



Monday 23 January 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

The dust has finally settled sufficiently for me to write to you all and introduce myself. I am the new Interim Principal at Huish Episcopi Academy and I took up post on 1st January 2023. I am also a Regional Director for United Learning Trust: a large group of schools located across the UK, with a growing presence in the South West. We believe in local schools for local people but bring a national network of support and expertise.

I held two parent forums and met many of you last week. It was useful to hear your views, thoughts and opinions on what has happened but also what needs to take place. As I was able to share, there are already plans in place and changes have begun. I have been overwhelmed with messages from parents and families and students who welcome the changes and pledge support. I thank you all for this.

Please excuse the length of this correspondence. I felt it important to be thorough in my introduction, explanation of changes and in my request for support from yourselves.

OFSTED and Post OFSTED

As you will be aware, the Academy was inspected under Section 5 of the Education Act, 2005 on 2nd and 3rd November, 2022. The outcome was that the Academy was graded 'inadequate' in the four main judgements (Quality of Education, Leadership, Behaviour & Attitudes and Personal Development) and graded 'requires improvement' for Sixth Form. As such, it was placed into Special Measures by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. 'Special Measures' is distinct from 'Serious Weakness' as it is an indication that outside help and support is required to correct the weaknesses and move the school forward. United Learning have been asked to provide a large element of this support and this has already begun. We are currently going through a process of 'due diligence' to consider whether it is right to move Huish Episcopi Academy into our Trust. This process will be concluded as quickly as possible and a final decision arrived at.

UNITED LEARNING

Support already in place from United Learning includes:

- Leadership support in the form of oversight of the current governance
- Leadership support in the form of myself; based at the Academy, plus a range of other senior leaders coming to address specific aspects of our work from their own expertise.
- Leadership and subject-based support in the form of our network of subject specialist advisors, who have already made contact with Heads of Department and started reviewing the curriculum and assessment that HEA offers.
- Leadership and domain-specific support from our 'back office' teams: HR, Estates, IT, Finance, PR, Marketing, Safeguarding and Health & Safety.

IMMEDIATE CHANGES

In response to specific aspects of the report, we have already undertaken the following:

- Restructured the Senior Leadership Team to ensure clarity on roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Restructured the Pastoral Team to ensure similar clarity. Advertised for Vice Principal, Pastoral, Recovery Room Manager and Deputy SENDCO
- Moved from vertical house tutoring to horizontal year-group tutoring – this goes live today and thank you all for your support with this. There are four specific reasons for this large structural change:
 1. Allow for age-appropriate themes and personal development messages. E.g. options, safeguarding messages, consent, examinations etc.
 2. Allow for high quality intervention for GCSEs, particularly in year 11
 3. Allow for high quality Literacy provision – as identified in the OFSTED report
 4. Give a single pastoral leader for each year – to resolve issues that arise: usually within year groups. E.g. bullying and intolerance – as identified in the OFSTED report
- Re-defined mission and values (now RESPECT, AMBITION and RESILIENCE – initial focus on RESPECT to address issues identified in the report)
- Re-defined Huish Episcopi as a 'Telling School' where students can come forward and report issues and know, with confidence, that they will be listened to and the information acted on
- Implemented a new information system so that all communications with parents are recorded, assigned and quality assured; ensuring every 'loop' is closed and students and parents feel listened to
- Written and implemented a new Academy Behaviour Policy and Academy Anti-Bullying Policy (which starts and finishes with contacting parents)
- Introduced a one-way system to simplify student travel and reduce incidents that occur on busy, narrow corridors and junctions
- Re-defined all duty rotas to allow for greatly increased coverage and toilet monitoring (in response to many issues raised around break and lunch time)
- Re-defined our approach to toilet visits. Toilets need to be safe places which children can use with confidence and not mis-use inappropriately.
- Tripled the number of staff on duty during lesson time to respond to incidents of poor behaviour in classrooms
- Trained staff in a new, simple lesson management protocol: Warn, Move, Remove to minimise and prevent lesson disruption, as well as '100% strategies' to instruct children in a non-confrontational way regarding lesson expectations
- Implemented weekly training for staff on common routines; to ensure a consistent experience for all students
- Implemented fortnightly curriculum development time for staff to see how the taught curriculum has 'landed' with the students, where gaps need filling, and to discuss the best delivery of upcoming topics.
- Introduced daily year 11 extra booster classes in English and Maths (one of the reasons for same age forms)

UPCOMING CHANGES

Huish Episcopi Academy

Wincanton Road, Langport, Somerset TA10 9SS

Tel: 01458 250501 Fax: 01458 250262

Email: office@hea.ac.uk Web: www.huishepiscopi.net

Registered in England and Wales: 7341553 Registered Office as above.

Company limited by Guarantee. An exempt charity



Science



LANGUAGE CULTURE



APPLIED LEARNING

Some of the measures we are working on take longer to plan and implement. These are some of the things we are working on in the background:

- Redefining the way we respond to SEND support and communication – through our new SENDCO, Mrs Horsford.
- Changing the 'One Page Profile' to be more clear and point specifically to reasonable adjustments
- Implementing 'Class Charts' – software so every teacher knows immediately who is sat where in their class, their individual learning needs and the scaffolding and adjustments required during teaching
- Re-structuring the whole Personal Development Programme to be based around our values and link holistically to national events; as well as be congruent within itself. Our aim is for students to hear a consistent message on the PD themes from multiple different areas of the school, including PSHE, RSE, assemblies, tutorials, lessons, character development and other delivery mechanisms; and coincide this with effective staff training to support the delivery
- Launching the United Learning Literacy Strategy; offering appropriate support with each level of Literacy Intervention, as well as a whole-school reading scheme (this is partly why we need same-age form time)
- Moving from weekly to twice-weekly staff training on consistent routines
- Ensuring high-quality schemes of work and clearly identified key knowledge and skills within each topic
- Implementing common assessment to enable comparison with a national data set, rather than just within one school.
- Rationalising our mental health support into 'waves' of increasing severity of need and ensuring the referral pathway is consistent. Ensuring the iSpace area is conducive to this; as well as specific and targeted behavioural intervention.
- Expanding year 11 and 13 support to include lesson 6 and tutoring to plug known gaps in knowledge before the exams
- Introducing an upgraded Praise system; keeping the aspects of the previous one that students liked and building in 'Proud Table', 'Spontaneous Applause', 'Systematic Leadership Development and Recognition' and 'The Best in Everyone Awards'.

These are the main headlining changes, but there are quite a number of other measures we are taking in the background to provide a consistently great learning and school experience for the young people. Please do feed back to me on what is going well and what we could do to improve as we progress.

There are a number of areas that I would ask for your support on:

- **Uniform and phone use:** we have had something of a push on this but the time will come when I need to make our expectations even more clear. I have deliberately not done this straight away but I will write to you before half term and ask that certain aspects are reinforced. Likewise, with phone use. We do not allow mobile phone use and, for the most part, young people at HEA are accepting of this. But after half term we will need to be more clear about what happens if phones are seen or heard.
- **Defiance:** very few young people at Huish Episcopi Academy refuse to follow instructions, but when they do it takes a long time and much staff resource to deal with the situation. Clearly, refusing instructions prevents any school running well so I would ask that you all support us by telling your children to do what they are asked,

but raise questions in the right way later on if they feel it is unfair: they will always be listened to. Repeated defiance of instructions because a child feels they are 'in the right' usually results in a suspension; which we clearly wish to avoid. Please work with us and ensure no young person arrives at the academy thinking they have a parent or carer who will support them in defiance of instructions. I really thank you for this as it gives us so much more time to support young people; particularly those who are more vulnerable.

- **Lessons:** it is my view that all children should be in timetabled lessons all of the time, unless there is a specific and planned intervention taking place or a personal emergency or a specific SEND reasonable adjustment (within clearly defined parameters). We are currently working through our 'Exit Cards' to make sure they are not narrowing a child's curriculum or causing them to have large gaps in their learning. Please support us with this.
- **Appointments:** If your child is going to be collected for an appointment, please let reception know in advance via email/phone/MCAS app so the teacher can release them from lessons correctly and we can ease the exit from school via reception.
- **Medical:** If your child feels unwell during the school day they should alert the school: telling their teacher if it is during lesson or visiting the medical room if outside of lesson. We need to be able to manage the situation and communication, for safeguarding and wellbeing reasons. Students should not be using their mobile phones to contact parents to be collected. This will be explained to students during their assemblies.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION


There is industrial (strike) action planned across four upcoming dates. I will include a separate letter about that with this introductory letter.

THANKS

Can I thank you all for your support with the necessary changes that are taking place. The speed of change is also necessary: I simply cannot preside over a school that is not safe for young people and where they do not feel confident in coming forward about issues that are affecting them. This has meant that I have pushed hard on the necessary immediate changes outlined above. The staff body, who are universally welcoming of change, have gone with this and I am incredibly grateful to them. This half term I know that all colleagues are working hard to make the initial changes that Huish Episcopi needs and I thank them for this.

We will undoubtedly not get everything right, especially as new systems bed in. If things are not working well for any reason please do get in touch immediately, no matter how trivial it seems. You can ring the front office and your message will be put immediately into our system; and I read every item in there every day and together we will make sure your issue is addressed.

Yours sincerely



Nat Parnell
Interim Principal
Huish Episcopi Academy