



Friday 1st September 2017

Dear Parents,

I do hope that you have had a good summer and that the break from the usual routine has given plenty of opportunities for your family to relax, unwind and recharge. It was great to see many of the girls during the summer at the Drama School and the Summer Camp, both of which were very well attended.

As we approach the start of the new academic year next week, I wanted to write to welcome you all back to St Hilda's for what promises to be another exciting year and to update you on various matters for the year ahead.

We are especially looking forward to welcoming our new Nursery and Reception girls, together with some new faces higher up the School. The gates open as usual at 8.20am on Wednesday 6th September and the doors for Nursery, Reception and Form I will open at 8.30am. Please can girls take all of their belongings into their new classroom where staff will be waiting to greet them.

The outside of St Hilda's has undergone some transformation over the break, with a new canopy installed at the back of the stage, a wonderful sail on the field, kindly donated by the leaving Form VI parents, and the artificial grass which is a wonderful new addition to the green space. I am most grateful to all of you and to FOSH for your generosity in providing this, together with benches, planters and other equipment, which will enable the girls to access the field during the winter months.

On the staffing front, we welcome back Mrs Wallace who has been on maternity leave during the previous academic year. Mrs Wallace will be teaching the Reception class on Thursday and Friday. Mrs Matthews will be working in the EYFS department for the coming academic year, in the Nursery for morning sessions and in Reception for the afternoon.

We are pleased to announce improved times for our Breakfast Club facility and After School Club. Breakfast Club will now commence at 7.30am each day, and is now also open to Nursery and Reception girls. Mrs Matthews will be supervising Breakfast Club from the start of term and we hope that this change will give parents, who need to get off promptly to work, added time in their schedule. After School Club will also be extended until 6pm from the start of term. Again, we hope that this will provide parents, especially those who are travelling at busy times, with greater flexibility. For both ends of the day, there will be no charge for Breakfast Club and After School Care from the start of term.

Looking ahead, we are also pleased to be bringing back the opportunity for boys to join our Nursery, a tradition that was maintained up until the late 1980s. We will be advertising for boys to join our Nursery class only, from September 2018. This has followed the recent closure of other settings in Harpenden and parental feedback from families with boys and girls, who have sometimes faced dilemmas of separating siblings prior to Reception.

As always, we seek to listen to parent feedback and the coming year will see the introduction of a new scheme designed to facilitate further opportunities for parents to raise matters freely. We are hosting two 'Parent Forum' mornings each term, to which a class or two will be invited for coffee with senior staff and myself. The first Parent Forum will be held on 20th September.

Following on from this, we will be sending out our annual parent questionnaire during the Autumn Term. Whilst we have usually done this in previous years during the summer term, we have chosen this time of the year to enable new parents to give feedback at the start of their time with us.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Marc Bignell, father of last year's Head Girl, is joining our Board of Governors. Marc has enjoyed a close association with St Hilda's through his two daughters and we are delighted that he will be able to offer his expertise and experience of the School in this capacity.

As usual, we will be holding an Open Morning on Thursday, 5th October, during the normal school day. This term, we will be holding an additional themed Open Morning on Saturday, 4th November where we hope to offer a variety of activities to which your girls, and prospective pupils, are invited. Further details will be sent in due course.

On Monday, as part of our INSET programme, staff will be undertaking Forest School training in association with Harpenden Town Council. Whilst we are not blessed with a woodland environment, many of the activities that are promoted through the Forest School initiative can be achieved within our setting and we will be seeking to widen the curriculum opportunities the girls have to expand their outdoor learning. We hope to introduce Forest School activities for all classes within the School, during this academic year. Further details of the Forest School initiative can be found here <http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/>.

Online safety and staying safe are two hugely important areas and I wanted to give advance notice for your diary of two events we are running this term to heighten the girls' awareness of these issues. The NSPCC Childline Service will be undertaking separate assemblies for Junior and Senior girls from Form I upwards on Friday 22nd September. They will then be returning on Friday 29th September to undertake workshops with Forms V and VI. On 14th November, we will be visited by Teresa Hughes, a consultant and former police detective specialising in online safety issues, who will spend the afternoon and evening speaking to girls, staff and parents about smart technology and internet safety. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend this evening event, which will give you the most up to date information about this fast moving area which causes so much concern. Having recently attended an excellent course run by Teresa, I can thoroughly recommend her approach, integrity and knowledge.

Finally, a practical question that many parents ask is regarding school uniform at the start of term, when the weather is often still warm. For consistency, please can girls wear winter uniform at the start of term. If we have exceptionally warm weather for a prolonged period, as happened last year, we will contact you to let you know if summer uniform can be worn.

I look forward to working with you in the coming year.

With best wishes

Mr Dan Sayers
Headmaster