



28 March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you at the end of a vibrant, fast-paced and successful term for the school community. As we embark on a period of much needed rest and relaxation, we look ahead to a vitally important term for Year 13 and Year 11. In this short letter, I will provide some key updates, reflect on the many highlights of the last six weeks and look forward to the Summer Term.

The term finished today in high-spirits and a true sense of community. Our annual Culture Day celebrates the myriad of cultures, traditions and nationalities that make up our richly diverse and inclusive school. Across our school cohort, we have over 45 different languages spoken, reflecting the diversity and richness of our collective self. The sight of students in the final assembly, proudly wearing clothes that represent their culture, was something to be very proud of. In this assembly, we celebrated the numerous achievements of students in lessons, the sporting arena, the creative arts and, in academic endeavour. The musical items, provided by students from Year 7 to Year 13, exemplified the students' readiness to share their talents with one another, in a safe and encouraging environment. Well done to all of our performers!

The highlight of the assembly, however, was the hotly anticipated release of the identities of the new Houses to the school community – an emotive subject that has sought the opinions of all stakeholders. Mrs Wisdom reminded us about the importance and power of positive culture within successful groups. She spoke about our school's history and its future. Going forward, our Houses will represent the richness of our School. We thank everyone who has shared their opinions on this matter and, having gathered the thoughts of over 1000 stakeholders, we are delighted to say that our new Houses will be named after the following individuals:

Isambard Kingdom **Brunel**: British Engineer and innovator was considered to be one of the most ingenious figures in engineering history. As one of our existing Houses, we maintain a link with the history of WGSB and its traditional excellence in Engineering.

Alan **Turing**: Turing's groundbreaking work as a computer scientist laid the foundations for modern computing and AI. He suffered prejudice and persecution due to his homosexuality but since his death he deservedly received a posthumous royal pardon.

Helen **Keller**: Unable to see or hear from the age of 19 months, learnt to communicate through touch by interpreting hand signals pressed into her palm. Wrote numerous books and campaigned for the rights of those with disabilities.

Katherine **Johnson**: American mathematician who overcame racial and gender barriers because of her extraordinary ability, was a key figure in NASA's Mercury and Apollo programs.

Sir David **Attenborough**: Credit with bringing the natural world into our living rooms and educating people worldwide on environmental issues and the impact of the human race on the planet.

Nelson **Mandela**: South Africa's first black president, focused on social justice and economic growth during his leadership. His emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation, alongside his commitment to unity and equality won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.



Mrs Wisdom will write again in the Summer Term to outline how the school will transition to our new, improved and vibrant House system in September 2024.

Towards the end of the assembly, as the WGSB Band (containing students from Y8 – Y13) played, staff and students were given the chance to reflect on another term's worth of hard work, challenges and cheerful co-operation. Sporting awards were given to our most successful football and rugby teams, as well as acknowledging the efforts of those students who had demonstrated dedication to their teams over the course of the season. We were delighted to recognize some of the lesser-known sporting achievements, including Frankie's (Y8) National Thai Boxing success and Connor's (Y10) efforts in National Cross Country.

Likewise, after a highly competitive selection process, we introduced the new Student Leadership Team to the school: Naya Wadsworth and Alex Tao (Head Students), Rylee Reeve and Sandra Adeniyi (Deputy Head Students), Jude Dennis, Tiara Perera, Benedetta Natangeli, David Magaji and Rachel Leslie (Senior Prefects).

The assembly finished with our customary recognition of all those who have tried their best during the term. As I have done before, I shared the words of the 26th President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, who spoke stirringly about those brave enough to try, even if that might result in failure:

'It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error'.

Communication with the School

We live in an increasingly polarized world, where opinions can lurch from one extreme to another. Social media and other news outlets do not encourage subtle, compassionate and thoughtful dialogue. Unfortunately, many schools have seen an increase in extreme (and sometimes unreasonable) opinions, often in emails sent late at night. In our experience, it is incredibly rare for any issues to be resolved through a lengthy email. It is similarly rare that parents and carers are in possession of all the facts before communicating in this way. We are fortunate that most of the communication with the school is well meaning and constructive.

Schools are busy, dynamic and fast-moving. Staff will sometimes go through a day of teaching without having time to read their emails. We welcome (and actively encourage) open communication with all parents/carers. In our experience, the best way to do this is to phone the school and request to speak to the relevant member of staff. If they are unavailable, the member of staff will always call back within a reasonable time frame. If necessary, they will then invite you in for a face-to-face meeting. Email communications will be kept to a minimum whenever possible.

I will never accept abuse, foul language or raised voices to any member of my team.



Mobile Phone Policy

We wrote early this term with an update to our mobile phone policy. The vast majority of students have adapted to the subtle changes very well. Put simply, unless given express permission by a member of staff, phones must not be seen or heard at any time in the school day. The sight of 500 students enjoying each other's company and having mature conversations around the lunch tables has been validation of our strategy. We also thank the parents and carers who have welcomed our approach and we have tried to adopt a sensible approach when accommodating parents collecting the phones. We will continue to review the implementation of our policy and will make any necessary changes before the end of the year.

Terms 5 and 6

We continue to broaden horizons beyond the classroom with a wide-ranging and ambitious enrichment programme during the summer term. We are delighted that over one hundred students will be embarking on their Duke of Edinburgh expedition this term and they are excited to experience the beauty of the Kent countryside, working as part of a team in unfamiliar surroundings. Similarly, as the summer term progresses our students will be visiting Dover Castle and Wildwood and conducting various Work Experience placements. As we reach the summer term, the school looks forward to STEAM and Sports Week, both of which will provide many opportunities for students to challenge themselves and work creatively with their peers. As always, the entire community is grateful to the staff who go above and beyond, often after the school day finishes, to ensure that these opportunities are available to our students.

I will write again in the Summer Term; however, in the meantime, I wish all members of our community a happy and restful school holiday.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S J Harrington'.

Mr S Harrington
Headteacher