



SOMERHILL

YARDLEY COURT
BOYS AGED 7-13

SOMERHILL PRE PREP
GIRLS AND BOYS AGED 2-7

DERWENT LODGE
GIRLS AGED 7-11

13th December 2023

Dear Parents,

Although the longest of the three terms, this Michaelmas Term has once again passed in a flash. It feels like only recently I was welcoming all our pupils back to school following the summer break and I now find myself wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas! Such is always the case at Somerhill with the terms packed full of learning as well as a multitude of other musical, dramatic, artistic, sporting, and social activities, all of which our pupils have approached positively and diligently with a smile.

As I mentioned in my September letter, this term has been a significant one for Somerhill as we celebrated 125 years of Yardley Court, 70 years of Derwent Lodge and 30 years of all three schools being together on the Somerhill site. Over 275 ex-staff and alumni attended our commemorative event, spearheaded by Jonathan Shute, where they caught up with old school friends and work colleagues, viewed the memorabilia on display and enjoyed an excellent afternoon tea from our Somerhill catering team, led by Phillip Bishop-Brown.

Sadly, Phillip Bishop-Brown will be leaving Somerhill at the end of this term. Phillip has been Catering Manager at Somerhill for 14 years and, during that time, we have all appreciated the efforts he has gone to, leading the Somerhill kitchen and producing daily meals for our pupils and the staff as well as catering for many other school functions. Whilst we are sorry to see Phillip go, we wish him warm congratulations on his new job, working for COOK at their HQ kitchen in Sittingbourne.

Following the long summer break, it has also been good to reconnect with the current parent body this term. At the heart of many of these initiatives has been Hannah Kirsop, our new Communications Coordinator, and my thanks go to her for driving forward and reintroducing the very successful Parent-Headmaster Forum followed by a handful of community events; it was a particularly busy November! The school was delighted to host the Fireworks night again this year with its ever-spectacular display, following which Christmas arrived seamlessly with the Parents' Association Christmas Fair and the Christmas wreath workshops. I would like to extend a huge thank you to all the parents involved in the planning of the Christmas Fair (Sarah Christmas, Claire Meredith, Franita Neuville, Katia Sproule and Katherine Vandestreek) and to all other parent volunteers; your enthusiasm and dedication of time to run these events for the Somerhill community is hugely valued. I would also like to extend my thanks to the wider parent body for their generous contributions to the gift fund for all our support staff.

As always, the temptation is to share everything that the children have done this term; however, as you can imagine that letter would be longer than the list of deliveries on Christmas Eve! Instead, I refer you to our half-termly 'Life at Somerhill' publication which brilliantly captures everything that has happened in both the Prep and Pre-Prep sections throughout the term.

That said, it would be remiss of me not to mention the magical Pre-Prep Christmas performances, the candlelit Senior Carol Service at Tonbridge School Chapel, and the Junior Carol Service at St



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Stephen's Church with the stunning Christmas tree backdrop. Well done to all our pupils for the parts they played in these events and thank you to all the staff members who worked so hard to produce them! I must also mention our youngest pupils in Nursery who, whilst too young for a performance, celebrated the festivities with a Christmas craft morning in their classroom. Reggie and I also took great delight in sharing a Christmas story with them – "Kipper has a Snow Day".

Finally, some of you may remember that I mentioned in my Christmas communication last year that we were due to have an Independent School's Inspection (ISI) visit in the next 12 months. We had expected this would happen this term but are still waiting! Needless to say, everything at school continues to be in order following our annual quality control checks and we will be in touch with you all to let you know when we have been notified about the visit.

In the meantime, I hope you all enjoy a wonderful festive season with plenty of time for both fun and relaxation, and I look forward to welcoming you back in January.

With best wishes,

Duncan Sinclair
Headmaster