

11th November 2009

Dear Parent

I hope that the arrival of the long winter nights has not dampened unduly the spirits of both you and your son or daughter at home. Certainly, from a school perspective, the winter arrives with a huge number of exciting challenges both in terms of academic progress at this time of year for all our year groups, but also in terms of significant concerts, sporting fixtures and drama in various guises in the weeks ahead. As ever, I hope that you will enjoy these public performances and I look forward to seeing you at School. I have written at this time, in order to update you on some important issues which have been discussed at School.

Parental Questionnaire

I am most grateful to the parent body for their willingness to participate in the recent parental questionnaire which was sent out and returned over the summer holiday period. Across the Senior and Junior Schools, we received in the region of 180 replies, roughly 22% in our Senior School and 18% in our Junior School. Those Parents will have seen that the questions were structured to give specific information on certain key areas of school life, including academic, pastoral and general. I was very heartened to see from the returns that the overall rates of satisfaction across the survey indicated by responses which strongly agreed, or agreed with the statements, ran in the region of 85% and almost 90% when factoring those responses which stated no view. For this support I am grateful to the parent body and was able to share this with my colleagues at our recent meetings.

Since the completion of the questionnaire, the results have been analysed both within the Senior Management Team of the whole school and most recently at a Staff Forum involving staff from Senior School, Junior School and Nursery. Each of the thirty question responses was given careful consideration within discussion groups, the deliberations are currently being collated and will be the focus of further discussion in the weeks ahead.

As you would expect, in such a questionnaire, items were raised for our attention which can be summarised under two broad headings - 'Things we do well' and 'Things that we need to improve'. I am happy at this stage to share these initial summaries and was very heartened once again, to read that the consensus of opinion across the returned questionnaires were that the things we do well, included our approach to fairness, the happiness within the School, the commitment of our staff, the strength of our co-curricular activities and strong academic support being shown across year groups. At the same time, I acknowledge the opinions raised, issues for improvement suggesting that we might address the timing of reports, increase opportunity for target setting with pupils, communication of our whole School development priorities, consistency of preps and the management of transition experiences at various stages within the School and finally our system of management of pupil relations. I am equally grateful for these opinions given to us from the sample of returns. The opportunity to receive parent reflection helps to stimulate our own school thoughts on priorities to be set in the forthcoming months and year.

There will be future occasions in which parent opinion may directly be expressed, but please be assured at any time that you do not need to wait for a formal questionnaire in order to contact us to raise any issue of concern or simply to ask for any clarification on an issue affecting your son or daughter. As ever, our primary point of contact remains the class teacher but equally senior colleagues within the School will be happy to respond to your queries.

Scholarships at The Edinburgh Academy

I wish to highlight to you through the inclusion of the Scholarship and Financial Support section of our Admissions Handbook, the revised Scholarship Awards, which are being put in place for the forthcoming academic session. I hope that these revisions will be broadly welcomed by all parents of the School, as the significant element of the review which has taken place, is the opening up of Scholarship assessment for both internal as well as external students. This was previously only available to internal candidates at restricted

points. As is common amongst most Independent Schools, the provision of financial support for fees lies primarily within our financial means assessed Bursary Scheme. Scholarship Awards however, play a vital part at the Academy in promoting and recognising high academic achievement and endeavour as well as particular talents in art, music and sport. The details of these Scholarship Awards are indicated in the attached leaflet and further details can be provided through our Admissions Office, or by contacting the Senior Deputy Rector, Mrs Deborah Meiklejohn, here at the Senior School. Should you wish your son or daughter to participate in the forthcoming Scholarship Assessments, then the important date to remember is that the Scholarship Application Form should be lodged with the Senior Deputy Rector by Wednesday 13th January 2010.

Counselling Service at The Edinburgh Academy

As part of our review of the pastoral care provision at the Senior School, I have been in discussion with Mr Mike Bryce (Deputy Rector with responsibility for Pastoral Care) over the appointment of a school counsellor. I am delighted that we have been able to secure the services of Mrs Roz Shaw who also works on a part time basis with our School Doctor. Mrs Shaw will initially be in school for one morning each week and will be available to pupils at that time. Although the majority of our pupils can plot a path through specific issues with support from family, friends and indeed their teachers here at the school, we believe that for a small number there may be a benefit from the opportunity to speak with someone who is apart from their regular circle of contacts yet is easily accessible here at the school. The intention is that referral will take place through Mr Bryce following consultation at Pastoral Year Team level and with parents.

SRU Rugby law variations

I am aware that pupils who take part in our rugby fixtures have been working to new SRU laws this session implemented within schools across Scotland. The impact of these has been the topic of much discussion with my fellow Heads within HMC and we have agreed to make formal representation to the SRU regarding the issues of ambiguity that have presented some problems with our fixtures. Ultimately the intention has been to promote safety within the sport and we remain strongly in support of that intention. I wish to reassure families of pupils affected by these changes that we monitor this carefully. Should you wish to discuss any concerns related to these law variations please contact Mr Mike Allingham, Director of Sport.

Email communications with home

As part of a response to issues raised by the Parents' Association, and also with the disruption caused by the recent postal strikes, I have taken this occasion to send this letter by email to parents who have registered an email address with us. We will however, retain the services of the postal service for certain communications including the delivery of School Reports, for the current time. I hope that you will welcome this development but should you prefer to receive all communications in hard-copy, please do notify our Senior or Junior School Offices to that effect.

I very much look forward to welcoming you to School over the remaining weeks of the School term, to our various School functions and Parents' Evenings. I wish everyone a busy but enjoyable period of preparation as we begin to move our thoughts towards Christmas activities.

Yours sincerely



Marco Longmore