



September 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

After a lovely spell of weather enjoyed by all of us, autumn appears to be setting in with some beautiful colours around our grounds – and a significant drop in temperature!

Website : You will be aware of the growing complexity of school websites and ours is no exception. More and more information is required by the DfE to be on the website; it is also increasingly becoming the medium of communication with parents on school matters, including grades, reports and clicks and reports, as well as housing a great deal of resources for pupils. As all these systems grow and become more integrated we have had to redesign the website to make it, hopefully, more tailored to individual user needs. The new website will be live from Monday 3 October.

The Parent Portal is now fully integrated into the new website. All of the information and details of the old Portal can be found here plus all communication from school relating to your child's year group. If you registered with the Parent Portal last year please use your same username and password to logon. If not, your username is the email address you have registered with the school and your password is "password123". Please do change this using the "Reset password" button and following the instructions sent to your email account.

The website will be in a process of transition for the first few weeks and not every piece of information may be available but we will endeavour to put everything right as fast as possible. We will shortly be setting up a mechanism for you to give us feedback.

Term dates: here are the term dates for 2017 – 2018:

Friday 1 September 2017	Year 7 return plus Year 13 registration
Monday 4 September 2017	Years 8 – 12 return
Tuesday 5 September 2017	Year 13 return
Friday 22 September 2017 (School Closed)	Staff Training Day
Wednesday 25 October – Friday 3 November 2017	Half term
Friday 22 December 2017 (Early finish 12 30pm)	Last day of term
Monday 8 January 2018	Term begins
Monday 12 February-Friday 16 February 2018	Half term
Thursday 29 March 2018	Last day of term
Monday 16 April 2018	Term begins
Monday 7 May 2018	May Day bank holiday
Monday 28 May – Friday 1 June 2018	Half term
Friday 20 July 2018 (Early finish 12 30 pm)	Last day of term

Attendance: Could I remind you that the aspiration for all pupils is 100% attendance. Continuous attendance fosters self-discipline, responsibility and reliability and it is simply not possible to catch up on missed lessons. We do monitor attendance closely and always intervene if attendance starts to drop and causes concern.

Leave of absence requests must be made in advance and before any bookings related to the absence are made. Leave of absence requests can, legally, only be authorised in **exceptional** circumstances. A fixed



September 2016

penalty notice will be invoked if ten sessions (five school days) are lost through unauthorised absence. Fixed penalty notices will also be issued when a parent takes a pupil out of school on leave for any other reason without authorisation.

South Africa Link: In September we welcomed Deon, the Chaplain from St Andrew's school in Bloemfontein, and two students to stay with us for three weeks, as part of our exchange programme. The boys have settled in quickly as members of the sixth form and have helped the rugby team out in a couple of matches! We all greatly enjoy having Deon with us to lead our worship and share his experience as a school chaplain in another country.

An Eagle in the Snow: Year 7 pupils have been exploring themes around Michael Morpurgo's book "An Eagle in the Snow" as part of their transition project. They are all off to visit the Imperial War Museum North in the next couple of weeks and are going to be celebrating the end of the war with a VE Day tea in the canteen this week. If you have never read this book, I can thoroughly recommend it – it's a great read!

Duke of Edinburgh Award: the award has got off to a great start this year with 30 students returning this week from their Gold expedition, 25 students going to St James's Palace in a couple of weeks to receive their awards and 20 more awaiting a date from the palace. Achieving a Gold award is a really wonderful feat alongside the rigours of A level study and every single student is to be congratulated.

Music has had a great start to the term! For the second year running, thirty-five Ripley pupils took part in a workshop with Schola Cantorum, Oxford University's elite chamber choir. Fifteen of our instrumentalists were treated to a jazz improvisation workshop led by nationally-recognised artist Moss Freed (guitarist with the band 'Let Spin') in a collaboration between Ripley, Lancaster Jazz Festival, and Lancaster Music Hub. Following on from the workshop, pupils were then able to perform as part of the Jazz Festival itself in Sun Square on Saturday 17th September, presenting the skills which they had learnt in the workshop.

Additionally several Ripley pupils have performed in lunchtime recitals as part of the week-long Priors Music Festival. Many were also involved in other aspects of the festival, performing in a concert of music by J.S. Bach on Sunday, singing with Vox Boys' Choir on Thursday, and taking part in the major end-of-festival concert.

Over the summer we have created seven new practice rooms so, hopefully, our musicians will be able to practise even more often!

Detention: We have had queries from a small number of parents regarding our right to give detentions. I would just like, therefore, to clarify the current state of affairs regarding detentions. The law was changed in 2012 to state that schools no longer have to give 24 hours notice of detentions. DfE guidance currently states the following: *"Schools don't have to give parents notice of after-school detentions or tell them why a detention has been given."* In the interests of good communication we do give information to parents on why a detention has been given and in most cases we do try to give 24 hours notice via T2P.

We look forward to our Harvest Festival on 19 October. Do come if you are able. We will be asking pupils to contribute food for The Olive Branch, who, at present, have some empty shelves due to increased demand over the summer holidays.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liz Nicholls".