

6 April 2011

From the Headmistress
Mrs Marion Gibbs
BA (Hons), M Litt, PGCE, FRSA

Dear Parents

I am writing to you separately from our end of term newsletter to draw your attention to some important matters.

Changes to our After-School Detention System

No pupils should be receiving three after-school detentions within a school year. We are concerned that in a small minority of cases an after-school detention is not seen as a particularly onerous punishment. We will therefore be piloting a system during the summer term whereby a third detention will be on a Friday evening from 4.00-5.30 p.m. As there are no late coaches home on a Friday, pupils will have to arrange to make their own way home. We trust that parents will continue to support us in ensuring that their daughters abide by the school rules, so that they do not incur after-school detentions.

Mobile Phones in School (Years 7 – 11)

As you are aware we have had a trial period during which girls have been allowed to have mobile phones in their possession in school, **provided that** they do not use them to make or receive calls or texts or to use social networking sites during the school day. It is most unhelpful if parents themselves persist in phoning or texting their daughters during the school day or expecting their daughters to contact them within school hours using their mobile phone. We have proper procedures for prior contact with parents who need to collect their daughters to take them to an appointment or for notifying parents that their daughters are unwell during the day. We cannot take responsibility for your daughter's safety and well-being if we do not know where she is because you have collected her from school without our prior knowledge. Please help us by following the correct procedures. At the moment we are continuing to allow the presence of mobile phones, but girls will receive a detention for using them, and for a second offence the phone will be kept at school overnight, after we have spoken to you about this.

Internet usage

Girls of all ages seem to be spending an increasing amount of time using the internet for social networking and similar activities. Please do supervise your daughter's use of such media, as unfortunately many people adopt different personae when online and young girls can get themselves into serious difficulties. There has also been a growth of very unpleasant sites such as FormSpring which encourage users to post anonymous comments about others. Apparently, sometimes people even post comments using another person's name in order to cause upset. Sadly, these sites operate legally from outside the UK. We can only recommend that you encourage your daughter not to use them.

Safety in the Local Area

A number of incidents have occurred in recent months in the Dulwich and Clapham areas, mostly in the evenings, where people of all ages have been "mugged" for their mobile phones and money. Please encourage your daughter to remain in a group when she is out in the evening and not to use her mobile phone in the street.

Social Mobility – Government Campaign

Although the Government are putting much stress on increasing social mobility and widening access to top jobs and universities, we are not feeling adversely affected here at JAGS. Our girls are still gaining entrance to high quality courses at good universities. JAGS is recognised as a school that promotes social mobility through its bursaries and extensive community outreach programmes and we remain committed to this. Meanwhile, I believe that a legal challenge has been launched as to whether it is lawful to discriminate against a young person because of their parents' choice of school for them. Interesting times!

JACMC Progress

We have submitted the traffic management and the large event plans to Southwark Council as requested. Unfortunately, there has been some delay in our receiving any response. Meanwhile, our campaign to raise the funds we need to build the Community Music Centre is gathering pace. We are still identifying potential major donors, so please do not hesitate to contact us with any suggestions. A number of the rooms within the building have already been sponsored. Many thanks to all those who have done this. Do please look at the 'Naming Opportunities' on the JACMC section of our website, if you would like to sponsor a room or a special seat in the Concert Hall. Meanwhile plans are now coming together for a "Big Sing" on our field at the end of Founder's Day afternoon. More details will follow.

Parking and Traffic

Inconsiderate parking in the area is a cause of major concern to local residents. It was for this reason that some initially opposed our plans for the Community Music Centre. There is also the very serious issue of pupil safety: it is essential that pupils are not put at risk by careless drivers and that pupils do not put themselves at risk by running out into the road without first looking carefully for oncoming traffic. Our neighbours should not have to cope with inconsiderate parking on double-yellow lines or across private drives and, in some unfortunate cases, with verbal abuse. As the Summer Term should bring better weather, I would urge parents and pupils once again to consider alternative forms of travel to and from school. If walking or cycling or public transport is not possible and family cars have to be used, then perhaps pupils could be dropped off a little further away from school to alleviate congestion.

School Fees for 2011-2012

The school is not immune from rising costs, including those for fuel, services and VAT, but the Governors are very aware of the current economic situation and are particularly conscious of the financial limitations being placed on us all as a result. Recognising these constraints they have decided to increase tuition fees for 2011/12 by £195 to £4,520 per term. Any parents who may encounter financial difficulties because of this are invited to contact the Bursar at an early stage (email: bursar@jags.org.uk) to explore what help may be available.

Thank you for your continued support. Enjoy the holiday.

