



Batley Grammar School and Priestley House



Mrs B P Tullie
Head

15 September 2011

Dear Parents

As we start the new school year you may wonder, as I did, what happened to the sunny summer holidays that we were expecting! Despite the weather I do hope that you and your families had a restful and enjoyable summer break. I have a number of items to bring to your attention.

New pupils

A warm welcome is extended to all our pupils but in particular to our new pupils in school this term.

I have been particularly pleased to witness first hand many of our new pupils settling well into the Batley Grammar School community.

Refurbishments

The summer holiday period was an extremely busy time in school and we had over 36 contractors from eight different companies all working on various parts of the school.

In Priestley House, Primary Phase, we removed the two supporting chimney breasts walls from Class 3 and the Art/Science rooms and have made two larger teaching spaces to accommodate Class 3 and Class 4. This project was made even more exciting and challenging by the need to make a hole in the external wall to deliver the five tonnes of steel work into the building. The two new classrooms now look excellent and the staff and pupils are enjoying their new learning environments.

Nursery, which is not part of the Free School, relocated to the Music buildings and they now are a thriving self contained unit called the Little Batelians.

In the Secondary Phase we now have a new Performing Arts suite in the area that was once the old Sixth Form Common Room. The Coat Peg Gallery and associated store rooms have been made into a further general classroom opposite the Graves Hall, as have the two DT store areas upstairs. The Food Technology room, which will be completed this week, is located opposite the Design Technology Lab.

The Language Lab on the ground floor has been converted into a third ICT suite. ICT facilities throughout the school have been extended and upgraded, as have the electrical and heating facilities and the security systems. In addition a couple of new office areas and an individual working area for students have been created.

Ministerial Visit and Official Opening

At very short notice, we were delighted to welcome the School's Minister, Nick Gibb MP to Batley Grammar School last Wednesday morning to officially open the school as a Free School and to unveil a commemorative plaque. In addition we had a number of visitors that morning and they all commented about the behaviour and politeness of our pupils, how smart and well dressed they were in their school uniform and the courtesy and respect they witnessed.

I have brought comments like these to your attention in the past and indeed it is a common theme when we have visitors, including prospective staff, parents and pupils in school. Their praise for the pupils and the school generally is always a pleasure to hear and it serves to remind us, lest we take it for granted, just how special Batley Grammar School is.

We do tend too often to keep this fact to ourselves and, as I have frequently mentioned, all of us associated with Batley Grammar School: pupils, parents, governors and staff alike are ambassadors for our school. All those associated with the school place great value on the high level of behaviour and respect that we enjoy here and we are keen to ensure that this special feature of the school is preserved.

School lunches

The cashless catering system introduced in the dining room is now working smoothly. We do understand that due to the volume of demand on the 'Parent Pay' logging in system, some of you may have experienced difficulties registering at the beginning of the term. Hopefully this has now abated and accessing the system is more satisfactory. The new choice options of Pasta King, Love Joe's (chicken bar) and a jacket potato bar every day in addition to the home cooked food, sandwiches, salads and paninis are proving very popular with the pupils.

Free School Meals

If your child is under 19 and you receive certain benefits, you may be entitled to get free school meals. We would urge you to apply for these.

To apply please contact Kirklees on 01484 221919 or attendance.pupilsupport@kirklees.gov.uk

Alternatively forms are available from the Finance Office.

World's Biggest Coffee Morning

In the secondary phase we are holding a Macmillan coffee morning at morning break on Friday 30th September, where pupils will have the opportunity to buy cakes, buns and biscuits. If you are the parents/carer of a secondary phase pupil and would like to donate buns, cakes and biscuits which we can then sell at break time we would be most grateful. These may be brought into the General Office from the morning of Thursday 29th September onwards. Priestley House Primary Phase will not be participating this year because it is their photograph day and the staff decided that orange squash, biscuits and photographs were not a suitable combination!

Your support is greatly appreciated and the funds raised will help to make a big difference to the lives of those affected by cancer.

School Uniform

Senior school uniform requirements are clearly laid out on pages 4-6 of the School Planner. I would like to thank parents for observing our requests at the end of last term. Pupils looked very smart and were dressed appropriately for the start of the new school year. However, I would like to draw your attention to the guidelines about jewellery, make-up and shoes. Earrings must be small and plain if they are allowed to be worn. In addition hair adornments should be functional, and in darker colours, rather than decorative; we will insist on the latter being removed. Finally, shoes should be black leather shoes and not canvas ones.

The Parents' Association

The Parents' Association work hard on our behalf to organise a variety of fundraising and social events for both parents and pupils. They make generous donations to fund special projects in both areas of the school and your support for these two groups would be greatly appreciated.

I would therefore like to draw your attention to the date of the Parents' Association AGM and meeting on Monday 17th October at 7.30 pm. in the Old Library. Accompanying this letter will be officer nomination forms from the Parents' Association.

The Parents' Association run a 100 club and have a few numbers left to sell. If you would like to purchase one of these, (at £15.00 for the year), then please contact the school office for details. The Parents' Association have organised a Christmas Ball for the 3rd December 2011 and will be present at the Year 7 and New Parents Welcome Evening on the 11th October 2011.

Open Day 2011

You will notice from the calendar that Open Day is on Saturday 24th September from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00p.m.

We hope to be able to extend the range of displays and activities for prospective parents and their children but that does mean that we rely upon our current pupils to be in school, that morning, helping in departments, taking part in activities and volunteering as guides and generally being effective ambassadors for the school.

We have already sent out a reply slip that we need returned to indicate pupil availability on that morning. Please note that, as usual, the secondary phase of the school will close on the Friday afternoon of 23rd September so that staff may prepare the school for Open Day. The Primary Phase will stay open.

Enclosed Documents

You will find a number of additional letters/information sheets accompanying this letter. These include:

- The Home School Agreement (two copies) - you and your son/daughter should sign these and then return the school copy to us immediately;
- ICT acceptable use statement – this should be signed by you and your son/daughter and the reply slip returned to school immediately;;
- Data Collection Sheet – please check the information in this and complete and correct any incorrect information or blank items and return to school immediately;
- A Parental Governor information letter from the Chair of Governors – this indicates the process that will be undertaken to nominate and vote for two parent governors to join the Governing Body;
- Parents' Association AGM notification and nomination form – the nomination forms should be returned to school;

Absence Requests

We are no more than two weeks into the start of the new school year and already I am receiving absence request forms to remove pupils during term time for holidays. The school does not look favourably on absence request during term time. We are now required to publish our attendance levels which, in the past, have only just met the national attendance target of 95%. I would like to draw your attention to the advice in our Parent and Pupil Handbook on page 6:

“Absences from school require the Head's permission in advance. This includes visits to Universities, doctor's and dentist's appointments etc. Absence request forms can be obtained from the Head's Secretary. When the Head has agreed the absence, she will sign the form and the secondary student/primary pupil should then show it to the Form Tutor/Class Teacher and teachers whose lessons will be missed. The secondary student/primary pupil should then take the form home to parents.

It is important that pupils do not miss school without very good reason. Parents are requested to arrange their personal holidays in school holiday time, and not to remove students/pupils from school for this reason. Responsibility for catching up work missed rests with the pupil.

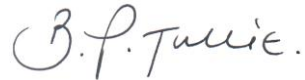
If a child misses school without good reason, the school can use a number of legal powers, including Penalty Notices. These fines must be paid within 28 days; failure to pay the Penalty Notice results in prosecution.”

The percentage absence rate, which is higher than we would like, is due mainly to holidays being taken during term time. Any absence request that is not agreed will inevitably be recorded as unauthorised absence. We do hope that parents will be supportive and not take students/pupils out of school unnecessarily.

Our focus for this term is one of 'starting as we mean to go on', particularly with our high expectations in relation to behaviour, discipline, planning, organisation, uniform, respecting all members of our community and making a strong contribution to the school's continued success. We do look to our parents to support us in this approach and thank you in advance for your co-operation.

It was a real pleasure to welcome the pupils back into school at the beginning of term, and I trust that with our guidance and your support they will give of their best and make the most of this year at Batley Grammar School and Priestley House, whether they are secondary phase students or primary phase pupils. I look forward to seeing you in school from time to time and to meeting all our new parents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "B. P. Tullie." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

B P Tullie (Mrs)
Head