



Dear Parent/Carer,

It is my very great privilege to have been appointed as the new Principal of The Folkestone School for Girls. I have been at the school for 8 years as Vice Principal and it is a school I am immensely proud to be a part of. I have met many of you over the years at parents evening, options evenings, music, dance or drama performances and look forward to meeting you again and working with you in the future to support our wonderful girls. We have amazing students, supportive parents, dedicated governors, excellent facilities, a wonderful site and, driving the school forward, a truly able and dedicated team of staff united in doing all we can to ensure that our girls flourish.

We are committed to excelling in all that we do and expect our girls to share and exhibit those same high standards for themselves. We aim for and achieve outstanding academic results but are equally concerned to foster creativity, to encourage courtesy and sensitivity towards others and to develop self-discipline, self-motivation and self-confidence.

Our academic curriculum, therefore, is only a part of what we do. We also encourage all our girls to explore other interests and to take part in the wider life of the school through our many co-curricular opportunities – be that debating society, music, dance, drama, sports, Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh award.....the list goes on.

We believe that this is in an incredibly important part of education. Being part of a club, a team, a cast or orchestra requires teamwork and commitment. It develops self-confidence and, simply, can allow us all to grow and flourish in other arenas. This belief in the power of co-curricular activities drives our thinking. Girls therefore do not complete an excessive amount of qualifications. Typically, students sit 10 x GCSE and a further 3 A-levels. This allows time to focus efforts on achieving the very highest grades within these but also time to participate in other activities and interests – both at school and at home. Additionally, and importantly, there is also time to spend with friends and family. We feel a sensible balance - with girls able to excel and explore in the classroom but also on the stage, the sports field, the concert hall .... Time, too, to just be a child/teenager.

With that in mind, over the summer break we have been busy developing our site to provide additional opportunities for our girls. We have added a rock climbing wall, constructed our very own mountain bike trail (and invested in 35 mountain bikes to use on it!). We have bought archery equipment and a school radio station has also been installed. We aim to bring back the 'big school production' this year, are exploring opportunities to become a Combined Cadet Force unit in September 2019. Our staff are busily training to use these resources and exploring other opportunities: self-defence, cooking (seven meals for seven days), cheerleading..... We have also signposted parents and girls, via the information tab on our school website, to other opportunities locally – a list of clubs and activities, available locally, that might be of interest and girls may consider joining. Many are free. Some do have a small fee. All allow the opportunity to do something you may not otherwise have the opportunity to do and to grow, develop and enjoy an interest away from school.

This work supports our **new personal development and character education programme** - we call it **the FSGBacc!** Over and above a traditional, rigorous, academic curriculum all girls will take part in a personal challenge. It could be climbing on our new climbing wall, presenting a radio show or taking part in the big school production. It will be different for everyone. We will also introduce this into our reporting cycle so that parents are informed of all that their girls achieve – in the classroom, of course, but also beyond it. Exam results are what girls get. They do not define who they are and will play only a part in shaping who they become. The FSGBacc will be at the very heart of what we

do because our job is not to prepare our girls for exams; it is to prepare them for life. There is perhaps no clearer indication of our commitment to personal development and character education than our new climbing wall. It is not tall enough to be used to deliver qualifications such as GCSE PE but that is not why we built it. It is there to provide an opportunity to flourish in another arena, to gain a new interest or hobby, to develop character traits such as self-confidence and resilience, to provide a talking point for interviews, to provide a balance (work hard/play hard) and simply because it is fun. Life is not all about qualifications.

That said, the most obvious way to develop personally will always be by making the very most of our education and so we encourage all our girls to aspire, to find out who they are, what kind of person they want to be and to develop their strengths across a broad spectrum of activities – academic and otherwise. Our aim is to provide an outstanding academic curriculum, outstanding teaching and outstanding opportunities and experiences to ensure our girls leave as well-qualified and well-rounded young women. They will have a strong academic portfolio of qualifications, highly-developed interpersonal skills, a broad range of interests and are well prepared to pursue varied and fulfilling careers and to take on the world!

We have been demonstrably successful in achieving our aims with Ofsted 'outstanding' status, performance tables and other awards and accolades for student achievement a clear indication of our successes. Yet we are no examination factory. We remain a happy, relaxed, positive, kind and caring school and that ethos is one that I hold very dear.

Our school website provides additional information about our vision for a truly outstanding education. I refer you in particular to the **FSGBacc** booklet which provides details of all the enrichment/development opportunities provided but also our rationale for what we do and why we think it's so important.

I also ask parents to visit our academic curriculum section which has been significantly updated. Here you will find **information booklets for every year group**. These cover not only what is covered in each subject over the year but also key information about each year group – such as who's who, key dates and even list suggested reading – as identified by our very own staff! I trust these will be a very welcome addition to parents. Both the FSGBacc and Curriculum information booklets can be found via the link below.

<http://www.folkestonegirls.kent.sch.uk/index.php/curriculum>

I inherit a school in excellent shape and we all owe a great debt of gratitude to Mrs Tracy Luke for her tireless work at The Folkestone School for Girls. I look forward to building on that success, to working with our girls, our staff, our parents and our governors to continue to deliver outstanding academic outcomes and to seeing our girls challenge themselves in the classroom and beyond it!



Mark Lester  
Principal

