



30 August 2019

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to (new and improved for 2019) Wetherby! I trust everyone had a fun and enjoyable summer. The Bakers were in Menorca as usual and it was a joyful opportunity to reconnect as a family, due to our normal modus operandi of Xbox, PlayStation, mobile phone and 'popping into town to meet some friends' for hours on end. It was reassuring that Patrick and Joseph still enjoyed their parents' company and actually asked to start 'beer and crisps time' (an internationally recognised Mediterranean time that fits after a day at the beach/by the pool and before the time at which one goes out for dinner) as this was an ideal chance for a game of cards and accompanying squabble over the Spotify playlist.

I am sure all the boys are ready for the term to start; we as staff certainly are. Great atmosphere in the building(s) these past few days – it's going to be a great year.

47 Bryanston Square

For as long as the school has been at 48 Bryanston Square, we have been keen to acquire Number 47. It has always been vacant, derelict in fact, its most recent purpose being a Malaysian Embassy building that housed Malaysians prior to visas being approved many years ago. We didn't (and still don't) need the extra classroom space but the opportunity to 'spread out' a bit and enhance the facilities was always appealing, as it was for the Portman Estate who were just as keen for us to accommodate the building. Our wish, however, was that we wanted to be one building. We didn't want to go out of the premises to come back into another one yet conservationists and listed building officials, understandably, insisted the building remain exactly as is. Thanks then to our architects and common sense, we came up with a plan to preserve the architectural heritage of the two buildings and create a workable space for education.

Once planning had been agreed, we set about the renovation...and came across the most significant problem; the building was in a much poorer state of repair than initially realised. Dry rot was pervaded the entire building and every single piece of wood had to be removed. At one point, all that remained was the external brick wall, roof and central staircase – everything else had been taken out.

Three years later, the building has been brought back to its former glory and provides an exceptional space for our School, allowing us to develop in areas that would not have been possible if we just had 48. On the Ground Floor we now have a 'Drama Suite' fully equipped with lighting rigs, curtains and appropriate acoustic fittings. Towards the back of the Ground Floor we have an 'ICT Suite' allowing the restoration of the original Library in 48 into a purposeful Library once again (and Lego Exhibition Centre). On the 3rd Floor, what was Miss Kroiter's classroom has been converted into two dedicated Learning Support Rooms, expanding and enhancing our provision in this area. Next to these new converted rooms, we have a new space, 'The Hub'; this is an area that has been specifically designed to cater for the boys' mental health and wellbeing. Boys can visit 'The Hub' if they want to talk to a teacher about anything, or just take a time out from what has always been a busy School. A lot of thought has gone into the design and intent of this room and I have no doubt it will add significantly to our pastoral provision at Wetherby Prep. And last but not least, in the Basement, we have our new Staff Room. Previously, the Staff Room was



on the 4th Floor, out of reach of the pupil population and a long way to travel for staff! Now easily accessible for all, it can become the meaningful, productive workspace that Staff Rooms are in every school. Number 47 can be accessed via two corridors, one in the basement and one on the third floor, allowing for a far better flow of boys and staff around the School.

Corporate Governance is often frowned upon in the independent sector and many feel that 'charitable status' is a far warmer and acceptable form of educational management. As Chair of Governors of a charitable trust myself, I can understand that but I can also say that it is because of the backing of the Alpha Plus Group that I have stayed in my position here for as long as I have. Being part of Alpha Plus Group has enabled us to pursue this development and though they prefer to stay in the background in these matters, all involved with Wetherby Prep owe them and Sir John Ritblat and Richard Jones in particular, huge thanks for supporting and facilitating all of our projects over the years in such an expert way.

Staff News

We welcome a number of new staff to Wetherby this term, as well as staff returning from maternity leave. In a change to previous communication, Mr James Brampton (Geography Teacher and 7B form teacher) informed me over the summer that he will not be returning this term. However, we are delighted to appoint Dr Andrew Lee to the Head of Geography post starting this term. Andrew has been Head of Geography and Head of Scholars at Westminster Under School as well as Head of Juniors and Head of Geography at St Paul's Juniors. He joins us after a period caring for his mother in Australia but is as excited to be re-joining the London prep school scene as we are for him joining our staff body. He also has a brand new Geography Classroom in 47 on what we are now naming the 'Humanities Floor'.

Week One

Please remember that we welcome just Year 3 and 4 this Monday (2nd). The staff and Pupil Leadership Team will be on hand to help all the new boys navigate the two buildings before the rest of the boys join on the Tuesday (3rd). Pick up is 4pm every day next week. We pride ourselves in the efficiency of home time but the first few weeks of any school year always take slightly longer as we learn new names of boys, parents, nannies and drivers. Buses will run as normal next week but again, new boys to the school won't be familiar with the routine so expect slightly later arrival times for the 4pm and 5pm buses in the first instance.

The holidays are wonderful but for me they are always too long. Our Wetherby staff are ready, our Wetherby boys are ready, the building is more than ready. It's going to be a brilliant 2019/2020 – see you next week!

Nick Baker
Headmaster