



30th January 2012

Dear Parents,

A cold Siberian snap might loom on the immediate horizon but this has been a term rich in endeavour, briskness and warmth thus far. My own best efforts to get ahead of myself for the start of term were thwarted by a very unwelcome festive virus just after Christmas and I rather feel I have been battling to catch up and clear the mountain of paper and commitments since. However, I can see some day light and with the evenings starting to get a little longer, too, we can sense lots of spring time optimism to come (even if it does snow beforehand!).

We've had a superb response to my advertisement for a successor to Sue as Assistant Head (Lower School). Amongst nearly fifty applications are seven very strong candidates whom we shall long list interview this week. Alastair Morrison will join us for the short list stage a week later, and we hope to be able to announce a successful appointment by the end of half-term. As a staff we have enjoyed two outstanding INSETs this term in support of our ambition to establish the school as a place utterly committed to enriching the children in and out of the classroom, and developing the highest standards of teaching and learning. The eminent paediatric neurologist, Dr Andrew Curran, a consultant at Alder Hey Hospital, and renowned expert on the role of emotional intelligence in children's learning, captivated his audience of teachers (which included the staff of two other schools whom I invited to join us, one of them a local state infant school). In the past week David Thompson, a leading Educational Consultant with whom we have been working closely for several years, helped us to revisit the essential ingredients of an excellent lesson. With the prospect of our next ISI led school inspection on the immediate horizon this was all good grist to the mill.

Two of my colleagues are preparing with impressive rigour and single mindedness to represent their nation in two forthcoming sporting challenges. Ashleigh Smith is in the USA representing England as they contemplate the Lacrosse World Cup. And Richard Alexander is training furiously with the GB Men's Hockey Squad in preparation for the Olympics. Good luck to them both. Richard was amongst a team of Feltonfleet coaching staff who led an invigorating and energetic Year 1 and 2 hockey coaching session on Friday. We were joined by the girls and boys of one of our favourite feeder schools, The Rowans in Wimbledon. A hot match tea in the dining hall at Calvi concluded an excellent afternoon, but only after Richard had given an astonishing demonstration of his skills to an enthralled gathering of children and parents. Those of you who remember a past colleague, Greg Garner, will be interested to hear that Greg, who left us to become a professional rugby referee with the RFU, will be running the touch line in Dublin when Ireland take on Scotland in the 6 Nations. Our congratulations go to him, and also to a former pupil now in the Upper Sixth at Hampton. Niall Barry has been selected for the USA U-18 rugby side which is playing

Canada next week, and England Schools later this term, an outstanding achievement and probably a first for Feltonfleet. Niall was part of a splendid Year 8 who left us five years ago. Many of them are now distinguished school leaders and contributors in their final year at some of the finest senior schools in the world.

The mild and calm weather which has graced most of the term so far has enabled the children to play some excellent sport at every level of the school. I am sure you follow the results avidly in the weekly newsletter, and many of you are enthusiastic touch line supporters, so I needn't indulge in a detailed dissection here. However, please allow me a special mention of a so far undefeated and excellent 2nd XV. Harry Horstead's leadership of his band of brothers has been stirring and inspirational. Our swimmers have so far won two galas out of two, and the children would be the first to acknowledge that their extraordinary improvements in the pool this year owe everything to the drive, dedication and expertise of our first-class swim coach, Deborah Vine. I know that many of your children supplement their excellent school sporting provision with club sport outside, and it is clear that girls' hockey, in particular, is flourishing because of a combination of some excellent coaching by my colleagues on our own Astro along with the opportunities to develop skills and playing experience at local clubs. Finally, congratulations to Oliver Attard in Year 8 who has been chosen for the Sandown Ski Team which will take part in the British Alpine Racing Championships in Bormio, Italy, at half-term.

There have been a number of other notable and distinguished achievements outside school this term. Oliver Champness, also of Year 8, and a joint Head Chorister at Feltonfleet, has been chosen for the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. He will attend a five day residential course at Easter culminating in an Olympic Gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall on Easter Monday. Magnificent and very exciting. The Senior Choir, of which Oliver is one, sang Mozart's "Jubilate Deo" at our recent Evensong. It was beautifully rendered, and our visitor, the Headmaster of KCS Wimbledon, Andrew Halls, was suitably impressed. Another friend from the senior school world and the Director of Music at Dulwich College, Richard Mayo, will adjudicate our instrumental competition later this term. I dare say that Richard won't be slow in reminding everyone present that not only did he and I once work alongside one another, but he was once one of my pupils at Uppingham, too!

For some of the children in Years 6 and 7 this has been an exacting and challenging time. We have passed through the season of senior school entry tests, and the hiatus which it has become clearly needs some serious and careful contemplation and reflection by the senior schools themselves. The process and the workings of it need to become more streamlined and much less the lottery it is for so many pupils, parents and prep schools. Pleasingly, as the results start to trickle in we are receiving some encouraging news. In one case it has led to an academic scholarship to Guildford High for Jieun Kwon in Year 6. Warmest congratulations to her, and indeed, well done to all the children in Year 6 and 7 who have done their very best this term. I am extremely proud of them all, as I am the young people in Year 8 who are tapering their efforts as they aim at scholarships for their chosen senior schools. We wish them all well.

I am very aware that as the competition for senior schools becomes more apparent, local ones in particular, then we as a school need to revisit all our senior school links, rekindle some which have been less continuous in recent times, and indeed foster connections with schools with whom we might not have a tangible and current association. I have an extensive senior school visits schedule arranged for this term and already I have visited

Brighton College, Kings' Canterbury, Downe House, and St Teresa's. I am very grateful to the many of you who supported the occasion last week when Martin Collier, the Headmaster of St John's and his staff team, led an excellent presentation evening for parents. We need even more of you to support our Senior Schools Fair on March 7th, and I hope you will encourage your friends with children at other schools to come along, too, so we can really swell the numbers. We expect up to fifty senior schools to attend and in every possible way this will help you to widen the net of possible senior school destinations for your child. I do hope that the evening proves useful for you when the time comes. The event takes place in the sports centre (the Bourne Hall).

The same sports centre will provide the venue for two consecutive evenings of drinks parties when Sue and I will welcome you to come and meet the Head elect, Alastair Morrison. They take place at 7.30pm on Monday 6th February (for parents of children in Years 5, 6 and 7), and Tuesday 7th February (for parents of children in Calvi, Years 3 and 4). You have received a letter detailing these evenings, and there have been several reminders in the weekly newsletter. We know already that large numbers are attending so it is imperative that you do inform my PA (lucy.goodall@feltonfleet.co.uk) if you are coming so that we can organise what will be a significant catering operation. Please note. Those who have replied will be issued with a name badge on arrival. No name badge, and it will be a very dry evening for you!

Open Morning falls on Saturday 25th February, and my Deputy, Shelley Guest, will be in touch in due course detailing the arrangements for the morning with instructions for you and your children. Suffice to say that this is an important school event and we ask that all pupils in Years 5 to 8 support us by coming into school that morning. We have been inundated with prospective parents this term and expect many more to come and visit the school on Open Morning. If you have friends who might like to see the school, and in particular on this occasion meet Alastair Morrison who will be with us for the day, do encourage them to come along.

There are school exams for Years 7 and 8 during the week beginning February 6th. Timetables and revision plans have been given to the children, and are on the web site. If your child is uncertain about any aspect of their preparation, do encourage them to talk to their teachers. And finally, another nudge, please, in the direction of school uniform and general appearance. Your support in helping us to keep the children looking tip top is greatly appreciated. Should the inspectors descend on us in the coming weeks I know they will find a school of happy and flourishing young people. If they can look smart and respectable, too, even better!

Thanks as ever for your support.

With best wishes,
Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John', written in a cursive style.