



September 2017

Dear Parents

As a new academic year begins may I take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Principal of our school and inform you of some changes and reminders for the year ahead. Having worked at Ripley for over ten years, I was immensely proud to be appointed as Principal in June of this year, taking up the post at the start of this academic year. As I'm sure you agree, Ripley is a very special place with a unique tradition and history. It is both a great privilege and responsibility to be taking over from my predecessor, Mrs Liz Nicholls, and building on the many great leaps forward made by our school under her leadership.

Whilst the winds of change blow both within education and the wider world, we have a foundation in our Christian faith that is rock solid and that guides our work. The vision I have for pupils, fitting in with this foundation and, I believe, the wishes of parents, is that our pupils thrive and flourish in their secondary education. This means helping young people to aspire to be the very best they can be, to try their best at all times, keep a positive attitude and make a difference in the world. As a church school, we aim to educate pupils in body, mind and spirit and give them a rich encounter with the Christian faith that enriches their lives.

As I'm sure you would agree, I believe that young people flourish in school when there is impeccable behaviour, excellent teaching and a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum that goes beyond academic subjects and builds character and resilience.

Examinations

We have just emerged from a hectic few weeks of A, AS and GCSE results. This is the first year when many of the changes brought in over the last few years have had an impact. These are:

- New GCSE courses in Mathematics and English. These are the new and more challenging GCSE courses in the core subjects, with grades reported on a 9-1 scale rather than lettered grades.
- A grade 5 in English Language, English Literature or Maths is deemed a 'strong' pass and equates to the top of an 'old' C and the bottom of an old B grade. A grade 4 is deemed a 'standard' pass and is set at the level of an 'old' grade C. Grades 7-9 reflect the old A and A* grades, with grade 9 reserved for only the very best exam performances.
- New A Levels in some subjects have been examined for the first time, again reflecting an increase in challenge in terms of content.

A Level

A Level results this year were very impressive indeed. The % of A and B grades has increased from 44% in 2016 to 49% in 2017, with the very high pass rate very similar to last year. In terms of the progress students make between GCSE and A Level, our performance has improved from 2016 across all indicators.

AS

At AS, results were excellent. Despite a weaker profile from GCSE, the % of A/B grades increased from 33% in 2016 to 34% in 2017. Likewise, there was an improvement in terms of the progress students made. With the post-16 curriculum in a state of flux, some pupils took AS exams this year in some subjects knowing that their marks wouldn't count towards their final A level grade. In others, the marks will count. Whether this had an impact on how much they revised in some subjects compared to others is a matter of debate!

GCSE

We are very pleased indeed with results at GCSE, particularly in the new Mathematics and English qualifications. 59% of our pupils achieved a 'strong pass' at grade 5 in **both** Maths and English, with 84% achieving a 'standard pass' at grade 4 in both. This latter figure is an improvement on 2016 when 80% of

pupils achieved a C in both Maths and English. We were very pleasantly surprised by the high number of 9 grades in English and in Maths. Results were outstanding across a number of subjects, particularly RE, Computer Science, Food, Product Design and PE.

Whilst the percentage of pupils achieving five good GCSEs including English and Maths is no longer a measure of school performance it is very pleasing to note that this figure has increased to 80% in 2017 (taking a grade 4 in English and Maths as equivalent to a grade C).

Parental Support

I am very grateful for the high levels of parental support we enjoy at Ripley. The partnership between parents and school is vital for the best interests of young people and lies at the heart of a successful school. Robust school rules ensure that the school runs smoothly and that no learning time is wasted. In placing your child with us, you are trusting us to act in their best interests and therefore I would ask that you continue to support us in the following areas:

Attendance and punctuality: ensuring that your child comes to school every day and arrives in good time.

Uniform: ensuring that your child always wears the correct uniform and that all rules regarding make-up and jewellery are followed.

Behaviour: we expect impeccable behaviour from all pupils, ensuring that they follow school rules at all times. It is crucial that parents support the school should sanctions for misbehaviour be needed.

Equipment: please ensure that your child has all the equipment they need for school and homework. A list of these can be found in the pupil journal.

Homework: please provide a quiet space for pupils to do their homework and check that it is done.

Thank you for your support in these matters.

New staff:

We welcome a number of new teaching staff to Ripley this term:

Mr English: Science

Miss Montgomery: Science

Miss Turley: Maths

Miss Newsham: KS3 Manager, English

Mrs Miller: Maths

Additionally, Revd Adrian Wolton joined us as our Chaplain and Adam Robinson, India Harding, Anna Watson and Victoria Knipe have joined us as Ripley Scholars. We wish them all well during their time with us!

Could I please remind you that there is an INSET Day on Friday 22 September 2017. Pupils will not be in school that day. Could I also remind you that I do have a drop-in clinic on a Thursday morning from 9.30 – 11.30am if there are any urgent issues you would like to discuss.

So, we look forward to what will no doubt be another exciting year in the life of Ripley St Thomas! Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr M Wood
Principal