

Our ref: SCW/JB

July 2008

Dear Parents and Guardians

I've met very few of you since I arrived here in early June, but I have been delighted at the warmth of welcome I have received. Some will have heard me speak on Prize Day about the qualities of a good school. I am enjoying watching these qualities emerge at Rossall.

Anyone bringing up a family will know that life is better when children are busy and know what the limits are. Schools are the same, though perhaps we have a wider range of motivations at our disposal to persuade children to work hard and get involved in as many legitimate activities as possible. From our side, as teachers, we then have a chance to admire some aspects of every child, a miserable performance in maths is countered by a fine contribution in netball; a determination to achieve a breakthrough in science, makes up for a string of poor cricket scores. At schools like this we can see a child in the round. Some of my best moments since I arrived have been in the Dining Hall, sitting with strangers, or standing in the games fields, wondering why girls cannot throw! And I had a wonderful two days with the choir in Spain.

Overall, though, however much fun we have in schools, we remain serious places, seriously committed to the academic and pastoral welfare of your children. One of the things we have tried to be serious about is DATES. I wasn't happy, when I arrived, to read the dates for next term; they left us with a very long and potentially exhausting second half of term. Accordingly we have **extended the October half term so that children return to school on Wednesday 29th October** (rather than on the Monday). The term will still finish on Wednesday 17th December. Please observe the published dates. There may, very occasionally, be a reason for returning late or leaving early, but in a school of this kind it is not unreasonable to insist that parents, children, and the school are in agreement about when the term stops and the holiday begins. This applies even in the summer term! If you want an exemption for a special reason you must write to me.

There has been much to admire and much to wonder at in my first five weeks. While I propose to grasp a few more nettles in September you ought to know I'm always keen to hear from you about things we do well or things we could do better. In crude modern parlance we are a customer-service industry and we need customers not to tell us how to do things (staff in schools have their own professional pride, and quite right too!) but to tell us where to improve.

Please read carefully the reports on your sons and daughters. Please go through them with your children, and then do the same again at the end of August.

“Change and decay in all around I see” moans the hymnographer; but new generations of children bring us new hope. They will need to manage without the ministrations of three departing colleagues Sylvia Roberts, Jen Booth and of course John Roberts, the outgoing Head of Geography and Chairman of Common Room. To them our thanks and good wishes; to you all my best wishes for a happy family holiday and some fine examination results.

Yours sincerely

Dr Stephen Winkley