

25<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Last weekend, it was drawn to our attention that RBC did not have a published Emergency telephone number in a situation where for compelling reasons a Parent needed to contact RBC quickly. There now is an Emergency number: +49 (0)761 708 39 708, also recorded in the Contact section of the RBC website (<https://www.uwcrobertboschcollege.de/contact/>). Your call will reach either me or Deputy Rektor Helen White. We are completely accepting of the need to be available in the case of a genuine Emergency. But if it is a matter that can be addressed during a *regular school day*, please rather contact RBC through your child's Personal Tutor, or by telephone through Reception +49 (0)761 708 395 00, or send me an email: [laurence.nodder@uwcrobertboschcollege.de](mailto:laurence.nodder@uwcrobertboschcollege.de)

At 12 noon German time today (Saturday), the RBC campus will be quiet, the first time since students arrived on the 26<sup>th</sup> August. 12 noon is the time by which all students must have departed, in groups, for their Fall Semester Project Week. At breakfast this morning there was a palpable sense of anticipation and excitement. This is RBC's first fully "off-campus" Project Week since the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic, and students are restricted to Projects in Land Baden-Württemberg. All the Projects (mostly student-conceived and student-led) have been designed with Covid-19 realities very much in mind, and a far higher proportion than usual have an outdoors component: this morning I spoke with students about to cycle to Bodensee (Lake Constance), others preparing for triathlon training (but from an off-campus base) and a third group preparing for a week's canoeing (this group with staff presence throughout the week). Today is a perfect sunny day; the week ahead has mixed weather. That also is part of Project Week, learning to endure through good and poor weather.

Within the context of schooling, the approach within UWC emphasizes student autonomy and personal sense-making. UWC graduates (and especially those from earlier generations) often speak of inspirational lessons and of teachers having deep impact in their lives. Equally, they speak of deep impact coming through informal interpersonal encounters and being given unexpected responsibility in doing things *on their own agendas*. I think of things like Project Week as part of RBC's duty of responsibility to facilitate students' growing up, of transitioning from childhood (where parents and others take full responsibility) to adulthood. RBC assists that transition by having members of staff in a checking mode – checking plans with Project Leaders, checking that they have done thinking about risk and risk assessment. RBC keeps a Team of Staff on call in case of any emergencies.

Yesterday (Friday 24<sup>th</sup>), around half the RBC students exercised their consciences to join a Fridays for Future (FFF) protest march in Freiburg. Part of what I think of as the RBC duty of responsibility in our students' transition into adulthood also is to emphasize that students need to take decisions in line with their consciences. Most if not all students are concerned about climate change. On the 14<sup>th</sup> September, the BBC reported a survey which stated that almost 60% of young people that were approached were either very worried or extremely worried about climate change (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58549373>). At Monday's Assembly I highlighted that there are different (in my view) valid responses (and combinations of responses) to climate change – from joining the FFF marches to attending

class to making sure that they are best placed academically to make their ongoing contribution. I emphasized that if an individual student were to decide in principle to attend Friday's protest march, they should march whatever Friday's weather turned out to be. And I reminded that FFF is designed as a "strike" – lessons would continue, and it would be their duty and responsibility to catch up on missed work.

RBC has had an excellent start to the Semester. Having talked up both Project Week and students' exercising their consciences – many in a way that led to their participation in Friday's FFF march in Freiburg - I also want to record my deep pleasure at the academic teaching and learning that happens in this place. At the beginning of the Semester, students were invited to write letters to their individual teachers on the theme how best to work with them – where students could suggest how they individually best learn. The RBC faculty is remarkable in their commitment to trying to teach best each student in their class – within the constraints of having to teach a class, not simply a dozen or so individuals simultaneously. We are human, sometimes there are errors of judgement, yet I cannot think of a RBC teacher whose weekly commitment is adequately encompassed by their contract of employment.

I wish to pay tribute to the German Authorities, who made it possible for every non-EU student who was enrolled at RBC to receive the necessary permission to enter Germany. I suspect that there are few UWCs who have received such outstanding support.

Why I am writing on Saturday and not on Friday is that at the beginning of the Semester RBC embarked on a detailed self-evaluation under the guidance of the "Wider Sense" Consultancy. Our detailed responses to a series of questions needed to be submitted by Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. As is the nature of evaluations, our submissions will be digested by a Team at Wider Sense in advance of their visit to RBC in late October. The Team is led by a former Minister of Education and President of the German Conference of Education Ministers. I will share their findings with you in due course.

With best wishes,

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