

December 2014

Dear Parents

As we reach the end of the long Michaelmas term there is much to celebrate and I am so proud of all that the girls and staff have accomplished. I am thrilled to tell you that we raised over £15,000 at this year's Nicky Stalls, an incredible sum and a real testament to your daughters' hard work and your own great generosity. Divided between the various charities, this money will make a huge difference to people who are in need in different ways. It is truly heart-warming to know how hard the girls work at reaching out to help those less fortunate.

Those of you who came to see the school's performances of *Electra* will agree that it was an absolute triumph; all those months of rehearsing and learning lines more than paid off, and the girls were simply outstanding. Once again, I am amazed at the level of talent and ability your daughters possess. It really was exceptional theatre and would easily have done credit to a West End stage.

The recent Fellowship Carol Service in London was a wonderful occasion. It was a joy to sing carols by candlelight, with pupils from two prep schools – Garden House and Coworth Flexlands – adding to the enjoyment of the evening. Thank you to the many parents who made time to attend.

After the fun and relaxation of Christmas, the girls will be straight back into rigorous academic work at the start of next term, especially those in the upper school as they face mock examinations. I hope I can count on your support to ensure that they find some time for serious study in amongst the Christmas celebrations. They will be coming home with pre-prepared revision timetables; please take a look at these yourselves and ensure your daughters are working through them properly. The work that they put in now will pay dividends in the summer exams. Your support is greatly appreciated. My staff are always on hand to give extra help and support when needed, so please do encourage your daughters to take advantage of the many drop-in sessions and subject clinics that the teachers will be running, often outside of school hours and on their own time.

I have received an unusually high number of requests this month for girls to be allowed to leave school early in order to catch flights. May I remind you that our term dates are published over a year in advance? In general, I will not grant permission for girls to leave before the end of term, unless the circumstances are really exceptional. We are required by law to fulfil a certain number of teaching hours per year and, with the new and more rigorous curriculum, every missed lesson will increase the pressure on your daughter. Please make your travel arrangements in line with the school dates, so that we can ensure your daughters cover the full curriculum. Thank you for your support in this.

Sadly, we say goodbye to Sister Liz Hill after almost thirty years of loyal service to the school, looking after your daughters (and some of you mothers too). The staff and girls have said an emotional goodbye, when we presented her with flowers and gifts and expressed our gratitude to her for all that she has done. She takes with her enough memories to write a book! She will be missed and I know you will join with me in wishing her the very best for the future. I would also like to inform you that John Bueno, the Bursar, will be retiring in August next year, and in January we will begin the long process of selecting his successor, although his are quite big shoes to fill! Katja Sass will also leave

Heathfield in August and we will begin recruiting her replacement in the New Year. Our Designer in Residence Harriet Eldridge has decided to explore other options and we say goodbye to her this week. We have found a replacement, Justin Alves-Khan, who will join us next term. Very sadly, our part time Teacher of Classics, Chris Green, has had to retire due to serious ill health. We have been fortunate to find an excellent replacement, Dr Diura Stobart, who will be with us in the New Year.

Fr Tim will bring this term to an end with the annual Carol Service which, in all the busyness of this time of year, certainly helps to focus our minds on the true meaning of Christmas. As a Christian school, the ancient Christmas message of peace, hope and love is one that we encourage the girls to remember throughout the year. I finish by wishing you and your families that same peace, hope and love, a wonderful Christmas together and a very happy New Year.

With my best wishes

Mrs Jo Heywood
Headmistress