

Our ref: MLG/ADL/Headteacher letter/September 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians

I hope you and your family enjoyed a relaxing and refreshing summer break. Our new term is now well under way and we have thoroughly enjoyed welcoming our students back for the new term. Our new Year 7 students seem to have settled in exceptionally well and there is a settled and focused atmosphere throughout the school.

Exam results

As you may have seen in the local newspapers, we were delighted by the exam results of many of our students this year. Results day was a very happy occasion, with much celebration and relief and with the overwhelming majority of students securely qualified for the courses or occupations they are now moving on to.

We were particularly happy for the 11 students who achieved A or A* grades in every exam that they took and for the 37 who achieved 5 or more grade A passes. We were equally pleased for the dozens of others who had worked hard to achieve or exceed their target grades.

Results were particularly strong this year in the arts subjects, in GCSE PE and in languages. We were also very happy to see that there was little or no difference in the performance of boys and girls, which is quite unusual.

However, we were somewhat disappointed at the performance of the year group as a whole. 138 (64%) of them achieved the "gold standard" of 5 or more A*-C GCSEs (including English and maths); this was fewer than we expected or hoped for. As you can imagine, we are now looking closely at the results of every student in every subject to analyse what went wrong and to decide what we can do to ensure improved performance next year. Governors will be meeting with the Senior Leadership Team this week to agree a modified action plan.

One factor which has already become clear is the impact of the progress students made in Years 7-9. This particular year group was the last to do the Year 9 SATs and their results in those tests (2 years ago) had been low, by the normal standards of the school. This confirms the vital importance of progress in every year the students are with us; it is clearly not enough to work hard only in Years 10 and 11.

Students in the new Year 11 have also received intermediate exam results in several subjects. If you have any questions about what these results mean, please get in touch – the teacher of the subject concerned will be the best person to contact in the first instance.

Holiday absence

One of the many messages to emerge from the analysis of the exam results is the vital importance of good attendance. We were already aware of this link between attendance and GCSE results; governors discussed this issue last year and have taken the decision that the school will no longer authorise holiday absence for students in Years 10 and 11, except in the most unusual circumstances. While we understand the financial incentive to book holidays in term time, we are absolutely convinced that they have a negative effect on exam results.

For any term-time holiday absences, students **must** see Mr Naylor, in the first instance. He is usually in his office at afternoon registration.

New term reminders

The start of the school year sometimes comes as a bit of a culture shock – we are keen that students settle into a routine as quickly as possible.

Could I ask that all parents:

- Check and return their data collection sheet (*this will be sent home via your child in the next couple of weeks*) – we are particularly keen to receive up-to-date email addresses as we are using email more and more (**this will be the last Headteacher's Letter to come out to everyone in paper form – if you would like to continue to receive a paper copy, please contact Reception**); an up-to-date mobile phone number will ensure that you receive important text messages.
- If your daughter/son is in Year 7-9, they will have been given a Curriculum Booklet full of information about the year ahead. Please ask them to show it to you.
- Check students' homework planners once a week and sign to show that you have done so; have a look through the rest of the planner as it too is full of useful information.
- Ensure that you have read and signed the cycle permit page in the planner if your son/daughter will be cycling to school.

- Encourage students to do homework on the evening that it is set.
- Ask your children about targets for the new year – these will be recorded in planners during the next few weeks (except in the case of Year 7, for whom the process will take a little longer).
- Encourage students to go to bed at a sensible time so that they arrive with us fresh and enthusiastic for 8.40am.

Uniform issues

Our students have returned to school looking very smart, in the main, and we are very grateful for parents' support in maintaining high standards in this area. However, I need to remind parents about 3 rules:

- a) skirt length – the school rule is that skirts should be no more than an inch (it's a long-established rule..) above the knee
- b) shoes – shoes must be plain black and must protect the foot properly (please see the website for examples)
- c) jewellery and piercings – students may wear a simple stud in each ear; no other jewellery or piercings are allowed

Please note that school ties can be purchased from the Finance Department at £4.00 each.

Admissions

We will be holding our annual Open Evening for parents of Year 6 students on Thursday 23rd September 2010. Even if you already have a child at the school, you are most welcome to come and to bring your Year 6 child along – it is a really good opportunity for them to see what the school is like and to help them and you make a good choice regarding their secondary education. The school will be open from 6.45pm until 8.45pm and there will be presentations in the main hall at 7pm and 8pm.

Early finish

In order to allow time for colleagues to set up their displays for the Open Evening, school **will finish at the earlier time of 12.40pm on Thursday 23rd September 2010.**

Trips and visits

We are delighted to be offering a larger number of residential visits this year. However, we know that students cannot expect to take part in everything and so it may be helpful for parents to know everything that will be on offer now, so that they can decide which visit (if any) to take part in.

This year, we are offering:

Destination	Dates	Year group(s)	Approximate cost
Germany – German exchange	September 2010 (annual)	8-10	£200
Osmington Bay, Dorset	October 2010 (annual)	8	£170
Osmington Bay, Dorset	October 2010	9	£170
Battlefields trip, Belgium	February 2011	10	£195
Ski trip	February 2011 (most years)	8-11	£905
Brittany, France	April 2011 (bi-annual)	9	£330
Paris, Futuroscope	July 2011 (annual)	10	£400
Duke of Edinburgh's expeditions (2)	Summer 2011	10	£120
USA – maths/geography	July 2011	8-10	£1475 Fully booked
Tanzania – "World Challenge"	Summer 2012	9, 10	£3200 (students fund-raise)

Please note that as from the 1st October 2010 all cheques for payment of trips etc to the school will need to be made payable to Hampshire County Council (HCC) NOT Crofton School as we are giving up our cheque book status.

Safeguarding

As you may have heard, schools are being encouraged to take additional steps to guarantee students' safety. As such, we are now asking visitors to the school (including parents) to bring some form of identification with them. This is obviously particularly important if you are new to the school. Please don't be offended if reception staff ask for ID – they have been asked to do so so that we can keep all the students safe.

Parent-Teachers' Association

The PTA is a group of very noble parents and friends of the school who organise social events, raise money for extra school equipment and help out at school meetings by providing refreshments and support for staff. They do a fantastic job for us; we hope they also enjoy being closely involved in the life of the school.

The PTA of a secondary school not far from us raised a total of £30,000 last year – this meant the school could re-furbish an entire Food Technology room. We would love to be able to improve our facilities in this way.

We are always keen to involve more parents in the PTA. This may mean helping out once a year with refreshments at a parents' evening; on the other hand, it might mean organising a quiz night, or a sponsored cycle ride. The PTA exists for the benefit of every student and every family, but it needs your support.

The PTA Annual General Meeting takes place on Thursday 14 October, beginning at 7pm. 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 PTA will be elected at the Annual General Meeting – the existing team can be contacted via pta@crofton.hants.sch.uk.

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 participate in the Graduate Teacher Programme – this scheme allows people of all ages to become teachers whilst working full-time at school. We are working with the University of Chichester and welcomed our first 2 trainees last year.

There will be an Open Evening for anyone interested in the scheme on Tuesday 12th October 2010. If you have a degree and would like to know more about the scheme, or to visit us on the 12th, please contact Mrs Hlavaty, who is our Professional Tutor, (BHlavaty@crofton.hants.sch.uk [or gtp@crofton.hants.sch.uk]) for more details. There is more information on our website.

Forthcoming events

16 September 2010 – PTA meeting 7pm – all welcome
20 September 2010 – Year 7 Information Evening 7pm
21 September 2010 – Year 11 Information Evening 7pm
23 September 2010 – Open Evening 6.45pm (school finishes at 12.40pm)
27 September 2010 – Year 10 Information Evening 7pm
28 September 2010 – Year 9 Information Evening 7pm ((followed by Residential Briefing Meeting)
29 September 2010 – Year 8 Information Evening 7pm ((followed by Residential Briefing Meeting)
30 September 2010 – Year 7 Parent/Tutor Meeting 3.30-5.30pm

1 and 4 October – INSET days – school closed for students

12 October 2010 – GTP Information Evening 7pm
14 October 2010 – Year 11 Parents' Consultation 3.30-5.30pm
14 October 2010 – PTA AGM 7pm

Autumn Term

Half-term: 25 – 29 October 2010
INSET day: 3 December 2010
End of term: 17 December 2010

Spring Term

4 January – 8 April 2011
INSET day: 28 January 2011
Half term: 21 – 25 February 2011

Summer Term

27 April – 27 July 2011
INSET day: 26 April 2011
Half term: 30 May – 3 June 2011

Everyone at the school is looking forward to an enjoyable and successful year. We hope that your son/daughter will achieve all that they are capable of.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Leeming
Headteacher