

Dear Parents/Guardians

Headteacher's letter to parents, May 2009

I hope that this letter finds you and your family well and happy.

The term has started really well, with our students well-settled and focused. It is an important, exciting and thought-provoking time at school – students in Year 11 are facing their exams and the immediate prospect of leaving us, while younger students also face tests of one kind and another.

Year 11s will be going on study-leave on Tuesday 12 May – Year 11 parents should by now have received a detailed letter about the arrangements for their departure, for revision sessions, exams and results collection. I would like to take the opportunity of this letter to repeat our good wishes towards these students and their families – we are immensely proud of the year group and very confident on their behalf. For some families, this summer marks the end of their close association with Crofton School – I very much hope that you will continue to feel that you remain valued members of the Crofton family and that you will stay in touch.

Work experience

As I write, Year 10 students are about to finish their first week of work experience. Staff have been busy visiting – I am delighted to report that the employers we are speaking to have been overwhelmed by the maturity and attitude of their temporary colleagues from Crofton. I am so happy to be associated with our students – they are consistent and reliable in their ability to impress people who meet and work alongside them for the first time.

As you can imagine, it is always a challenge to find enough work experience placements. If you are in a position to offer such a placement at your work place, we would love to hear from you – although we organise most of our placements through Portsmouth Education Business Partnership, it is really useful to have a list of extra ones for emergency use. Please email me at school@crofton.hants.sch.uk if you are able to help.

The House System

As you may have heard, we are planning to reactivate our house system from September 2010. We want to increase students' sense of belonging; we want to encourage competition and we want to provide more opportunities for students to take up positions of responsibility.

There will be 4 houses; 2 tutor groups in each year will be allocated to each one. I am delighted to say that Mrs Evans, Mr Hiscock, Mr Sykes and Miss Watson have kindly volunteered to be our heads of house (but we very much hope that students will take leading roles in all house activities).

The vital question of house names is before us. We have invited all students, governors and staff to put suggestions forward and I would like to extend this opportunity to parents, too. As an incentive, we are offering a prize for the winning idea – if the person who suggests it is an adult, the prize will be a £25 donation to a charity of your choice.

Please give the problem some thought and send your ideas in – Mr Naylor is leading the project and will be delighted to hear from you. Again, the easiest route is via school@crofton.hants.sch.uk – the closing date is 18 May.

Kirkland Rowell Survey

Many thanks to all those parents who have already returned the survey forms that came home on Friday (1 May). It is really important that we get a good number back – we want to use your opinions as we plan school improvement and we need a representative sample. If you have not yet had a chance to return yours, please do so as soon as you can – we will be sending them off for analysis next week.

The Croft

Plans for the construction of our new centre for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are progressing well – subject to planning permission, we hope that work will begin in October. It will replace the near-derelict single-storey building at the front of the school.

We have decided to call it 'The Croft' – we want to make it clear that it is a fully-integrated part of our school; we also want it to be thought of as a welcoming and secure place.

As a community, we will spend time during 2009/10 learning more about ASD – there will be opportunities for parents to be involved in what we are convinced will be an exciting improvement to our school – watch this space.

Medication

I would like to remind all parents that we need to have your written consent for the administration of all medicines, including painkillers. We take our duty of care for our students very seriously and we need to be absolutely certain about who can take what – there simply cannot be any exceptions or special cases.

If you have any questions about medical care at the school, do please get in touch with Caroline Pinder, our Welfare Officer.

Home access

In my last letter, I was pleased to report that we had at last been able to make students' progress and attendance data available online. You may remember that I mentioned a succession of technical problems – it may not surprise you to learn that we had some more almost immediately and had to take the system offline for more than a week. As I write, we are almost ready to 'go live' once more – I really hope that no further problems will afflict us.

Parents can gain access to the SERCO system where the data is held via our school website. You should already have received a letter explaining what to do; this letter also invited you to come to school to collect your unique user ID and password from reception. We also asked that you bring proof of your identity (a driving licence or passport, ideally).

We hope that you will find the new facility useful.

Crofton School Association

Inspired by the success of our Bingo Night, the association's next ventures include a car boot sale and a quiz night. We would love to hear from anyone who is able to help with either.

The Car Boot Sale is provisionally arranged for Sunday 5 July. The aim is to raise money to support the school – CSA are particularly interested in improving the stage and seating in the main hall. We need people to publicise the event; to help marshalling and directing traffic; to help with refreshments and to help clear up afterwards. Please feel free to help all morning; however, even the odd hour would be very much appreciated.

The date for the quiz night is not yet confirmed. However, please let us know if you would be able to help either with question setting or refreshments or bar-tending on the night. The contact, as ever, is csa@crofton.hants.sch.uk.

The Paris Marathon

I am delighted to report that we all made it round ! I am also pleased to say that we enjoyed ourselves enormously and have returned to school uninjured. I would like to thank all those parents and staff who sponsored us – we do not yet have a final total but will certainly be in a position to make a substantial contribution to our 3 charities.

Swine flu

A couple of parents have asked about the school's position on the swine flu epidemic. We have been advised that there is no need to adjust school routines at this time; we have also been asked to ask parents to alert us immediately if they, their children or any member of the family is suspected of having contracted the disease.

The situation is changing continuously – I will keep you informed.

Summer Term dates

Half-term: 25 – 29 May
Year 8 Parent Consultation: 30 June
Summer Concerts: 8 and 9 July
Year 10 Parent Consultation: 14 July
The Crofton Debate: 16 July
End of term: 22 July

Yours faithfully

Matthew Leeming
Headteacher