

Thursday 20 April 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

I write with an update about progress here at Huish and, as before, some information for you and requests from you. This communication offers me the chance to discuss some of the ongoing long-term projects while also assuring you about our immediate priorities.

While my focus in this message is on school improvement priorities, I suggest that you check out our social media and other publications like the Huish Sport Newsletter to witness the amazing work and accomplishments of our students.

STUDENT BEHAVIOUR AND SAFETY

Our top priority continues to be to ensure that student behaviour is exemplary, and that students feel secure and protected. While this focus is always ongoing, significant strides have already been made, and children have expressed their appreciation for the improvements. It's heartening to receive messages from parents indicating that their children are now finding lessons more engaging, with fewer distractions. Our slogan is, "Huish Episcopi is a Telling School" and young people are increasingly trusting us to act promptly and professionally when they report concerns to us.

STUDENTS IN LESSONS

I have previously stated that students benefit the most when they attend their timetabled lessons with a subject specialist. It brings me great pride to report that internal truancy has become a rare occurrence, and students have fully embraced this message. As a result, classrooms are more tranquil, and students are able to access a more comprehensive curriculum with fewer gaps in their learning.

As a consequence of this success, the staff responsible for our "Student Support Base (SSB)" area can now concentrate on the specific needs of our most vulnerable students. Even when students need to attend our "Recovery Room" on the rare occasions that arise, their learning and curriculum align more closely with that of their regular lessons, reducing the chances of missed learning opportunities. The changes we have made have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of students needing to attend the "Recovery Room" as they now understand the high expectations placed on them by teachers in lessons and corridors.

ANTI-BULLYING

We have implemented robust systems to ensure that any concerns reported by students are addressed with utmost care and attention. Our 'anti-bullying flowchart' ensures that parents and caregivers of all parties involved are kept informed at every step of the intervention process.

FIRE DRILL

A fire drill has been scheduled for the upcoming weeks. As I have personally experienced a real school fire in the past, I am very particular about these drills. I have instructed all staff and students to exit the building silently, with any communication limited to matters concerning the drill. I will have held assemblies about this with all year groups before the drill. If any students talk or behave inappropriately during the drill, we will notify you and impose sanctions here at the Academy. Please discuss with your child the importance of drills and safety, and I kindly request your support in ensuring silent transitions.

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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are reconstructing our personal development programme from scratch to ensure that the holistic development of students is just as carefully planned and executed as their academic subjects. This is an ongoing project, and we are continuously working towards achieving our desired outcome. Nonetheless, our staff have embraced this challenge with great enthusiasm and diligence. Assembly, PSHE and tutor messages are increasingly aligned to provide common messages to students, assisted by the move from houses to year groups.

Although the extra-curricular activities offered at Huish were already satisfactory, we are committed to providing additional opportunities for young people to participate in clubs and leadership programmes. We will closely monitor their involvement starting from September, and proactively seek opportunities for students to develop their wider self where we feel they may have been missed.

CURRICULUM

In addition to prioritising a positive learning environment, we have been collaborating closely with United Learning, the Trust that I am a representative of, to ensure that our curriculum is stimulating, challenging, and relevant. Most subjects are now working closely with trust advisors and several have already adopted the United Learning curriculum. We are working towards common assessment in all subjects to be completed by July 2024.

TEACHING

Our professional development (CPD) programme has undergone a restructuring. Teachers now have two CPD sessions per week, where teachers practice well-defined and codified routines that stay the same from one lesson to the next, helping student familiarity. Examples of these are lesson entry and exit, use of mini whiteboards and questioning techniques.

Additionally, teachers are now planning their lessons around our preferred 'Teach, Check, Practise' cycle. This approach ensures that students have sufficient time within lessons to practice their newly acquired learning at a high level. To maintain an appropriate level of challenge, I have requested that teachers eliminate "time-filling" activities such as word searches.

Overall, these changes aim to raise the standard of our teaching, resulting in more effective learning outcomes for our students.

HOMEWORK

We acknowledge that our current homework strategy is not adequate for our needs. To create an effective strategy, all subjects must identify and define the essential knowledge and skills that need to be learned. Our staff have been dedicating their time during INSET days to revise their schemes of work and adapt the United Learning schemes to ensure clarity on these aspects.

This effort will ultimately result in a more efficient and streamlined 'Home Learning' strategy, which we will release as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience as we strive to get our plans in order. Rest assured, we will have a consolidated plan in place well before September.

READING AND LITERACY

As indicated in both the OFSTED report and my previous correspondence, improving literacy is a critical priority for our Academy. To ensure a sustainable and impactful approach, we have planned and executed our strategy with great care.

I am pleased to report that, following staff and student training, we have launched the first of two elements of our strategy this week - the Tutor Reading Programme. For three days each week, students in years 7 to 10 are reading from a carefully curated selection of literary texts

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together. These books were chosen to promote both the love of reading and cultural awareness, while simultaneously incorporating all the key skills required for reading.

The second element of our strategy involves using the NGRT Testing mechanism, in line with United Learning, to identify specific weaknesses in individual students' reading abilities. This will enable us to offer targeted interventions in areas such as phonics, decoding, fluency, and comprehension, starting in September 2023.

Our objective is to improve literacy outcomes for all students and to instil a lifelong love of reading. We are excited to see the positive impact of these changes in the coming months and years.

Mr Brookes has written to you about this separately.

SEND

The organisation of our Special Educational Needs (SEND) systems has been an enormous undertaking that is still ongoing. Our dedicated SENDCO, Ms. Horsford, and her team have been systematically reviewing the SEND register to ensure that we have accurately identified the needs and appropriate strategies for the significant number of students within this cohort. Currently, we are implementing a system called 'Classcharts' that will make these profiles and strategies readily available for classroom teachers, facilitating consistent scaffolding within subjects for our learners. This will enable our teachers to more easily access the necessary information to support SEND students effectively, ensuring that their individual needs are met. Ms. Horsford has written about the specifics separately.

EXAMINATION CLASSES AND EXAMINATION LEAVE

We are offering greater levels of support to our examination groups, particularly in Year 11 and 13. This support takes various forms, such as Core Subject Tutor Time, after-school intervention classes, Easter revision materials, Pearson Revise Online, Exam Success Evenings, and prioritisation during recent strike days. We aim to provide students with every opportunity to succeed in their exams and are committed to helping them achieve their full potential.

Mr Vaughan has written about the specifics of this programme separately and we will continue to communicate carefully around this.

UNITED LEARNING AND TERM DATES 2023/24

We are currently in the consultative and legal phase of the process of joining the United Learning Multi Academy Trust. Despite this, Huish is already benefiting from the support of the group in leadership, teaching, and support services. We anticipate concluding the process on 1st June and becoming an official United Learning school. As the process affects our term dates and INSET provision, we have postponed publishing them. However, we understand that many parents need to plan their holidays and arrangements, so we are including them with this letter and they have been uploaded to the academy website.

[HEA Term Dates 2023-24](#)

STRIKES

Regrettably, the NEU has announced two more strike days which will again hinder our ability to operate. However, in consideration of year 10's GCSE courses, we have decided to provide teaching for year 10 on the upcoming strike day of Thursday 27th April. The previous strike days have focused on year 11, and this will be the case again on Tuesday 2nd May. I have included a separate letter outlining arrangements for both days. We explored options to include both year 10 and 11, but the industrial action and instructions from other professional associations during the strikes have made this unfeasible. I share your hope that the

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differences between the unions and the government can be resolved quickly for the benefit of our students.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

I am aware that the students are not wearing their uniform consistently, and I have received reports of this from parents and members of the public. While I have not addressed this immediately, as I wanted to build trust with parents and students, I have asked the pastoral team to consider ways to improve adherence to certain aspects of the uniform, such as our piercings policy and the proper wearing of shirts and skirts. These are non-cost items that can be addressed before the summer break. I ask for your support from home on this matter as young people looking smart and taking pride in their appearance is an important part of their learning journey. We are striving to build a school that our scholars will be proud to attend and that they will be proud to have attended as alumni. A smart and consistently worn uniform is a great symbol of this both within the school and in the wider community. Please expect correspondence from the pastoral team in due course.

PRAISE AND REWARDS

We have devised a plan to revitalise our praise and recognition procedures, as a large number of students are displaying exceptional effort at the Academy. The new approach will prioritise recognising these efforts systematically and meaningfully, and will consist of five main components:

- The United Learning 'Best in Everyone' awards scheme and process, culminating in both local and national awards ceremonies.
- Continuing and enhancing the popular 'Proud Table', which includes Mr. Parnell's postcards home.
- A staff proud postcard home programme.
- Training and intentional practice for staff on providing positive recognition in the classroom.
- Spontaneous classroom peer recognition.

The praise points will remain in place, as we understand that many students, especially those in lower years, value them. However, these points will now feed into the aforementioned strategies in a systematic way to ensure consistent recognition of ongoing excellent effort.

APPRECIATION

I want to express my gratitude for your ongoing cooperation and support during this process of transformation. It has been heartening to receive your messages of encouragement, whether through meetings, emails or letters, and to hear of the positive changes that are being noticed. We know that there is still more work to be done, but the support we have received from this community in these early stages has been truly inspiring.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need anything, and we remain committed to providing the best possible experience for our students whom we hold in such high regard.

Yours sincerely,



Nat Parnell
Interim Principal

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