a good range for our students. Last year saw a growth in the opportunities and number of performances in both Music and Drama and my thanks to Dr Grigsby, Mr Edney and Mr Phillips, in particular, for that. We are keen to see this growth continue.



This year's examination results were pleasing across the year groups and my congratulations to the pupils for their achievement and my thanks to the staff for all the support that they gave to this end. At A-level we were pleased to see a quarter of the grades being A* or A grades, which is an increase from last year. It is very encouraging to see pupils doing so well despite the courses becoming more

challenging and tested in a linear fashion, with everything assessed at the end of the two-years. What is most pleasing about the A-level results is the list of University and Career destinations from last year's U6th with nearly all going on to their planned courses. This is testament both to their hard work but also to the advice that they have been given during their time. At GCSE level we have had an increase in the number of pupils getting 5 good GCSEs including English and Maths. In the junior department the KS2 results were again clearly above national expectations in all 3 areas of maths, reading and writing.

As a school I want us to be hungry for further progress academically and to have even greater ambition for our pupils to do as well as they can. This year staff we will have more of a focus on teaching & learning; how the pupils can best engage with their learning and how they get the support and challenge that they deserve to do the best they can. Mrs Potter, who has been such an effective Head of Science for us, becomes our Director of Teaching & Learning and will work with Mrs Ross to take a lead in this area. Mrs Potter steps aside from running Science after 100% of the 39 pupils who took GCSEs in Biology, Physics and Chemistry obtained at least B grades, with two thirds at A or A*. Our new Head of Science, Dr Marks, who joins us with a wealth of experience, has been given quite a challenge to follow! Mr Phillips has stepped away from running Kent House after a very successful three years there, and will now lead a new department for us: Citizenship & Careers. We have decided to evaluate and improve our careers programme and the opportunities for pupils to consider pathways and educate themselves on options for after school, and how they can best prepare for these.

Mr Shaw, who ran the Sixth Form so well last year, takes on a new role as the Head of Psychology, Sociology and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The latter being an exciting option for Year 12s where they can carry out detailed research into an area of their choosing, this being a very good way of linking subjects together or complementing their studies. The EPQ is also highly valued by Universities and we are pleased to be able to offer it this year, in our Sixth Form, alongside other subjects.

As you drive into the school site, you will see the evidence of development along the main driveway. We have moved the horse paddocks further away from the entrance drive and you will see a range of sprinklers on the top field. This is in preparation for a fourth pitch on the top field. Similarly at the lower fields, by the Gatton lake, you will see an additional full sized pitch being prepared. Neither of these will be ready for playing on this year but we look forward to the additional opportunity that they give us for more fixtures and more teams, as well as practices and casual sport.

I very much look forward to continuing to hear about your views of the school – from experienced RAAS parents, or new ones. As last year, we will have a series of *Partnership with Parents* meetings during the year, which will be for these conversations. Please do take other opportunities to let me know your thoughts as we work together to continue to reflect on how we can make this school work better for our pupils.

With all best wishes



Mark Dixon

Headmaster