

To all parents

Welcome back to the start of another year. I am very much looking forward to seeing all your children again. It has been a long holiday, which I hope you have all enjoyed.

You may have seen reports of our GCSE results in various newspapers. This year, yet again, the girls have lifted their performance to new heights. We usually manage a very acceptable pass rate (A-C Grades) and this year again we are in the mid-90s. We aim to achieve a pass percentage as least as good as other, more selective schools, but we usually have to accept that our A\*/A percentage will be below that of the more selective schools. Not so this year. Our A\*/A percentage (66 %) beats the published results of all other North Yorkshire schools, including the selective Ripon Grammar School, St Peter's, and Queen Margaret's. The girls have worked hard, as have their teachers.

I wrote to you at the end of last term about Tuck and Uniform. There will be a tuck shop for boarders; tuck is otherwise prohibited. The uniform code is described in the enclosed Parents' Handbook (Appendix 9); in summary wear the correct uniform smartly and correctly, wear no make-up, earrings may be only one pair of silver or gold studs. Parents who check their children before dropping them off allow us to nag less and teach more.

The Parents' Handbook also contains our policy on IT Safety (Appendix 14), outlining the controls we have put in place to safeguard your children and discourage them from wasting too much time on "social" sites. Your ParentReps saw and agreed the policy last term. Please contact them or me if you have any concerns.

If you have been reading your newspapers you will be aware of my views on Outdoor Education/Adventurous Training. I do think it important that children are exposed to managed risk in order to learn how to cope with it and exploit the opportunities offered by taking calculated risks. Government advice is that we contact you for written permission each and every time we intend to do something which involves any degree of risk whatsoever, which would restrict imagination, opportunity and flexibility. Our legal advisers tell us that we can meet the government's purpose by informing you of all the activities which we intend to offer each term, allowing you to opt out if you are unhappy. I attach therefore a list of all such activities and visits from Year 3 onwards which are contemplated this term (the pre-prep will continue to be asked for agreement each time). If they involve extra payment then the teacher running the event will contact you anyway to make sure you are happy with the expenditure involved. Otherwise, unless I hear from you, I assume that you agree that your child may be involved in the relevant activities listed. Let me make it quite clear now that we shall continue to manage risk carefully and appropriately. "Health and Safety" should not stop us doing anything we want to do, but it does make us aware of the dangers involved and the measures we should be taking sensibly to minimize the risks to your child. That is how we approach each activity. We have a written risk assessment for each activity, and make sure the staff involved are correctly trained and qualified. The children may not be aware, to begin with, of the safety measures we are taking, for we try not to make them too intrusive or restrictive, but they will become aware of them over time and begin to adopt the

correct approach towards risk themselves as they grow through the school. I hope, thereby, that they will develop that adventurous sense of personal vocation which, with self-discipline and high personal standards, goes to make up the Queen Mary's "Character".

**ACTIVITIES AND VISITS WHICH INVOLVE A DEGREE OF RISK – YEAR 3 AND UPWARDS**

Please write your name on this form, draw a line through any activity which you do not want your child to participate in and return it to the office. If you do not return the form it will be assumed that you agree to your child taking part in the relevant activities listed.

YEAR GROUP	ACTIVITY	COMMENT
3 - 11	Bushcraft Club (Thursdays)	Voluntary club, run by qualified bushcraft instructor
5 and 6	Canoe Club	Voluntary club, run by Mr Bailey (qualified canoe coach)
3-11	Climbing and Bouldering Walls	To be constructed in school grounds this term. Supervised by qualified climber.
7	Low Mill weekend and Sunday socials	Supervised by qualified instructors
All Boarders	River swimming (day and night)	Activities may occasionally include day girls. Supervised by Mr MJ (qualified canoe coach and life saver)
	Canoeing (day and night)	
	Night walks	
	Abseiling/pole walking in Great Hall	
	Mattress surfing down Great Hall staircase	
	Camping/camp fires	