

Newsletter

Weekly news at St Christopher's



Dear Parents,

Against this backdrop of national mourning and sadness, today is difficult to put into words. I am sure that many of us will have felt something similar yesterday when we heard the seismic news that our Queen had left us. However, as the

Queen said in a message of condolence to the families of British victims lost in the 9/11 terrorist attack: "Grief is the price we pay for love."

I had asked all staff to come to school in black today as a sign of respect, so the feeling today contrasted starkly with all the excitement and joy we have had at the start of the week with the pupils coming back to school. Nevertheless, I want to welcome you to the 2022-23 school year. I want to extend a particular warm welcome to all our new families joining us this year, and I hope you quickly get the sense of our happy and hard-working ethos. I am also very grateful for our Preschool parents for their patience as the new build is completed, and being so brilliant with the current logistics of dropping their children off at the Upper Hall and with Mrs Conway in one of the classrooms on the lower corridor; thank you!

As well as welcoming you all back, I want to extend a warm welcome to our new teachers who have started with us. Mr Chowdhury (Year 6), Miss Leaf (Year 5), Mrs Oliver (Reception) and Mrs Dubeck (MFL Teacher) have all settled brilliantly, and I am sure that if your children are in their classes, they will have found them as to be as great as we did when we first offered them the chance to join us.

There is always lots of change to manage at the start of the school year, from new teachers, new classmates, new routines, new pencil cases and new school shoes! Change is a normal part of life and is the one thing in life that we can count on. We have a few more changes this year, and I hope many of you will have seen our new office at the front of the building. If not, do pop in! The building work on the Preschool building continues, but is looking good, and is on track to be finished on time by half-term. Finally, there are a few small tweaks to the nomenclature of the school structure, which will hopefully make it a little clearer, with the Kindergarten will now be known as the Preschool, and Lower School will be called the Pre-Prep.

My first assembly this term was all about starting something new, and we watched a time lapse video of a sunflower growing. I got the children to notice how small the seed was at the start of the video compared to the final plant it grew into. Much like the seed, we can often feel small when we start something new and need things to help us to grow, physically, mentally and emotionally! This is not just food, water, shelter; things like care, love, encouragement and friends are as important if not more so! I told the school that just as a plant needs nurturing to grow, if we nurture each other we can help us to grow and develop in our new classes to be the best we can be. At the end of the assembly I gave each class a plant that I had bought them to look after in their classroom. Studies have proven that houseplants improve concentration and productivity (by up to 15%), reduce stress levels, and boost your mood. We are going to look at every class plant before Christmas to see which class plant has been nurtured carefully, to help it grow into the best it can be!

Today, we shelved all our usual plans and we began the day with a special assembly reflecting on the Queen's remarkable reign, which we celebrated not long ago during our Platinum Jubilee Day. In addition, I explained to the children that death can be a very sad event, but we must also try to look back on the Queen fondly, as I am sure that she would want to be remembered with smiles and happiness. I read "The Queen's Hat" by Steve Antony which is a light hearted book where the wind takes the Queen's hat. The Queen was always so very well dressed, with her hats being the staple of so many of her outfits. At school, we will have a memorial display in our entrance hall which the children are working on today.

Finally, I think it only appropriate to bookend my letter as I began it. The Queen has been a permanent fixture for our entire lives, and her death will prompt memories of all that has passed these last 70 years, and all those others who we loved and lost. Today we mourn a monarch.

I hope you have a restful weekend to look forward to; the first week of back to school is always exhausting.

Mr Carter
Head

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MFL at St. Christopher's The Hall

The curriculum has changed for Modern Foreign Languages this year and now Languages will be taught in its own designated room. Mrs Dubeck is our new teacher and below she outlines our new vision for MFL.

I am delighted to be joining St. Christopher's The Hall this year as a Modern Foreign Languages teacher. I have been teaching languages for the past 14 years and I am really looking forward to meeting all of your children and sharing my passion for language learning with them. I thought it would be helpful to give you some information about how languages will be taught this year.

The children will have the opportunity to learn both French and Spanish through weekly, well-planned 40 minute lessons. We will be offering a high-quality, vibrant and ambitious foreign languages curriculum that inspires and excites children, using a wide variety of age-appropriate topics and themes.

Children will learn French from Reception to Year 4 and we are very excited to be offering Spanish for the first time to children in Years 5 and 6. Through engaging and interactive lessons, there will be a real emphasis on having fun with the new language and to foster a genuine interest and positive curiosity about foreign languages. Learning a language is a life skill and offers children the opportunity to build their cultural capital by developing a deeper understanding of other cultures and the world around them.

The children will benefit from a vibrant and newly-decorated Languages Lab. All children from Year 1 to Year 6 will be taught in this classroom. The room is an immersive cultural space, full of visual stimuli, where children want to come and learn. There is a colourful carpet area for whole-class speaking and listening activities and desks for independent written work. It is a welcoming and purposeful environment aimed at maximising learning with an interactive whiteboard, visual prompts and a variety of specialist props and resources. The children will also have access to a wealth of online material through our subscriptions to Language Magnet, Accès Studio and ActiveLearn. These digital resources are integrated into the classroom and enable us to enhance teaching and learning.

Children will be given ample opportunities to listen to authentic material and take part in real-life experiences. They will be encouraged to problem-solve by working out language for themselves in a supportive context where risk-taking and creativity are encouraged. Target language will be used consistently in lessons to aid fluency, communication, pronunciation and understanding. We are proud to facilitate a whole-school approach to language learning and to be able to offer the children a variety of enrichment activities to bring languages alive such as celebrating European Day of Languages, French café mornings.

In addition to language lessons, I will also be offering a French Club to Years 5 and 6 on a Wednesday afternoon. Each term, we will focus on a specific topic. This term, the children will be learning about famous French fashion designers and how to describe clothing in French. In the final week of term, they will be taking part in their own French fashion show!

I do hope you find this information helpful and it gives you a flavour of what is to come in languages this year.

Mrs Dubeck



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Social Media and Reviews

Our social media contains lots of things that happen during our week, and we have some good posts to start our new term. You can follow us at [@stchristhehall](#) on insta and Twitter, as well at [@stchristhehallsport](#) to get all the inside info from school life!

We also love when parents write Google reviews on our school. We will also ask prospective parents, who attend our Open Mornings, to do this.

Therefore, if you would like to write a short review, you can do so using the following link. Thank you in advance for doing this.

<https://g.page/r/Cd0V7pq2h8TCEAq/review>

Absence

We want our children to enjoy coming to school. Our attendance 'floor target' is 96%, but we hope for 100%. Research has proven that there is a link between school attendance and academic performance and success. Absence from school is often the greatest single cause of poor performance and achievement.

There has also been much in the press about the Government consultation paper which suggests that parents, regardless of area or postcode, whose children have five days of unauthorised absence or lateness within one term, take holidays during term-time, will face a fixed penalty notice.

Therefore, this year, authorisation for absence will not be given for any extended absence during term time. Holidays should be taken during the school breaks and not during term time. There may be exceptional circumstances, where permission may be given for a pupil's absence during term time, but these will be very few.

Any absence for sickness should be reported to the office via email no later than 9.00am. We will always follow up where a pupil is not in school for the day if we have not received notification.

If you wish to take your child out of school during term time, for any period of time, for any other specific reason, please email the Head to request permission (headspa@), as far in advance as possible.

Coffee Morning for new parents (and any other parent who would like to come)

Alongside the SCA, I would like to invite parents to an informal coffee morning, next week, on **Thursday 15th September from 8:30-9:30 in the SCAMPS building**. This is a chance for new parents to come into the school and enjoy a cup of tea and coffee with my senior staff, members of the SCA, as well as socialise with other parents at the start of a new term.

I would also like to extend this invitation to our current parents; it is always lovely to see you and I know new parents would love to meet fellow parents who currently have children in the school already.

The SCA are often asked if there is a charge to attend! To clarify, there is no charge, but we obviously appreciate any donations towards the playground projects.

I hope to see some of you there next week.

Half Marathon

We are so proud of Mrs West, Mrs Wanstall, Mrs McLaren and Miss Atkinson who completed The London Big Half Marathon last Sunday (4th September). Thanks to generous sponsorship, they have so far raised a whopping £2,854! It would be wonderful if they managed to tip into the £3,000 territory!



If you feel you might be able to help, there is still time to add a retrospective sponsor. This can be done by following the link: https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/stchristophersthehallmarathon?utm_term=Q749pRxxv6

All proceeds will go towards our playground projects which we hope to be able to start work on during the October half from - more on that next week! Thank you to everyone who has generously donated so far; we are so grateful.

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Communication



Communication is absolutely key in school. Please know that we operate an open door policy, which means that parents/carers are welcome to visit by appointment.

Please alert the class teacher via email, the planner or when you collect your child in the afternoon if you would like to see us.

You can contact your class teacher using the mail@stchristophersthehall.org.uk and put FAO: (class teacher's name). Obviously, for anything which is time sensitive, please call or mark email URGENT.

Obviously, your first port of call with any issues be it academic, pastoral or any other reason will always be your son/daughter's class teacher. If there is need, the class teacher will be able to escalate it to either the Head of Phase (Mrs Chamadia as Head of the Pre-Prep and Mrs Rudge as Head of the Prep) or to one of the Assistant Heads be it an academic or pastoral matter (Mrs West and Mrs Wanstall as Academic Assistant Head, and Mrs Rudge as Pastoral Assistant Head). Mr Carter is happy to meet parents if a solution has not been found by going through the chain of management.

Below is a quick reference guide for all other communication in school:

Music or visiting music teacher lessons	musicadmin@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
Sports or fixtures	sport@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
Lunchtime or afterschool clubs	clubs@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
Finance	bursar@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
SCAMPs (bookings or general enquiries)	scamps@stchristophersthehall.org.uk
SCAMP (logistics or payment)	bursar@stchristophersthehall.org.uk

Reading

You are all aware of how important we think that reading is. There can be few things as powerful as reading in children's education. It has astonishing benefits for children: comfort and reassurance, confidence and security, relaxation, happiness and fun.

Therefore, this year, we have really raised the profile of reading. Every day, straight after lunchtime, all children in all classes will have a silent reading session, which will be an opportunity for them to enjoy the book they are currently reading, as well as for teachers to hear pupils read. Additionally, there is now an enshrined end of the day where all children will be read a story by their class teacher. It is often said that "*reading is more caught than taught*". This is because when children are read aloud to, they are being shown what good readers do and how reading sounds, but we are also mirroring for them what they want to become: readers! Reading stories to children also helps to inspire and engage them with authors and genres that they may not otherwise consider.

Additionally, once our library make-over is finished, and all the books have been categorised, each class will also be having a weekly session in the library, to borrow books, and use the resources. There will also be an Open Library session three times a week at lunch time, when pupils can come and quietly enjoy the library during their break time.

One of the things I will be doing this term is spending a week with each class sharing a story with them at the end of the day, which I am very much looking forward to.

I hope you, as parents, will also continue to enjoy reading at home with your child.



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Wednesday Clubs

Another thing we have introduced this year is an enrichment hour on a Wednesday afternoon, after lunch. This is a time for us to educate beyond the curriculum and to encourage pupils in a variety of creative and different ways.

Therefore, each half term, pupils will choose from a selection of "clubs" on offer. We will try to accommodate pupils as far as possible with their first or second choices, but at times this may be difficult. If we are unable to do that this term, we will make sure they have priority next term. We hope that all the clubs that we are offering our pupils will be enjoyable.

This hour also gives us an opportunity to vertically stream within the school so pupils in Reception to Year 2, and Year 3-6 will mix, allowing them to get to know pupils from different year groups and form new friendships, adding to that sense that we are all a big family.

This term, "clubs" during this hour will include: outdoor learning opportunities (a little "Forest School-esque, but we can't use that word!), newspaper club where pupils will have an opportunity to write articles for the weekly newsletter to parents, Lego, cookery, board games, French (for those in Year 5 and 6 who will be doing Spanish this year), as well as construction and book club, and more! As you can see there is a lot of choice. Ask your child about the different options that were on offer and what they gave as their top three choices!

These sessions will start next Wednesday.

Birthday box

This year, Mr Carter has introduced a "Birthday Box". This is for when children have a birthday during the school term. If a pupil's birthday is on a weekday, they will get to come and visit Mr Carter's office and chat to him. They will get a special birthday sticker as well as the opportunity to pick a small gift from the birthday box. If a child had his/her birthday at the weekend, he/she will be able to visit on the following Monday. We hope this will be a lovely opportunity to make the children feel special - after all, birthdays are a **BIG** thing when you are a child!

This week, Mr Carter saw Arjun (RO), Maxwell (2O) and Zach and Otis McMordie (6C) as they have had birthdays this week - Happy birthday, boys!



Star of the Week

We are always looking for ways that we can promote, praise and reward pupils. As you know, we already have lots of ways of highlighting pupils from our Celebration Assembly on Friday, when chosen pupils get a special sticker from Mr Carter, to being awarded merits for good work and behaviour in their Planner, to character counters for demonstrating the values we are working towards, as well as bigger awards at the end of term with our highest Merit Earner, and our Character Counter Champion. And now... this year, teachers will also be choosing a "Star of the Week" who will be displayed in the classroom: a recognition by their class teacher for doing something which has impressed them.

All of these things are so important as rewards produce a sense of achievement among pupils, which creates a positive learning environment, increasing pupil motivation and well-being. This translates into more effective learning.

I hope your son or daughter comes home and tells you when they have achieved any one of these things, and are really proud of themselves, just as we are.

What's Happening Next Week

- 🔔 **Monday 12th September**
 - U8 Girls Netball v Eltham (14:30-15:30)
- 🔔 **Tuesday 13th September**
 - 5 min Pastoral Parent Meeting (15:30-17:30 - various times)
- 🔔 **Wednesday 14th September**
 - Information Meeting for Year 6 parents re - Residential Visit to RockleyPoint (16:00-16:45)
 - U11 Girls Netball v Croydon High (15:30-16:30)
- 🔔 **Thursday 15th September**
 - Coffee Morning for Parents (8:30-9:30)
 - 5 min Pastoral Parent Meeting (15:30-17:30 - various times)
- 🔔 **Friday 16th September**
 - U11 Girls Netball v Eltham (14:30-15:30)