

Address Gatton Park, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0TD
Headmaster Mark Dixon

Telephone 01737 649000
Fax 01737 649002
Website www.raa-school.co.uk

ROYAL ALEXANDRA & ALBERT SCHOOL



July 2019

Dear Parent

Headmaster's end of year letter

It has been another busy and productive academic year and I thought this would be a good opportunity to give details of some of the important work that goes on in the background – things that have a big impact on the School.

As you would expect, we continue to place a great deal of emphasis on teaching and learning and in April Mrs Mitchell, the new Deputy Head (Academic), launched the 'Good to Great' (G2G) teaching initiative. This initiative, which is happening largely behind the scenes, is a way of upskilling our teaching staff so they have the support they need to deliver the highest quality lessons. Amongst other things, there has been a focus on; sharing best practice; the quality and quantity of prep; making the best use of student data; and encouraging a love of learning. It takes time for this sort of initiative to lead to improved academic outcomes, but I am confident this is a positive step that will lead to good results for those taking public examinations this summer and in future years. Of course, it doesn't stop there. We will closely monitor teaching and learning on an ongoing basis.

Another 'behind the scenes' element of any school is the Board of Governors. This is the group of people who set the strategic direction for the school and oversee the delivery of the strategic goals. We are fortunate to have a very strong Board of Governors (who are all volunteers!) and for the last 9 years the Chair of the Board has been Bill Gillen. Bill has seen the School through many changes including the opening of our Sixth Form in 2010 and I would like to formally thank Bill for his dedication to this school.



In June, a new Chair of Governors was appointed. Tim Redburn, who was already a Governor of this School, has had a distinguished career in business. A Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Tim has held Executive and Non-Executive positions on the board of a wide range of organisations and industries including Esporta, Biffa, Premier Foods and Towergate Insurance. I look forward to working with Tim as we take this School through the next stage in its development.

In June the Board of Governors agreed the introduction of 'vertical houses' where the child stays in the same house from Year 7 to Year 13. This decision was the culmination of a year's planning and consultation with key stakeholder groups by the Deputy Head (Boarding and Pastoral), Mark Skidmore. In the next academic year, we will put in place the necessary changes to enable the introduction of vertical houses from September 2020. This means that from September 2020 Alexandra, Cornwall, Kent and Gloucester Houses will have pupils from Year 7-13. Elizabeth, Albert and Edinburgh House will have pupils from Year 7-11. Pupils from Elizabeth, Albert and Edinburgh House will move to Gatton Hall in the Sixth Form. There will be no change to Rank Weston House which will remain the Junior boarding house.

There will be many benefits from having vertical houses including; continuity of communication and relationship with the house staff; better sense of belonging and ownership within the house; better opportunity for inter-house events/sports; greater sense of house spirit. There are bound to be many questions about how this will work and I will provide more details as we move through the next academic year. I would like to thank Mark Skidmore for the tremendous amount of work he has put into this project. As many of you will know, Mr Skidmore has decided to move back to his previous school from next September. He leaves behind a fitting legacy of an 'outstanding' boarding Ofsted and the start of an exciting new house system. We wish him well in his new job. Mr Joe Gale will take over in the role from September. Mr Gale is currently a Deputy Head in another Surrey all-through school and has a number of years of experience at Senior Leadership in a range of schools.

The quality of our boarding provision, together with our academic success has made this school even more popular. The demand for Flexi Boarding places in Year 7 this year has been exceptionally high and we have a waiting list of over 100 children. Demand for boarding has been strong too.

Those of you who follow our social media feeds will know how much has been going on within and outside of the classroom this term. We had three prize giving services this year - the first time we have had ceremonies to include every year group - and I was pleased that we could celebrate the achievement of all our pupils in this way.



The beginning of the Summer Term is characterised by the intense activity surrounding the preparation for external examinations. I was pleased with the way our Year 11 and Year 13 pupils applied themselves to their studies and I hope they are justly rewarded when they receive their results in the Summer. There were exams for the younger pupils, too, with the Year 6 SATS being completed in May.

Exams seem like a distant memory now that we are in the last week of term. Year 11 and Year 13 are having a well-earned break whilst the rest of the school rounds up what has been an eventful and fulfilling academic year. Music performances have continued throughout the term with Gattonbury and the Junior concert on Gatton Hall steps completing a packed calendar of performances both in school and in outside venues including Chichester Cathedral and the Merton Dementia Care Home.



The Drama department has worked with all ages of pupils to deliver performances and showcases that have thrilled audiences, with the final performance of their exam pieces by the sixth form in the last week of term. The Creative arts showcase event on 24th June was another highlight and was an impressive display of the many aspects of pupils' creativity.

In the sporting arena there have been more successes in athletics when our Year 8 boys came 2nd in the District. On Thursday over 700 pupils took part in the Colour Run around Gatton Park. This event will raise money for Challengers, a charity for disabled children and young people which has been running for 40 years across the South East. They run pre-school, play, youth and young adult schemes which offer a safe environment where children can have fun, make friends and try new activities.

These provide families with a short break from care responsibilities. (see www.disability-challengers.org). It is wonderful to see the whole school come together for events such as this. They are a demonstration of the Gatton Aims that we try to instil in all pupils.

Challengers

The Gatton Aims were highlighted in the giving of Gatton Awards to pupils and staff who demonstrate one or more of the values of: taking ownership of our lives; respect ourselves, others and the environment; aspire and persevere; be courageous and honest and contribute to our community and to society. We had a strong field of potential winners of these awards and are really proud of all those nominated and those who were chosen to receive them.

Another group of people who, I believe, demonstrate Gatton Aims are the PTA, who we know as the Friends of RAAS. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their work during the year to raise money to provide additional resources for pupils at this school. Their tireless dedication to supporting school events like Sports Day, as well as running their own events, has raised funds to provide facilities to enhance the experience of all the children who attend this school.

As I write this letter, Explore Week is well underway. Pupils are participating in activities in Gatton Park as well as further afield, including canoeing on the lake, wheelbarrow races, cycling, environmental projects, Duke of Edinburgh, to name but a few. This is the culmination of a whole year of interesting and diverse co-curricular trips and activities that have been overseen by the Deputy Head (Co-curricular and Community) Mr Czerpak. A number of photos showing some of the weeks activities can be found at the end of this letter along with photos from our Proms and Junior Summer Ball.



In their final week, Year 10 are having a 'World of Work' week, and I would like to thank Thakeham Homes for their support with this. Some of the sessions are being run by their staff so pupils are being taught about business by professionals in each field including HR, Marketing and Town Planning. This should give them a good appreciation of the commercial world as they approach the time when they are thinking about their subject choices for the Sixth Form.

To close, I would like to thank you for the support you have provided to your children and the school over the last year. It is only by working in partnership with parents that we can support your children to achieve the very best they can. I hope you have a relaxing and enjoyable summer holiday.

Yours sincerely

Mark Dixon
Headmaster

Gatton Proms and Ball

We would like to thank all those who organised and helped at our Year 11 Prom, Year 13 Prom and Junior Summer Ball. All three events were a huge success and thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils and staff.



Explore Week 2019

