

WH/RNM/DEC 2011LET

13 December 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

PARENT GOVERNOR ELECTION

We have three nominations for the two vacancies as School Governor. I am grateful to Tony Wildgoose, Ruth Toone and Claire Blakey for their willingness to serve our school in this way. I enclose statements from each candidate and a ballot sheet.

The period of 'ballot' is usually ten days, which would mean that you would have to return your ballots on Tuesday 3rd January 2012, the first day of the new term. If we are relying on ballots to be taken out of a school bag and returned to reception on just the first day back in school we may only have a tiny number of returns, so I have extended the ballot period to noon on Friday 6th January. You do not, of course, need to rely on your daughter or son to ensure your ballot arrives in school, it can be posted FAO Mrs M Rushton, with the envelope marked 'Governor Ballot'.

This ballot marks the end of the term of office of Mr Gavin Davies. It was with regret that Governors heard that due to the demands of his professional life Gavin was unable to consider standing for re-election to the Governing Body. He has served our Governing Body well, bringing his wisdom, vision and integrity to our debates; we are grateful for his contribution to our school and I have written to him on behalf of the school expressing our appreciation.

SCHOOL MEALS

I am very grateful to Mrs Brown and her team who will provide three days of Christmas meals this week. I hope all our young people choose to eat one on at least one of these occasions. We are fortunate to be so well supported by Mrs Brown's team; they provide healthy meals of a consistently high standard.

I am very keen that all of our young people who might be entitled to a free school meal are claiming them; there are over 4,000 young people in the city who are entitled to have a free school meal, but are not receiving them. If you want to check whether you are entitled I have put some information on the Parents Section of our school web site. Registering is really quick and easy, and you may not need to fill in a full claim form if you are already claiming support with rent or council tax, in these circumstances you will automatically be awarded a free school meal. If you think you qualify and have not heard from the Benefits Office then please ring the Leeds Helpline on 0113 222 4404 and they will tell you what you need to do.

If you are able to access free school meals, your daughter or son can have a free, healthy meal at lunchtime, saving you more than £350 a year in dinner money for each child. If you do qualify for free school meals Leeds City Council will also consider you for a school clothing grant of up to £37.50 per child to support the provision of school uniform.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

I am grateful to the Music Team for their work this Christmas. The Glee Club have been singing on the High Street during late night shopping, and also raising money for Christian Aid by singing in the Dining Hall at lunchtime.

We are very much looking forward to our annual Christmas Concert at 7pm on Tuesday 13th December in the Main Hall. If you missed the performance in the High Street you can catch up with the Glee Club as well as the jazz band, soul band, brass group, guitar group and orchestra. Tickets are available on the door for £1.

FRENCH EXCHANGE

It is great to welcome twenty three French students from Collège Georges Sand in Revin, in the Champagne-Ardennes region of France, who will be spending a week staying with their English exchange partners. They were expected to arrive at 8pm on Thursday, however due to the shocking sea conditions created by last week's high winds, they were delayed; they arrived safely, but late, after a very rough sea crossing.

The visitors spent Friday in school, experiencing our lessons and getting a taste of the English school system. For the rest of the week they will visit our region, and spend time getting to know their English partners and their host families. Our young people will go to stay with their exchange partners in Revin, in March next year. I am very appreciative of the individual welcomes these young people will receive in our homes and for the hospitality they will be shown. Of course I am grateful to the Languages Team for arranging this, however this type of opportunity only occurs because of the support and partnership of our families; we continue to be grateful for the support we receive.

UNIFORM

I have previously reminded our families about the change to skirts that will commence at the start of January, so I hope you are all now prepared for this change. For Year's 7, 8, 9 and 10 the only skirts girls can wear will be the Boston Spa plaid skirts. These are available from APC, and can be ordered through our web site. All girls can continue to wear black trousers if they prefer, while Year 11 can choose between the new plaid skirt and a black knee length skirt. If this change is going to be a problem for you please contact your Year Office. As we experience the first really cold weather of the season, can I also remind you of our expectations about coats and jackets? We are of course happy to see a waterproof coat brought into school, however, hoodies, sports jackets, track suit tops, denim jackets and similar items are not coats and should not be brought into school. Thank you for your support with this, we have made such good progress with uniform, it is important that standards are maintained!

ATTENDANCE

I am grateful for the support we receive in securing good attendance in school. I know it sounds obvious, but our data clearly shows that those who attend also achieve. One of the early indicators of a possible future attendance concern is where there are multiple weeks that are broken by an occasional absence; good attendance is a habit, and a routine expectation of a full week in school is a key to sustaining effective attendance. There has been an increase in this last term of absence due to medical appointments. I appreciate that accessing specialists like consultants or orthodontists can be difficult, and after waiting weeks for a referral appointment families are unlikely to ask for a different appointment time, but where routine doctor and dental appointments can be made outside the school day, they should be.

EARLY KEY DATES IN 2012

We have had a range of Subject Consultation Evenings this term, and we are grateful for the way our families have supported these. The rise in standards and achievement in our school is achieved because of the dialogue we have with home. Today our Year 8 students will receive their reports; please contact the Year Office if there is a matter emerging from this that you may want to speak to school about.

On Thursday 12th January at 7.00pm we are holding our Year 9 Option Information Evening. At this evening we will explain the subject choices available going into Year's 10 and 11, and what factors you might want to consider when making these choices. On Thursday 19th January we are holding the same event for Year 8, looking at the single subject choice they are making into Year 9. You will already have received notification about Review Day on Tuesday 7th February; I look forward to welcoming you to these events.

NEWSLETTERS

I have been sending out newsletters such as this for four years now, I would appreciate knowing if they still meet your needs, or how they could be improved for you. If you have any comments I would appreciate receiving them. They can be emailed to info@bostonspa.leeds.sch.uk with the subject marked 'Newsletter Feedback', or posted FAO Mrs M Rushton, with the envelope likewise marked 'Newsletter Feedback'. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

On Friday 16th December the buses will come early, and school will end at 12.35pm. School re-opens on Tuesday 3rd January 2012, at the usual time.

I hope that for all of our families the Christmas Season is a brilliant one, and on behalf of Boston Spa School I wish you every blessing for a peaceful New Year.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Headteacher