

Our ref: MLG/ADL/Parent Letter/January 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians

Happy New Year! I hope that this letter finds you and your family well and thoroughly refreshed by the Christmas holiday. It has been delightful to welcome all our students back and to be looking forward to a busy and enjoyable term.

I hope that you were not too inconvenienced by our closure last week (and that you received notice of the closure in good time, either via BBC Radio Solent or via our website). It was simply impossible to get enough staff in to guarantee the safety of students.

I would like to thank the dozen parents and governors who so nobly came into school on Monday to help shovel snow. Your efforts were really very much appreciated.

### **2 years on**

This January is the beginning of my 3<sup>rd</sup> year at the school. I would like to say at this point how much I have enjoyed working at Crofton and to thank everyone who has made me feel so welcome and so supported.

You may remember that we have agreed the kind of school we want to become. This is a summary:

#### Our vision for the future

*We want to become an outstanding school, at which:*

- ❖ *There is no bullying or unkindness; people are allowed to be themselves*
- ❖ *All students make impressive progress*
- ❖ *Students' individual needs are carefully identified, understood and catered for*
- ❖ *The curriculum is relevant, ambitious, varied and stimulating; science has a special place in it and permeates the whole life of the school*
- ❖ *Students become autonomous, independent learners*
- ❖ *Students become good citizens, aware of their responsibilities and rights*
- ❖ *Learning is genuinely valued and genuinely fun; students and staff are expert at it*
- ❖ *Everyone (students, staff, parents and friends) feels valued and included*
- ❖ *Students are well-prepared for adult life in a time of rapid and unpredictable change*

This list is a bit long to remember off by heart and so we have been encouraging students to think of it in this more manageable way:

#### **Be kind; Be curious; Always try your best**

I would like to say a quick word here about the first point. We really want to become a school which is famous for the quality of relationships that exist between students – where bullying is unknown and where every student goes out of their way to brighten the days of those around them.

This is ambitious, I know. It will only happen if every student is committed to it and, also, if we know when things are not going well. If your son or daughter is having a hard time, PLEASE tell us. We do not want anyone to suffer in silence; we want every student to enjoy every day they spend with us. We can usually solve problems between students quite quickly if we know about them; we can do nothing if we do not know.

As a parent, I know that it can be hard to get this right. Children need to be resilient and to learn to stand up for themselves; they (and we) need to see the difference between a short-term unkindness or a falling-out among friends and the sustained, deliberate cruelty we call bullying. Students will sometimes choose to deal with unkindness themselves; sometimes they will tell you but not want to tell us; sometimes they will tell us themselves. As a 'rule of thumb' though, if a problem has gone on for more than a week or two without improvement or if your son/daughter is very unhappy I would urge you to let us know. We really want to help.

### **Contacting you by email**

We now have the technology necessary to send out school information by email. We would like to move gradually to electronic communication with you because it is both more reliable and better for the environment.

We would like to use email for a limited range of purposes:

- A half-termly newsletter (to replace this letter and to include more news about the school and its students)
- Reminders about parents evenings and other whole-school or whole-year events
- Emergency messages (eg about school closures, or changes of dates)

We promise not to inundate you with 'spam'!

As I write, we have only 454 email addresses for the 800 or so families with children at the school. We would very much like to be able to reach everyone who has a connection! If you have not already provided your email address and would like to do so, please return the form below.

### **"Home Access"**

**FREE COMPUTERS!** It sounds too good to be true but, as far as we can tell, it isn't. 'Home Access' is a new government scheme intended to make sure that every child in the country has a computer at home with broadband access to the internet.

Home Access grants will cover the cost of a computer with software, 1 year's internet access, service and support and parental control software.

If you have a child in school years 3-9 you may be eligible. Eligibility is based on family income – if your child is entitled to free school meals you will almost certainly qualify for a Home Access grant; you may qualify even if your income is a little higher than that.

I hope that this scheme really is as good as it sounds. The person at Crofton who knows most about it is our Extended Services Co-ordinator, Anita Sloan – do, please, feel free to contact her via the school office for more details.

The Home Access website for parents [www.homeaccess.org.uk](http://www.homeaccess.org.uk)

If you think you might be eligible for a Home Access grant simply call the Home Access Grant Helpline on 0333 200 1004 to get an application form.

### **Parent Support Workshops**

The TEEN Positive Parenting Programme will be run by Lisa Dalglish, our Parent Support Adviser, at Neville Lovett School starting on Tuesday 12 January 2010 (12.30pm – 2.30pm) for 9 weeks. Please contact Lisa for further information or to book a place on the course on (07867) 970024 or email: [lisdalglish@hants.gov.uk](mailto:lisdalglish@hants.gov.uk).

### **Attendance**

As you can probably imagine, we, the local authority and the DCSF keep a close eye on our attendance figures. Recent data from the DCSF shows that our overall attendance is a little lower than we would hope and also that we have more 'persistently absent' students than other schools like us (defined as 85% attendance or lower).

Of course, every student is an individual and there are often unavoidable reasons for missing school. However, the link between attendance and achievement is known to be very, very strong and I would like to urge all parents to try to ensure that their children are at school every day. We have dozens of students with 99 or 100% attendance - missing even a single day affects students' progress.

### **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Resourced Provision**

I am sure that you will remember that we will be building a new resourced provision for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Construction of the new building (which we will be calling "The Croft") is expected to begin at the end of January, ready for the beginning of September 2010. We hope that the construction phase will not inconvenience students or visitors too much and we are very much looking forward to welcoming our first students later this year.

### **Crofton School Association**

As I hope you know, we are very well supported by a highly dedicated team of kind parents and friends who organise events, provide refreshments and help us to raise funds. The Crofton School Association has a long and illustrious history and we are all truly grateful for the work they do.

The CSA Committee feel, however, that it is time for a change of name. As such, they have decided to re-launch themselves as the Crofton School Parent-Teachers' Association (or PTA), with a new email address of [pta@crofton.hants.sch.uk](mailto:pta@crofton.hants.sch.uk)

Their next major event will be a bingo night on Friday 12 March. More details will be available shortly but please do consider coming along and put the date in your diary now. We REALLY want the school to be a welcoming and happy place and for you and the whole of your family to feel part of the wider Crofton family.

The next meeting of the PTA will be at 7pm on Wednesday 10 February. We are always absolutely delighted to see new faces.

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### **Artificial pitch**

Regular readers of these letters will remember that we have been trying to develop a project for an artificial pitch at the school. It would be fantastic to have such a facility – at present our field (which suffers from poor drainage) is unusable for much of the year.

As you may know, we have secured planning permission. Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find sufficient funding – even if we are successful in our bid to the Football Foundation and even if we commit more of our own (very limited) capital reserves to it, we are still between £100,000 and 200,000 short.

We have worked long and hard with Crofton Saints Football Club to try to find the shortfall, without success. It is an awful lot of money, but I am hoping that there might be someone out there with a bright idea about how we might raise it. If you have any suggestions do, please, get in touch.

### **Admissions**

We wish to advise parents that the County Council is consulting with parents on how it processes in-year admissions from September 2010. The consultation can be accessed on Hampshire County Council's website, <http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/admissions/consultation-admission-arrangements>

### **Important forthcoming events**

**\*\*Date change** – in response to suggestions from parents, the Year 8 Parent Consultation will now be on **Thursday 22 April 2010** instead of Thursday 1 July 2010.

12 January – **Year 8** Science Information Evening – from 4pm  
From 14 January – **Year 11** Science exams  
26 January – **Year 7** Science Information Evening – from 4pm  
28 January – **Year 9** Parent Consultation – from 3.30pm  
29 January – **INSET day** – school closed for students  
11 February – **Year 9** Upper School Courses Evening – from 7pm

### **Spring Term**

4 January – 1 April 2010

**Half-term:** 15 – 19 February 2010

### **Summer Term**

20 April – 23 July 2010

**Half-term:** 31 May – 4 June 2010

### **INSET days, 2010**

29 January 2010  
19 April 2010  
9 July 2010

Yours faithfully

Matthew Leeming  
Headteacher

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Name of student(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor group(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' email address: \_\_\_\_\_