

8th January 2010

Dear Parents

I would like to extend a warm welcome back to School at the start of Term and to 2010. It may seem an ironic description as you read this letter and look outside to a scene more in keeping with the Christmas carol, 'In the Bleak Midwinter'. I do however hope that families have had an enjoyable and in part restful Christmas holiday. It was clear to me in meeting pupils back at School that many appear to have had a very enjoyable time and Santa has been very kind to those I have spoken to!

Winter weather and possible School closure communication

As you will have already seen in various forms of correspondence, we have returned to School in what has just been labelled as the 'worst winter' since the 1960's. This has challenged our staff (teaching and non-teaching) in terms of preparing the school for pupils. I have been very grateful to all who have contributed in setting up for term and who have braved difficult circumstances themselves to report for duties and responded to the immediate needs, adjusting the arrangements for pupils as necessary.

Mrs Meiklejohn and Mrs Bashford, in the Senior and Junior Schools respectively, have been coordinating our efforts to ensure that we remain open and that suitable adjustments have been made to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe on site. You will continue to receive regular updates from them regarding any adjustments in timings of school activities or games in response to the winter conditions.

Please be aware that we have added a message box to the Home Page of the School website <http://www.edinburghacademy.org.uk/>, in order to provide updated information regarding changes at School. I hope that parents will find this useful as the first port of call for information regarding arrangements surrounding the winter conditions. Please check this daily as updates regarding adjustments in timings will be posted there.

I would ask that all parents assist the School in ensuring that they alert the respective school offices if they know that there will be an absence or late arrival of a pupil at School. This will assist in the follow-up of unexpected absences, which at this time of year can be a timely and a concerning activity for our staff.

As you have seen already, we are determined to keep the School as fully operational as possible during this cold period. If in extreme circumstance there should be a need to call a school closure due to weather related issues, as much notice will be given as possible. The reality of such a scenario is however that a decision may need to be taken at short notice. The School will immediately post such a message to the School website, email parents and contact by phone all those who have not registered an email address. We will also alert local media of an announced closure. If such a measure were needed, we would of course ensure that a safe and supervised activity was maintained for pupils until they could be collected or be safely sent home.

Clearly my colleagues and I wish to see as normal a school experience for all our pupils. This is a busy time for all years and ages at School. This is of particular importance to our senior years pupils who are entering A Level module exams along with Higher and GCSE prelims. Every effort should be made to attend these with due regard to safe travel.

Other matters

I am pleased to be able to update parents that over the past year, with advice received from the Police, a Working Group has considered the School's security in order to provide recommendations for the Court's consideration. Many of the more easily implemented recommendations have been agreed and put into place. Cost estimates for others have been obtained, with these and other recommendations being considered shortly by the Court. The aim of this review is to achieve an appropriate balance between enhancing the School's security whilst permitting its proper operation and maintaining appropriate access.

On the sports and Games front, I received during the holidays confirmation that planning has been granted for the location of additional temporary changing facilities at New Field. This will provide for enhanced changing at the Pavilion end of New Field for all sports, but notably will be linked to the hockey pitches by the completion of the paths presently under construction across New Field. When complete, remedial works will start to reinstate the damage done to the turf during construction.

As many of you know both our U15 and U18 rugby teams have reached the semi finals of the Scottish School's Cup and deserve congratulation for this achievement. As I finalise this letter I have just received the following communication from Mr Allingham, Director of Sport, which has arrived today from the SRU.

In the light of current weather forecasts, pitch conditions and transport difficulties throughout the country Scottish Rugby has decided to postpone the semi-finals on player safety grounds. As a consequence the final of both competitions will also require to be rescheduled.

The semi-finals at both under-18 and under-15 levels for the week beginning Monday 25 January. The new date for the final at both age-levels is Thursday 11 February, at Murrayfield Stadium, with the under-15 event kicking-off at 6pm and the under-18s at 7.30pm.

I am sure that you will join me in wishing the teams every success in their next match and that we might see a strong Academy presence on and off the field on the 11th of February.

Staff matters

I would like to introduce and welcome Miss Heather Kilfeather to our Geography Department, who will be providing maternity cover for Mrs Tara Robinson over the remainder of this session and the start of next. We are also pleased to welcome back Mr John Meadows this term to the English Department. Mr Meadows continues his recuperation and will be increasing his teaching commitments in the weeks ahead. Mr Graeme Trotter remains acting Head of English for the next few months. Ms Heidi Lord will continue her teaching commitments with the English Department in January. Finally I would like to formally welcome back from maternity leave, Mrs Polly Prosser to our Art Department.

I hope that 2010 will be a happy, busy and rewarding year for all pupils at the School and I look forward to meeting with you at the many events that mark the remainder of our school year.

Yours sincerely



Marco Longmore