



7th September 2017

Dear parents,

The beginning of the academic year in September is always an extremely exciting time, welcoming back existing pupils as well as 240 new Year 7 pupils. I would like to express a particular welcome to any new parents, and hope to meet many of you at the PTA Quiz (see below).

Exam results

The results at both GCSE and A Level were extremely good and I would like to commend the dedication of both pupils and staff. This year sees the first results of the new GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics, introduced by the Government as well as a new 9-1 grading system for those GCSEs. The Government had also retained for this year existing GCSEs in other subjects and the A*-G grading. To ensure that pupils this year are not disadvantaged, Ofqual, the independent regulator, has ensured that the number of pupils getting new grades 9-4 will be the same nationally as gained grades A*- C last year. The short timescales and late delivery of materials have made this a very stressful two years for pupils and teachers, and we are delighted that the hard work and commitment shown has resulted in excellent results across subjects. Full details are on the school website.

The Year 11 cohort deserve particular praise for the way they engaged with the curriculum changes in English and Maths with 75% of pupils gaining grade 9-4 (equivalent to A*- C) in **both English and Maths**, and one fifth gaining at least 2 top grades (A* or 9 or 8). Overall, the entire year group made 0.2 grades per pupil on average more progress in English and Maths than similar pupils nationally, which is a very strong result showing our longstanding commitment to "every pupil, every subject, every grade".

China Exchange

18 pupils visited China at the start of the summer holiday. As part of the visit the pupils lived with Chinese families in Shanghai. The trip was a wholehearted success and we will be updating parents and pupils in more detail in the latest copy of Accent.

New Teaching Staff

We would like to welcome Miss Pye (ML), Mrs Jones and Miss Middlemiss (Maths), Mr Hudson (Science), and Mr Machin (PE) to the teaching staff. This means that we are fully staffed at a time of a major teaching recruitment crisis nationally particularly in the South East. We have been very pro-active, been closely involved in the teaching training scheme, The Warwick Partnership, and managed to recruit at an early stage in the last academic year. Congratulations to Mr Hearnden and his wife, whose baby arrived just before the beginning of term, and so we are making adjustments to the Science timetable for him and for Ms Sheikh who is ill.



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Sponsored Walk

The school is organising a Sponsored Walk for Friday 29th September and a separate letter will be sent out giving more information about this event. We normally stage the walk every two years. The aim of this year's walk is to raise money for a new lightweight minibus which will allow a wide range of staff to drive rather than the driver restrictions associated with standard minibuses. This should benefit every pupil whilst they are at Ashcombe. The new bus will cost £25,000 and we are hoping that the walk will offer an opportunity to raise a substantial amount of this money. Sponsorship will be able to be donated online at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/ashcombe-trust/minibus-appeal>, or you can also text ABUS17 £10 to 70070 or whatever amount you wish. We are looking for parent volunteers to help with the administration of the day. Please contact Mr Panting on panting.chris@ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk if you are able to help on the day.

Careers Fair

The annual Careers Fair takes place on Monday 18th September and will start at 6pm. All Year 9 to Upper 6th pupils and parents are welcome and we will be sending out specific details about the event. We have an exciting array of exhibitors and it has been particularly pleasing to hear of the growing number of pupils who are following pathways that were first triggered at the fair. For example, one of our successful A-Level pupils is about to start University in Holland after meeting a Dutch University in school. We are still interested in hearing from volunteers who are willing to help with the event. Please do contact Mr Panting on panting.chris@ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk if you are available to help. We would urge you all to come, ask questions and seek advice.

PTA Quiz Night

This will take place on Friday 29th September, 8.00-10.30pm in the Ranmore Hall, and all parents are very welcome. Please see attached flyer for more information.

Frontier and Office 365

We have made some changes to our online virtual learning provision this summer. We have moved to Office 365 away from our previous online resource facility, Frontier. All pupils will have a new OneDrive/Office 365 account which will allow them to store their electronic files online.

Cashless Catering - low balance email alert

ParentPay have introduced a new feature: low balance alerts. You can receive:

- an alert when your child's balance runs low
- an alert when you have something new to pay for

Here's how to set-up Alerts: Simply go to Profile > Alert settings > Select the type of Alert (low balance and/or new item) and then select how you want to receive alerts, email and/or SMS Text. Email alerts are free of charge. If you opt for SMS text alerts there is a small charge per text.

To set up alerts and check your balance - Visit ParentPay

at https://www.parentpay.com/?utm_source=email&utm_campaign=alerts&utm_term=parents

Building works and projects

We are currently fitting new window frames in the Bradley Building, the canteen and the Ranmore Study Centre. They will greatly enhance the environment once completed. There will be a degree of disruption over the next few months but we are confident this will not impact upon the learning of the pupils. Very frustratingly, the contractors have discovered that 60 years

ago when the frames were being fitted and screwed into the surrounding brickwork that, rather than using a Rawlplug or equivalent, the fitters used tiny amounts of asbestos paste. This has meant using specialised contractors to remove the frames safely before the new windows are then fitted in the usual way. This means that the project is going to take longer than originally planned, but detailed plans are in place for re-rooming etc.

Uniform

Many thanks to all who support the uniform rules. Full details of the uniform and equipment expectations can be found on the school website. We hope all pupils will return properly dressed and equipped. Members of the pastoral team will be in touch with parents if there is a concern regarding their child.

Rugby tops are available for purchase from the PTA uniform shop either online or via a paper order form. This academic year 2017/2018 is the final season for the traditional rugby top which is still available in limited sizes. To reflect this the traditional rugby tops are now priced at £5 and preloved at £1 so grab a bargain while stocks last. The new style rugby top, which will be the only style allowed from September 2018, is also available in all sizes for £22.

Communication with school

I am aware that many parents choose to communicate with the school via email. Please be aware that staff have teaching commitments and other duties during the school day and often may only be able to respond to you after school hours. If the matter is very URGENT and you need a quick response from a member of staff, please telephone and we will do what we can to help.

I hope you have had a good summer and look forward to a productive Autumn Term.

Yours sincerely,



D.J.Blow
Headteacher