



RICHARD PATE

INDEPENDENT CO-ED SCHOOL 3-11
CHELTENHAM

Wednesday 18th December, 2024

Dear Parents,

I knew this end of term was going to be emotional because there are so many significant milestones after 36 years of teaching and 19 years at the helm here at Richard Pate. I could not be happier however with the way it has all gone. The children seemed to raise their game for each event to make it extra special. We started the festivities with our Year 4s performing their fantastic version of Strictly Come Dancing which was enjoyed by many parents and family members. I enjoyed watching the audience reaction almost as much as the superb dancing. This performance was followed by the wonderful Prep Nativity – Simply the Nativity – and parents were also able to listen to some beautiful recitals from our musicians whilst enjoying PTA teas and coffees before the show. The week culminated in our amazing Christmas lunch with the whole school wearing Christmas jumpers and enjoying some very talented staff entertainment (Mrs MacDonald was reminded that dancing lessons might be on the cards for me in retirement). I would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs James and her fabulous catering team for preparing such a delicious meal for 350 people and to Mrs Johnston and her brilliant PTA team for their ongoing help and support and for allowing the staff to enjoy it too.

The Autumn Term is always a long and busy one and this has certainly been no exception. As always, your children have been a credit to you all and it has been lovely to see them involved in so many ways across the School. I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to our team here at School who have once again worked unstintingly to educate your children this term in a wide variety of activities both in and out of the classroom. Our clubs and activities list continues to grow with so much on offer across many year groups with clubs this term including Papercraft, Chill Out, Trading Cards and Academic Club.

School Trips: We have had some great trips this term with our Nursery and Reception children attending a magical performance of the 'The Elves and the Shoemaker' at the Everyman theatre. A couple of weeks ago our Year 6s enjoyed a fascinating trip to the Black Country Museum. Our school visits continue over the next two terms culminating in our residential trips for Year 5 and Year 6 in the Summer Term.

Prep Nativity: The Prep Nativity 'Simply the Nativity' took place with two performances last week. As always, it was a magical spectacle and I was proud of all the children who took part. All credit to the wonderful Prep Department team for their efforts to stage this lovely Christmas event.

Junior Christmas Carol Service: We were delighted to bring the term to a close with the wonderful Junior Carol Service last week. It was lovely to have everyone together at Christ Church and the choir, musicians and readers all performed brilliantly. I would like to say a huge thank you to Miss Crompton and her amazing team for doing such a fabulous job. Please find a Flickr gallery of photos from the evening <https://www.flickr.com/gp/200945358@N05/73683M0CWX>

PTA News: It has been another busy term for our PTA culminating in the Christmas Fair with a brilliant Santa Dash involving lots of fun, festive activities – all raising valuable funds for the school. We are hugely indebted to this amazing group of volunteers. You will find a letter from the PTA along with this newsletter.

Curriculum Focus: We have enjoyed a busy and informative Outdoor Learning Curriculum Focus this term. The focus kicked off with whole school training in our wonderful woodland led by Mrs Norris and Mrs Rowe. During the training they were able to show all staff the changes which have been made to 'Minett's Wood' including some new clearings due to ash die back removal; in turn the addition of a range of logs, den building branches, a huge 20ft log-slice table and tree stump seating for the children. They also talked through the woodland etiquette, introduced the new 'Base Camp' and modelled the safe use of a range of tools.

Nursery and Prep have been building on their skills during their weekly Forest School sessions. They have been making their own playdough, building habitats for cuddly woodland animals, den building, swinging in hammocks and on the new woodland swing, crafting musical instruments, bug hunting, creating leaf creatures, making mini towns and giant dragons from natural resources and have been mastering a newly acquired skill of hammering nails into wood. Meanwhile, the Juniors loved investigating and practising Stone Age techniques with visiting artist Chris Oakey; they spent the day building shelters, foraging, lighting their own fires and whittling spears. Other Junior children had tremendous fun building shelters using ropes and tarpaulins, pretending to be medieval people preparing to build their own castles, making roman numerals from natural materials, producing careful observational drawings, learning woodland themed words in French and became fully immersed in the outdoor environment as inspiration for their creative writing.

There has been such a fabulous 'buzz' around our Outdoor Learning focus this term, which has been lovely to witness. In true RPS style, the children have been doing their bit for sustainability. They have been planting more trees to help to re-generate the woodland, working hard to shovel and spread the woodchip across all of the woodland pathways, pick up any litter from our woodland site, plant new bulbs and plants. All of this enables the children to take ownership of their wonderful woodland. We think our resident willow badger has been very happy as he has watched over all of the exciting woodland projects this term and our motion sensitive camera has been capturing on film just what he sees! What a great curriculum focus!

Junior Music: It has been an extremely busy term in the Music department thanks to the hard work of Miss Crompton and her busy team. Our Junior children have participated in several informal concerts to the school which pupils, parents and staff have enjoyed. Our Junior choir sang beautifully at two local WI concerts and the local retirement home and all the children were a credit to you and the school. As above, the Junior Christmas Carol Service was a great success with all the musicians and readers performing brilliantly. Overall, it has been wonderful to see the choir and orchestra go from strength to strength this term and lovely to see a good number of new pupils learning instruments with the latest additions starting brass lessons.

Junior Sport: RPS Sport has continued to flourish this term. All the Junior children have been participating in a number of hockey, rugby and football matches this term at all levels. Key highlights of the term include our brilliant U10 Girls' hockey team who have enjoyed an unbeaten season, the U11 Girls' hockey team finishing 3rd in the County tournament and the boys' first IAPS rugby festival, which they thoroughly enjoyed. The term finished with some competitive (but fun!) house hockey and rugby matches. Extra-curricular sports clubs including badminton and netball have been popular and given pupils the chance to further their development. A big thank you to Mr Edwards and Mrs Knight and their team for their coaching and support for all years throughout the season.

As we enter the Spring Term, the core sports for boys will be football and hockey (Years 3/4 on Monday and Friday; Years 5/6 on Wednesday and Thursday). It is compulsory that all boys have shin pads and gumshields in order to take part in lessons. Self-fit gumshields are adequate (Opro are a good brand) however ones fitted by your dentist may be beneficial. If you choose the latter, please make sure that your son has a fitted one ready for the start of the term. Please also bring in a hockey stick if they have one, but school has enough to provide if not. Gloves are optional but advisable particularly during January and February when it can get very cold on our astro. Finally, please bring both trainers and football boots to school on Games days as the boys need to be prepared to play on either the astro or the field.

The girls will do netball so no protective gear is needed but warm layers are advised. **All** pupils should have a change of footwear and socks if the weather is bad.

Year 6 Destinations: It has been another successful year with 21 of the children qualifying for one of the seven grammar schools. We will not know which schools the children will select until National Offer Day on the 1st March but we have 4 that have qualified for Pate's Grammar, 8 for Sir Thomas Rich, 7 for Denmark Road or Stroud High, 1 for Marling and 1 for Crypt. We also had some very able children who elected not to sit the test this year opting either for independent senior education or one of the excellent comprehensives in the area.

From those who did pursue independent education we had fourteen scholarships offered for academics, music, sport and even equestrian this year! The independent schools were all incredibly complimentary about the candidates put forward for their abilities as well as their character. We continue to be incredibly proud of this year group. They are a wonderful group to have at the top of our school and we look forward to the next two terms of the Year 6 adventure particularly as they work towards next term's production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

Charitable Initiatives: We continue to feel very grateful for the generosity of the Richard Pate family and it was amazing to see the extraordinary number of new toys and food donated for the Salvation Army appeal at the School Fair.

As we look ahead to next term, please find below some important updates and notices:

Staff News: We were very fortunate to have Mr Thurston join us for the Autumn Term on a one term contract to help us settle into the new academic year. He finishes with us today and we wanted to extend a huge thank you to him for all his efforts over the term. With the announcement of Mrs Penny Lewis's retirement at the end of the year we have started the process of recruitment for a new teacher from September 2025. If you know of anyone who would make a fabulous addition to the Richard Pate team do let them know that the position appears on our website and in all the prime teaching job sites.

Key Dates for the first week of term:

- **Wednesday 8th January:** First day of Spring Term (full day)
- **Wednesday 8th January:** First swim of Spring Term for 4MH 8.10am
- **Wednesday 8th January:** Boys' U11 Football v Hatherop Castle (Home) 2.30pm
- **Wednesday 8th January:** Boys' U10 Football v Hatherop Castle (Away) 2.30pm
- **Wednesday 8th January:** Boys' U11 Football v Hatherop Castle (Home)
- **Wednesday 8th January:** Year 6 French Trip instalment 1 due
- **Wednesday 8th January:** Girls' Netball U11 v Hatherop Castle (Away) 2.30pm
- **Friday 10th January:** First Swim of Spring Term for 5W 8.10am

Year 5 Preparations and Parent Meetings: I have been visiting the Year 5 classes this term to work alongside Mrs Kirby on some exam preparation and discuss with them the process of transition and will continue to do this next term. I will also be continuing to arrange meetings with every Year 5 parent to talk about the options available to them and the children for Year 7. If you would like to book an appointment, please contact Mrs Hayman in January and she will confirm a time for the Spring or Summer Term. There is no huge rush to book these meetings as we have plenty of time but it would be good to touch base before the end of the Year 5 journey. Year 5 parents will also be receiving a very helpful guide to the extensive preparations that are being offered to their children regardless of the secondary path they will be following.

Absence: In order to ensure your child's continued safety, it is important that you report any absence to Mrs Hayman and Mrs Thornton in the office. You can do this either by ringing 01242-522086 and leaving a message or by sending an email to absent@richardpate.co.uk. I would like to remind everyone that children should be in school by 8.55am at the latest each morning. Late arrivals are extremely disruptive to the class and can be very difficult for your child as well. Unless your child is booked for After School Care or a club please remember that the latest pickup is 3.50pm.

Breakfast and After School Club: The After School Club continues to be very popular and we do find the club oversubscribed on occasion. I would be grateful if all parents could look at their block bookings for next term, particularly the Junior parents once they decide which clubs and activities their children will be joining. Places can be booked for both Breakfast and After School Club via the SchoolCloud booking system: <https://richardpate.schoolcloud.co.uk>. The system will be going live for next term's bookings from Monday 23rd December. If you do not require a particular session, it is important to cancel that booking via SchoolCloud or you may be charged. I would also like to remind everyone that the last collection time is 5.30pm.

Spring Term Menu: The first menu for next term will be Week 1 (*attached for reference*).

Notice Requirements: We like to remind parents at this stage that if you intend to remove your children from the Richard Pate School at the end of the academic year then we need to receive notification by the last day of the Spring Term which this year falls on Wednesday 2nd April. Failure to give notice by this date could incur a term's fees in lieu of notice. For those Nursery parents who are waiting to hear about places at local primary schools through National Offer Day (which this year falls on Wednesday 16th April) I would suggest you book an appointment via Mrs Hayman to discuss this with me in the coming weeks.

Next Term's Calendar and Clubs and Activities: Along with this newsletter I am sending out next term's calendar as well as the list of clubs and activities with the usual caveat that we may find additional events appear once the new term begins.

Open Day: We are due to hold our next Open Morning on **Saturday 8th February** for prospective parents. This is an important opportunity for those parents to visit our School facilities and to get a chance to meet our lovely staff. Please do share the date with anyone you know looking for schools in the area. I would also like the parents to meet some of our Year 6 children in action and will be contacting some of you in the new year to see if they can spend the morning with us. I wanted you to mark it in the diary as I know how busy many of your weekends are.

Nursery Stay and Play sessions: Our Nursery Stay and Play sessions in the Spring Term will be on Friday 7th February and Friday 7th March. These are a lovely opportunity for parents and grandparents to join us with their little ones, meet new friends and enjoy our fantastic indoor and outdoor play facilities. If you have younger children, please come along and do share the details with any friends you think might be interested in joining us.

All that remains for me to say as I close this final newsletter of 2024 is to wish you a safe, healthy and happy holiday. It has been a great pleasure for us to watch your children continue to flourish this term both in and out of the classroom. I hope you all enjoy your children's company over the next three weeks and we look forward to welcoming you all back on Wednesday 8th January. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Yours sincerely,



Robert MacDonald
Headmaster