



Oakhyrst Grange School

PREPARATORY SCHOOL FOR BOYS & GIRLS

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HEADMASTER: MR. ALEX GEAR B.Ed

1st December 2020

Dear Parents

In this very unusual term it is pleasing to report that nearly all of the children are back at school and that things are, as far as is possible, back to normal. The new normal means working in bubbles both in and outside of the classroom. It means two sittings for lunch and as far as the day to day routines, we are doing our very best to keep things safe while at the same time letting the children enjoy themselves. To this end, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs Sophie Farrington who has joined us to assist Mr Buchala with the health and safety cleaning protocols. She has already settled in incredibly well as a new and important member of our team. It is with sadness that I have to report that one of our much loved Lunchtime Supervisors, Mrs Noble, has resigned because of health concerns. We expect this to be a short term goodbye and hope to see Mrs Noble again in the near future.

A word of thanks to our wonderful PFOG team who despite the lack of opportunities remain constantly there in the background and in support of the school. A special word for the gallant and hardy team of parents who assist at drop off every morning and in all winds and weathers. The work that they do is invaluable. Thank you most sincerely to the team of 12. Thank you to Mrs McCoy for continuing to lead our PFOG team and to Mrs Murphy for leading a very special team of 12.

There was the usual excitement around the School Council Elections. The Class Representatives were all voted in and Finn K, was elected as this year's Chair and Millie J and Charlie S were elected as Vice-Chairs. The School Council as with the Government are having a series of much smaller meetings and some of them online. They have produced an Advent Calendar style series of activities for the whole school to participate in during December. The children actually produced a video and this has been shared with all of the children in their respective classes. I am very proud of their talent and their initiative.

We were able to hold the Inter-House Cross Country Championships and the children participated with great enthusiasm. The pupils who both ran and became spectators for each race cheered everyone from first to last with equal gusto. We will be announcing the House winner at what we hope will be our usual and annual Prize Giving in the summer. Here's hoping.

Years 2, 3 and 4 have all held their own Form Assemblies. Unfortunately, there were no parents in attendance but I have to tell you that the Class Teachers and pupils delivered the usual high standard of presentation. When we arrived at the Harvest Festival time, Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 each had their own Harvest Assemblies in their own twin bubbles. They were lovely and our tradition was upheld. The whole school got together by way of generous donation of food and produce that Mrs Carter delivered to the Caterham Food Bank. Once again thank you for your generosity.

Years 5 and 6 produced a very moving and thought provoking Remembrance Assembly. A special mention to the Year 5 pupils. We observed the annual two-minute silence, impeccably. Mr Gardner and Finn K, played the last post and reveille from the school roof above the office. Our neighbours commented on how wonderful it was to hear the haunting notes being played at 11.00am on Remembrance Day. This year we collected a record £246.90 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. Once again I thank you for your generosity. It seems fitting that we should break the record in this year of all years.

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow

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We also made a collection of new gifts that were donated to the Salvation Army for distribution. Once again thank you all for your generosity. Our thanks also to Mrs Baker for organising this.

For the first time we are having two Nativities. The Early Years, KG and LKG classes produced a splendid Nativity called The Christmas Story. The recording will be available shortly. The second Nativity is scheduled for Friday 4th December and Years 1 and 2 will be performing their version of A Miracle in Town. Once again there will a recording available.

There will be the usual Christmas parties for the children, this time in bubbles and we will be enjoying a Christmas lunch in two sittings. Our Carol Service this year will be for Years 3 to 6 and will be after school outside on the tennis court in front of a specially constructed Christmas Tree. Samuel M has been chosen as the Once in Royal soloist and there will be two readings by Healy D and Arya P. There will be a short collection of carols performed by separate classes and by the assembled children.

The Year 6 children were busy taking the first set of entrance examinations using the ISEB online programmes. Examinations were taken in English and Verbal Reasoning followed by Maths and Non-Verbal Reasoning. Caterham School candidates were all interviewed in zoom meetings by staff members from Caterham. After Christmas there will be more examinations here at Oakhyrst online and on paper as well as some examinations that the children will take at potential next schools. My congratulations to the children for remaining calm and collected at this most difficult of all times. It is a question of keeping concentration and effort levels high, while remaining calm. I would like to thank Mrs Harbott for her highly professional dedication in preparing the children for their assessments. This work continues. A special word of thanks for Mrs Pattison, Headmistress of Croydon High and Miss Rose, one of our Governors in helping to prepare the children for their interviews.

I pray that you will all have a very happy and safe family Christmas. This is going to be a very unique and difficult Christmas for many families. I know that the New Year will bring many challenges, but I believe in my heart that the future is rainbow coloured. Let us all be optimistic at this difficult time.

With season's best wishes and greetings.

Mr Alex Gear
Headmaster