

23 October 2008

Dear Parents/Guardians

In some ways it scarcely seems a moment since term began; in others, it feels as though we have been back for months. I am sure that parents will agree that the first half-term of the year has flown by. It has been a busy time, but also a highly enjoyable one, with lots of exciting events.

Exam results

We have now largely completed our analysis of the summer exam results. With 79% of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade C or better, we are delighted overall, both with the achievement of our most recent cohort of leavers and with the improvement compared to the previous year. However, we are also acutely conscious that there is room for further improvement.

Having examined the results in great detail and having discussed them with governors and the Local Authority, we are now using them to help us adjust our plans for the year ahead.

Year 9 SATs

As you will have heard in the press, the government has announced that Year 9 students will not sit SAT tests this summer. We have not had time to plan a detailed response to this change – we will need to consider how we can continue to obtain the benefits that the tests provided (practice in exam technique, information to support the setting process and a focus for the end of the year). However, overall we are very pleased with this development and believe that students will be better off as a result.

Training as a teacher

In common with other schools, we want to encourage people to consider a career in teaching. Teaching is the most wonderfully rewarding profession and it is never too late to start!

We want to attract the very best people to work at Crofton School and so we will be starting a new teacher training programme next September. The Graduate Teacher Programme allows people of all ages to become teachers whilst working full-time at school.

There will be an Open Day for anyone interested in the scheme on Friday 14 November. If you have a degree and would like to know more about the scheme, or to visit us on the 14th, please contact Mrs Hlavaty, who is our Professional Tutor, (b.hlavaty@crofton.hants.sch.uk) for more details.

Crofton School Association (CSA)

The Annual General Meeting of the CSA was held on 8 October. The CSA has worked very effectively over a number of years, organising social events and raising money for the

school. It is enjoyable but demanding work and so it was delightful to see so many new faces at the meeting – there was a real sense of enthusiasm and optimism.

We have exciting plans for all sorts of events in the coming months – more details will follow shortly. If you would like to get involved, do please get in touch – it is a really good way of helping the school and also of getting to know other parents. The Chair of the CSA is Heather Mullen – she can be contacted via csa@crofton.hants.sch.uk.

One of their new projects is a raffle, with the draw to be held at the Christmas pantomime on 12 December. They would be very grateful for any offers of prizes and can be contacted via the email address above.

The CSA will be hosting a party for parents of Year 7 students on Wednesday 17 December – please put the date in your diary and watch out for more information nearer the time.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Resourced Provision

I hope that you received my letter about this proposal. In case you did not, I should mention that the Governing Body and Headteacher are in discussion with Hampshire County Council over a proposal to establish specialist provision at the school for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, or ASD. The project would entail the construction of a specially designed, single storey facility within the school grounds for use by up to 12 young people, between the ages of 11 and 16. They would attend Crofton as full time students.

A process of public consultation will take place during October and November 2008, should the Council agree to the project in principle. You may wish to be aware that the first stage of the consultation process will offer you the opportunity to comment on the proposals; we will be holding a public meeting at the school on Thursday 13 November 2008.

We believe that this is a really exciting proposal and offers us the chance to improve our school, as well as an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those students who would join us. However, we are anxious to hear from all interested parties and to take account of the widest possible range of views.

Charities Week

As I write this letter, Charities Week is in full swing. I had not experienced this unique Crofton phenomenon before but I had heard a great deal about it. Mr Milliken and his team are clearly working very hard to make it a success and I am profoundly grateful to them – the week is a vital feature of the life of the school.

Please note that Friday 24 October will be a non-uniform day in support of 'Jeans for Genes'. We hope that students will wear their jeans but it is in every other respect a standard non-uniform day.

Access to tutor rooms

In my last letter, I wrote about ways in which we were hoping to increase students' access to tutor rooms at lunchtimes. I am delighted to report that the arrangements we put in place at the start of September have been highly successful – students have generally been extremely sensible and rooms have been left in good condition for afternoon lessons.

Following suggestions by a number of students we have also been able to open the hall, with an additional serving point for lunches. This, too, seems to have worked very well – it has been great to see students enjoying the opportunity to sit with friends from other tutor groups.

I am proud of the way our students have responded to these changes. Such open access would not be possible in every school – it is a real testament to their maturity and sense of responsibility that it has worked so well here.

Cycle safety

Many thanks for your support over the introduction of compulsory cycle helmets. The overwhelming majority of students now have them and I am certain that they are safer as a result.

However, I continue to receive comments and complaints from our neighbours around the village about our students' safety on the journey to and from school. They point out that some students do not wear their helmets; they also regularly describe careless or irresponsible behaviour by both pedestrians and by cyclists. Please discuss road safety with your son/daughter – I remain worried that some students put themselves at risk by their own behaviour.

Parking

Parking and traffic are perennial problems at many schools. I know that parents do their very best to be considerate to each other and to local residents. However, I have received a request from residents of Marks Road for parents not to leave cars there or to block entrances. Many thanks.

Important forthcoming events

It has been lovely to see so many parents at the information evenings we have run for each year group. Do, please, make a note of the dates of the events below.

Year 8 Information Evening – 6 November, 7pm
Year 7 Parent Consultation – 18 November, 3.30pm
Christmas Concerts – 9 and 10 December, from 7pm

Important calendar changes

My July letter contained an error regarding dates – there is no INSET day on 4 April (it is a Saturday) but there is one on 20 April 2009. Sorry.

Autumn Term

Half-term: 27 – 31 October
End of term: 19 December

Spring Term

5 January – 3 April
Half-term: 16 – 20 February

Summer Term

21 April – 22 July
Half-term: 25 – 29 May

INSET days, 2008-9

3 November, 29 and 30 January, 20 April

I hope you have a highly enjoyable half-term holiday.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Leeming
Headteacher