



August 2020

Dear Parents and Pupils,

I hope you have had a fabulous summer and have been able to enjoy the hot weather. I would like to take this opportunity to look forward to Year 6 at Ballard; welcoming you to the Upper Prep section of the School. After such a strange summer term, we are looking forward to a more normal and exciting year ahead, and I would like to inform you of some useful points for the new term (but please bear in mind that some of these things may change as we finalise details for this term).

Over the course of the summer term we were able to organise a number of sessions to help prepare the pupils for their move to Upper Prep, though, of course, under rather different conditions from those we have been used to in the past. These sessions have included working on a Transition Booklet, and it was great for me and the Tutors to meet all the pupils towards the end of the term. We really enjoyed talking and answering questions and having a brief tour of the Senior School. I hope they found it useful. Much thanks to Mr Ridley, Mrs Kingsley-Smith and others who did a wonderful job with the transition process.

Year 6 is very much a transition, and over the course of the year we try to develop increasing independence and encourage pupils to gradually take more responsibility for their work and behaviour. At the start of term in September the longer morning is quite demanding, and so for the first few weeks the children will be going to lunch soon after 12.30pm, in order that they arrive in the Dining Hall prior to the majority of older pupils at 12.45pm, and they will also have a designated seating area. Homework will also be limited in the autumn term, but gradually increase over the course of the year.

There are two Tutor Groups in Year 6, with Mrs Goult and Mr McNeice (both experienced Year 6 tutors), and supported by Mrs McCleave (and Merlin) and Mrs Hand, with Tutor Rooms in the Main House. This would be a good time to remind you that registration period starts at 8.30am each morning, and, although the Form Tutor should be your first port of call (and we really want to hear from you), this is not the best time of the day to see a Form Tutor; it would be much better to leave a message or email in the first instance. If you have an issue of an urgent nature, please do pop in to Main Reception and ask for me as I am usually around at that time, if necessary. We have Form Tutor times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays after lunch. There are many activities planned for these times such as quizzes, current affairs, etc., but they also provide a time for quiet reading (Tuesday, specifically, is set aside for everyone in the School), so it is important that children have a reading book with them in School at all times.

Teaching groups will vary; with Science, Humanities and the Arts being taught in their Tutor Groups, however English and Maths are streamed or set into groups. PSHE is an important session and is taught with the whole year group together. These different groupings will allow all the pupils to interact and get to know each other.

During the year we will have some different and challenging curriculum projects to look forward to each term, often linking several subject areas together. These projects will aim to develop creativity, resilience and problem-solving skills as well as showing that many skills are transferable across subjects.

Activities outside the classroom also abound, with most pupils involved with Drama, Dance, Music and Sport. We also encourage everyone to have a balance of activities on a daily basis.

In order to ensure the term starts as we mean to go on, I urge you to check uniform guidelines and the equipment list (it will be particularly important this term that they have their own equipment). A reminder that mobile phones should not be brought in to School – if it is felt that one is needed (for example travelling to/from School by train), please let me know, and the phone should be handed in to Main Reception for safe keeping during the day.

We will continue to have our formal Parent/Teacher evening, as well as a Parent/Tutor evening during the year. The first parent event of the term is the Informal Evening on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> September and I look forward to seeing you there. Our Parent/Tutor meeting is on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, giving you a chance to talk with the Tutor and review the start to the year.

Yours sincerely

James Blake  
Head of Upper Prep