

August 2018

Dear Parents,

I hope you are all as excited as I am about the start of the new academic year and have enjoyed a restful summer.

As a school, we are delighted with the achievements of our pupils in their public exams with some of our best ever results. At A Level nearly 50% of all grades were A*/A, and at GCSE 21% of grades were the new 9 (with 39% of all grades 9/8/A*). My congratulations to the pupils on their hard work over the past two years which has resulted in these outstanding results and to the Birkdale staff who have supported them in all their endeavours.

On a practical note, during the Christmas Term, Mr King will be supporting me as Acting Deputy Head and will assist in the day to day running of the school. Mr Harris will be starting as Head in January and we are looking forward, as a school, to ensuring that Birkdale is ready for his arrival and the exciting times ahead.

The start of a new academic year is always very important in terms of establishing expectations and standards for the year ahead. Whether your child is starting in S1, moving into Middle School, commencing GCSEs or embarking upon A Levels, hitting the ground running in September will firmly establish good disciplines and routines that will help them to achieve their full potential during the year.

I am looking forward to seeing the boys and girls looking smart on their first day back; I firmly believe that taking pride in one's appearance reflects upon a pupil's approach to their academic studies and I would be grateful for parental support in looking to maintain the highest standards. If there is any uncertainty about expectations of the pupil dress code, I am attaching the policy on '*Expectation of Pupil dress and general appearance*'.

Birkdale prides itself in developing young men and women who are confident in themselves, socially aware, and always looking to embrace the opportunities around them and being part of the Birkdale community. To that end, we are taking a firmer line on mobile phones in the school; pupils in S1–S4 may bring their phones into school but they will be required to then leave them in their lockers during the school day; S5 and Sixth Form pupils will be allowed to have their phones on them and to use them in lessons at the discretion of their teachers and in their common room areas. The key difference to what has existed in the past is that pupils will not be allowed to have their phones out in public areas and they will be confiscated in such instances. We want the pupils to have a break away from the distraction of their phones and social media so that they can be talking to one another and developing the social skills that are increasingly important.

It is very much hoped that you, as parents, feel that you are an integral part of the Birkdale family and we are looking forward to working closely with you throughout the year. We are going to be holding more events for parents to come in to the school and I sincerely hope that you will feel free to join us on these occasions and get to know some of your children's teachers better. Early in the term we hold informal evenings for S1 parents to meet with the form tutors and pastoral staff. We hold similar events for S3 and L6 parents as their children embark upon new stages in their time at Birkdale. There will also be a drop-in breakfast each half-term to which parents from any year group are most welcome. I would also like to invite parents to join me for lunch, if it fits in with your busy schedules, so that you can see

first-hand what our excellent catering staff provide for your children – if this appeals to you, please get in touch with Mrs Howard (Head's PA) to arrange a suitable date.

There is always much to look forward to in the Christmas Term. In October, our musicians will be performing in a Solos concert and also in a Sixth Form Choir concert which is a collaborative undertaking with Sheffield High School. We are very excited about our Drama production ('Petals') this term which is an original play by our very own Mr Kenyon (Head of Middle School) and reflects upon the First World War, all the more poignant with it being the centenary anniversary of the conclusion of The Great War. The FOBS quiz is an annual highlight and often brings out the competitiveness of our parents! As we approach the end of the term we hold the Christmas Concert which is a truly fabulous celebration of the school's musical talent and I cannot recommend this event strongly enough to you. I hope many of you will also be able to join us at the Jubilee Centre for our Carol service on 12th December.

I have every confidence that we will have a very exciting year ahead of us. May I take this opportunity to thank you for your faith in us by sending your children to Birkdale. We are looking forward to working closely with you and opening up a world of opportunities for all our pupils and helping them discover their talents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas Pietrek". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "P".

Nicholas Pietrek
Acting Head Master