



Highfields School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Year 10 Student Information

Welcome back! It has been really pleasing to see the students settling into their Key Stage 4 courses and adapting so well to the rigours of their new timetables and option choices. I am delighted to report that we have had a very successful start to the academic year, with many staff members passing on glowing reports about students to me already.

Hopefully, most students will be happy with the option choices that they have made. The deadline for any changes to option subjects is 23 September. If your son / daughter wishes to make a change, this needs to be submitted to me in writing (email or letter) with a reason by this deadline. I will then look at whether the requested change is possible.

As this is such an important year, we thank you for your cooperation in not taking your child out of school during term time. The work over the next two years builds up to the GCSE examinations in May/June 2021 and assessments under timed conditions will be undertaken on a regular basis in virtually all subjects. If your child isn't in school, they aren't learning, progressing or developing their knowledge and skills. We have a school attendance target of 96.5% and would ask you to support the school in our work to achieve this especially as the government now classes attendance levels below 90% as persistent absence. Government guidelines for schools also state that we are not allowed to authorise holidays in term time. Information on term dates and CPD days is available on our website.

I also wish to draw your attention to the following key dates, which will involve Year 10 students:-

- Year 10 Curriculum Evening – date to be confirmed
- Friday 22 November, Friday 14 February and Friday 19 June - Year 10 assessment profiles to parents
- Tuesday 03 March – Year 10 Parent Consultation Evening
- Friday 06 March – Health Day
- Monday 27 April to Thursday 07 May – Year 10 exams
- Friday 26 June – Work Experience Day
- Monday 29 June to Friday 10 July – Work Experience fortnight

All students are expected to undertake a period of work experience in Year 10. Students were issued with an information pack in July and details of available placements for Year 10 are accessible to students on VLE (the school's virtual learning environment; accessible with their school username and password. Students then need to enrol for the topic "Work Experience" to be able to view the information). The VLE is updated regularly with new placements and there are lots

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of interesting offers and ideas on there at the moment. Please encourage your son/daughter to start thinking about organising their placements. The Year 10 Work Experience Coordinator is Mrs Christine Giles. Students should return their work experience forms to Mrs Giles as soon as possible, and by the end of November at the latest.

If students need to make a phone call whilst at school, they may do so from the pastoral office. If you need to get a message to your son / daughter in school please do so by calling the Year Manager, Mr Allsobrook, rather than trying to contact your son / daughter on their mobile phone. We are striving to protect your child from cyber bullying and I appreciate all the support you can provide with regard to the supervision of the use of Facebook, Instagram and other internet sites and messaging apps. Further information on e-safety is available under the Parents tab on our website.

I would also like to remind all students that make-up, visible body and facial piercings (including nose piercings) and chewing gum are not allowed. Highfields School is also a smoke-free campus, including the use of e-cigarettes, and individuals not complying with this rule will be committing a criminal offence. I know that I can count on your support with regard to these issues.

I am confident that your son/daughter will reach their full potential in their Key Stage 4 studies. The attitude and achievement of this year group have always been of a very high standard and we wish to maintain and develop this through a continuing, close-working partnership with you and your child. If ever there is a situation that you need to discuss with someone at school, please do not hesitate to contact either myself, the Year Manager (Mr Allsobrook) or your son/daughter's Form Tutor. This is particularly important with regard to students on crutches and the requirement to complete risk assessment forms before they can return to school.

We have recently worked on our strategic plan which we call our 'Big 3' priorities. You can find this plan on our website but I thought it might be useful to explain how you might experience the plan from a home perspective and invite you to offer your support. We are aiming to improve students' 'approach to learning'.

We want students to take on the habits of effective learners so that they can succeed not only with us and in their onward study but also in whichever job they choose. Teachers will now be clearer on what they expect. If teachers believe that your child could be a more effective learner they will let them know and reflect this in reports. It is not a punishment. It is not necessarily a judgement on behaviour. It is an indicator that they need to work in a slightly different way to maximise their fabulous potential. We want ours to be a happy and inclusive school. We are going to be more stringent with students who disrupt learning or make others unhappy through the way they behave. In lessons this means that they will be removed more quickly and will stay out for longer if they disrupt the learning of others. This is in response to survey responses from families and students about the impact of low level disruption in lessons.

We have recruited a number of student leaders who are specially trained to ensure that students feel safe and are supported around friendship issues, or where bullying emerges as a concern. A high number of students at Highfields have low attendance. We know that missing even one lesson affects students' learning and wellbeing. Students have told us how things 'snowball' when students miss work and then feel anxious about re-joining lessons where they feel on 'the back foot'. We will be trying even harder to work with students and families to keep children in school, in lessons, with their friends, learning. Our school has a uniform code which was introduced some time ago. The

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way a student wears their uniform says a lot about their commitment to their school community. Highfields uniform continues to be present a reputational challenge because members of the public and visitor to school continually tell us that students do not, as a group, look 'smart'. Apart from anything else our school needs to attract students into year 7 in order that we have the funds to support learning and market research tells us that students' appearance plays a big part in families' choice of school.

We will continue to work with students to improve their appearance in school and out in the community. Staff are unanimous in their support of this focus. If you need any clarification of our uniform policy it can be found on our website. As a result of conversations with student parliament and our determination to improve engagement in extracurricular activities and develop social skills we will no longer allow students to use headphones or earphones (apart from for certain students with additional needs) around school during the school day.

We will explain to students our reasoning but please encourage them not to use earphones or headphones whilst on school site. Although you are unlikely to notice from a home perspective, our central focus on 'curriculum' will centre on the quality of holistic education that your child receives. This will touch all aspects of your child's experience in school. Mr Marsh's newsletter will offer frequent updates about the way that we are trying to make our school an exciting and inspiring place to learn.

I look forward to continuing to work with the students as they move forward in Year 10. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there are any concerns you wish to discuss. With good leadership and guidance and a willing heart to learn, I am confident that each and every student will be the best they can be.

Yours sincerely

Miss J Hughes
Head of Year 10

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