

Our ref: ML/AD/Parent Letter/April 2008

April 2008

Dear Parents/Guardians

I hope that you and your family have enjoyed a stimulating and relaxing 'Spring Break'.

The next 8 weeks are the most important time of the school year. Students face public exams and internal assessments; for our most senior students, the results of these exams will sum up the achievements of 12 years of compulsory education. Students and staff need to be absolutely focussed and intolerant of any distraction from the vital business of learning.

It is important to bear in mind the fact that some students will find the exam season (and the thought of leaving the school) very stressful. We need to be alert to their feelings and sympathetic to their needs. If you are worried about your daughter/son, do please get in touch.

### ***Strike action by members of the National Union of Teachers***

Please accept my apologies for the disruption caused by the strike on 24 April. The decision to close the school to students in Years 7-10 was not an easy one, but we were concerned about adequate levels of supervision and students' safety.

I would like to emphasise the fact that this is a national dispute; relations between staff and employers at the school are very good. Crofton teachers are motivated by the best interests of their students and work very hard on their behalf.

### ***School improvement***

With the OFSTED inspection over but with the report very much in our minds, we have begun the process of planning for improvement next year. The resulting plans will be detailed and extensive but will focus on 4 key areas:

- Challenge, variety and pace – we believe that many of our students are achieving at a very high level and we need to make sure they are set tasks which really stretch them
- Intervention – we are interested in improving the systems we have for monitoring students' progress, noticing underachievement and doing something about it
- Autonomy – our students need to be independent learners, taking responsibility for their own success and not waiting to be "spoon-fed"
- Sharing good practice – we know that we have outstanding learning and teaching in some areas of the school and we need to make sure that it is spread

I hope that parents will understand that it will take time for these changes to take effect.

Many parents will be curious about the results of the Kirkland Rowell questionnaire that was sent home last term. When we receive the results I will share them with you.

### ***Jewellery***

Some confusion has arisen about the school's policy on jewellery and body-piercing. I would like to remind all parents and students that we allow one pair of small studs in students' ears but that no other jewellery is allowed. Visible body-piercing is not allowed either – if students are in any doubt about what is acceptable, they MUST ask their Head of Year before they commit themselves.

Interestingly, the Year Councils and Student Leadership Team discussed this issue at the end of last term. They have asked that we consider changes to the rules on ear-rings but they were clear in their view that they do not want to see the school allow other kinds of piercing.

### ***Year 11***

Year 11 students have just a few days left with us. We are all looking forward to the end of year assembly on Tuesday 13 May and to the Prom the following day. I am told that both of these are really enjoyable events and that generations of Crofton students have taken part in them sensibly and with enthusiasm.

I understand that some students used to go into the village after they have finished and throw eggs at each other. I would very much prefer that this does not happen. I think that the risk of injury and the damage to the image of the school are significant and would ask that parents do everything they can to discourage it. Any student who is caught throwing eggs at school or near a road will forfeit their Prom ticket.

### ***Cycle Safety***

As you may know, we are keen to improve students' safety on the journey to and from school. At present, a high proportion of our students cycle – this is something we want to encourage. We also want to make sure that they are safe.

Consultation with the Year Councils has revealed very high levels of resistance to the idea of wearing cycle helmets. Whilst I remain convinced that they improve cyclists' safety and that we should make them compulsory, I do not want to discourage cycling or to be forced to punish large numbers of students for not wearing them. As such, I have delayed our enforcement of the new rule while we organise some convincing cycle-safety education. We plan to run a series of assemblies with the aim of convincing students of the benefits of wearing them.

If any parents have access to resources or experiences that would help us with this campaign I would be delighted to hear from them. A combination of personal experiences, parental support and compelling medical evidence will help us to make the case with some authority.

### ***Important dates***

Tuesday 29 April – Year 7 Parent Consultation (from 3.30pm)  
Wednesday 30 April – INSET day – the school will be closed  
Tuesday 6 – Friday 9 May – Year 9 SATs  
Monday 12 May – Year 10 Work Experience begins (2 weeks)  
Tuesday 13 May – Year 11 Leavers' Day  
Wednesday 14 May – Year 11 Prom  
Tuesday 20 May – Year 9 Parent Consultation (from 3.30pm)

### ***Improving communication***

Many parents have mentioned to us that they would like to see communication with the school improved. If you are reading this letter, it suggests that your son/daughter is a reasonably reliable messenger, but I know that news does not always reach you all.

We hope to develop email communication with all parents in the medium-term. In the mean time, we will be conducting a trial of some new software that allows text messaging from schools to parents' mobile phones. I hope that this trial will begin on 7 May and will be based on the contact details which we currently hold.

We intend to use the facility sparingly. We will start by sending out reminders about school events such as Parent Consultations; we may also use it to alert parents about letters like this one! I hope that you will feel that it is a useful additional link between home and school.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Leeming  
Headteacher