

ASPIRE & ACHIEVE TOGETHER





# Welcome

Dear parents, carers and students

Welcome to the Holcombe Grammar School Prospectus. At Holcombe, our aim is to develop students into successful, well-rounded, confident young people who are equipped with the academic and life skills necessary to thrive in the modern world.

Students at Holcombe are given the academic and intellectual tools to help them structure their thinking and learning effectively, thus enabling them to engage successfully in their studies. We believe in developing our students' understanding of how their brain works and how to deliberately use their brain in the most effective fashion for both academic and personal success.

Every individual is encouraged to 'Be Your Best Self' and there is an emphasis on celebrating student progress as well as attainment. Whilst many students go on to achieve places at Oxford, Cambridge and other Russell Group universities, we celebrate the achievements of all students.

We offer a very successful and diverse range of sports using our excellent facilities, including a new 3G pitch and Football Academy, in partnership with Maidstone United Football Club, as well as our newly refurbished sports hall and state of the art gym.

All of this is delivered in a caring, supportive environment which ensures that every student has a sense of community and belonging.

In April 2018, Ofsted confirmed the findings of their original inspection (2014) and stated that "This school continues to be good". They found that:

- the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.
- the Governors, middle leaders, staff and students share the vision for the school as well as commitment, dedication and work ethic.
- students' progress and attainment continue to be well above national averages.

Holcombe is sponsored by The Thinking Schools Academy Trust and is part of a family of local schools including The Rochester Grammar School, The Victory Academy, The Gordon Children's Academy, All Faiths Children's Academy, Cedar Children's Academy and New Horizons Children's Academy.

There are currently 16 Academies in the Trust covering Kent and Portsmouth. We are a successful and rapidly growing Trust, ranked as the best Academy Trust in the country in 2018 for Secondary performance. It has high expectations, setting ambitious targets for pupils' learning and progress.



Mr Lee Preston  
Principal

# One Community

The sense of community at Holcombe is palpable and is almost woven into the very fabric of the building.

To develop this sense of community, every student is able to participate in a range of activities in the local community. They are offered a variety of school trips that form the basis of their shared experiences and sense of belonging, remembered well after their academic lessons have faded.

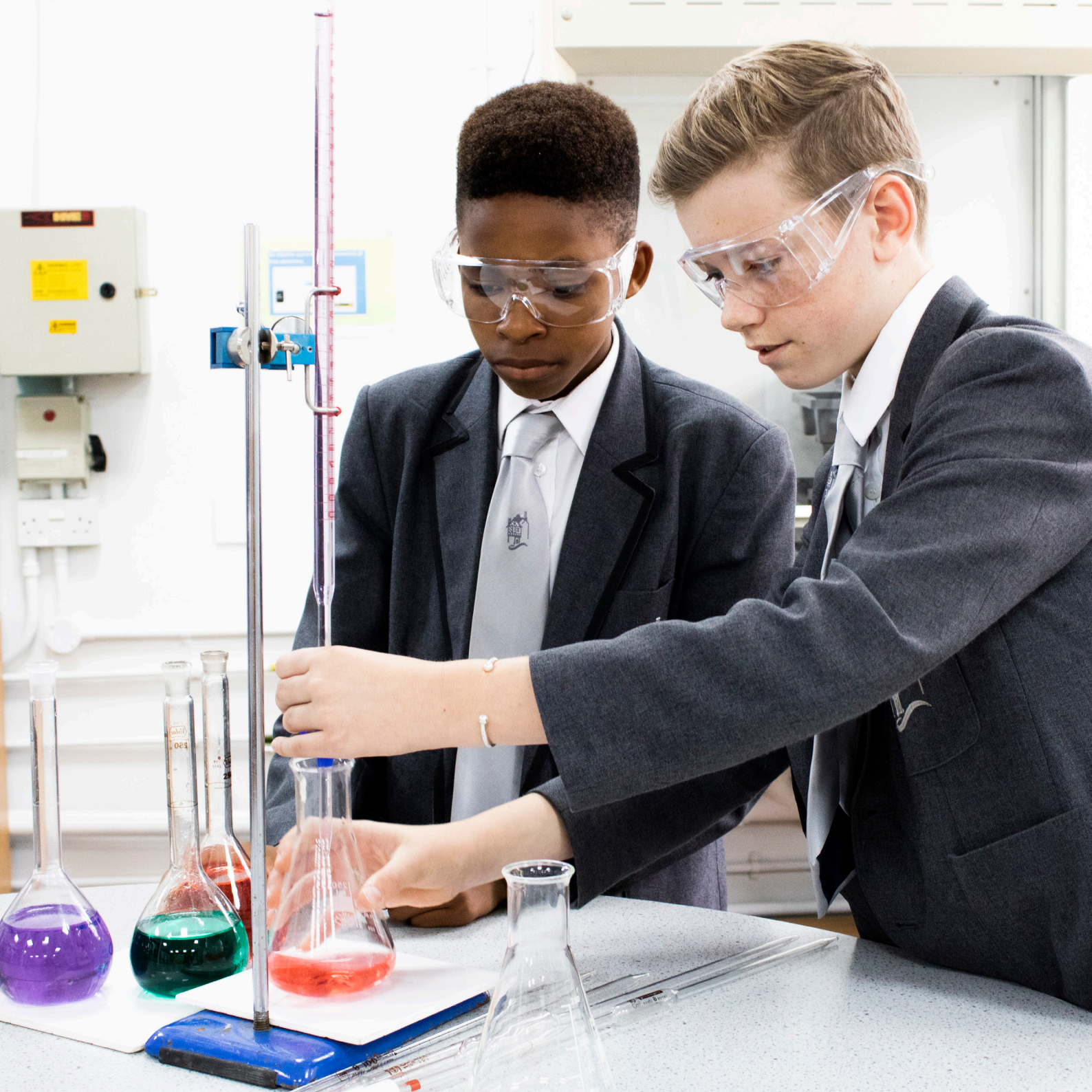
Students have many opportunities to broaden their horizons, including international partnerships, trips and visits, including residential. In addition, our annual Founders' Day is an event that brings staff, students and parents together to celebrate the whole school community and the year gone by.

At Holcombe we have deliberately created a core of activities and experiences that all students in a year group will share, to help them bond as a group and develop lifelong friendships and memories.

**“Holcombe Grammar School’s curriculum is appropriately adapted to the needs, abilities and interests of all pupils. A range of extra-curricular activities further promotes personal development and welfare.”**

Ofsted 2018





# Rewards

At Holcombe we believe it is essential that students receive regular rewards and recognition.

One of the core values at Holcombe is Respect. Students and staff work together to build an environment that encourages self-respect, respect for others, respect for the environment and respect for learning.

Through assemblies and pastoral systems, students have opportunities to work interdependently outside of lessons, to develop the Holcombe habits that enable them to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Students are able to share their opinions in an environment where they will be listened to, challenged and encouraged to respect differing views, in a constructive manner.

By rewarding students for having done the right thing, we reinforce good habits, thereby developing the routines and skills that will make them successful throughout their life.

To reinforce these desired habits and skills, we use a comprehensive reward system for students. Every student has a Reward Card. Teachers are encouraged to give students a House point on the student's Reward Card whenever they see the student exhibiting the behaviour we are trying to reinforce. As students accumulate House Points they gain rewards.

Students also gain prizes every half term in recognition of outstanding performance and progress or effort in academic subjects. In this way student success and demonstration of appropriate work habits are positively reinforced, so that the successful behaviour becomes part of a student's normal routine.



**"I love this school."**

Kydan

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# MET Agenda

The stepping stones to a successful future.

Holcombe Grammar School firmly believes in giving students opportunities to build a successful future for themselves. It has a clear vision of the three stepping stones to a successful future, Mastery, Endeavour and Thinking. This is known as the 'MET' agenda.

Teachers and students strive to become Masters of their chosen fields. This attitude of constant inquisitiveness leads to new ideas being explored, trialled and evaluated, as students push themselves to greater heights.

Mastery of a chosen field does not come without Endeavour. Holcombe's history has strong links with Chatham Dockyard and the sense of industry and hard work has not left the school. At Holcombe, students realise that they will reap the rewards of the effort that they put in both inside and outside of the classroom.

'Thinking' tools provides a structure that enables Holcombe students to understand how they learn. A clear understanding of Metacognition enables members of the Holcombe community to develop skills that serve them long after their time at the School.







# Mastery

At Holcombe we aspire for all our students to achieve their personal best and to 'Be Your Best Self'.

Many of our students achieve the very best academic grades and entry to one of the world's top universities and develop Mastery in their field.

Our students have an excellent track record of achieving university offers from some of the country's most prestigious universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick, Leeds, Bath and Russell Group universities, as well as securing apprenticeships with some of the country's leading companies.

Every student is supported and challenged to make the best of their natural academic talents and leave Holcombe on a pathway to personal success.



**"I have been able to develop all the skills I need to successfully go on to university and my career in medicine."**

Jamie

# Endeavour

Holcombe Grammar School aims to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that caters for the needs of all of our students. We accomplish this within a community, where everyone is treated as an individual that matters. Our curriculum nurtures independent learning through varied and exciting lessons that stimulate and motivate students, and by developing thinking, understanding and creativity. The School encourages high levels of aspiration and mutual cooperation, so every student gains as much from their education and preparation for life as possible.

Students all follow the core subjects from Years 7 – 11. From the start of Year 7 students are able to access an appropriate level of challenge and support to match their level of ability.

Homework is set regularly and allows students to deepen and extend their learning beyond the classroom. We recognise that not all students find homework easy to cope with and so facilities are available for quiet study and support after school and many students take up that opportunity.

In Years 10 – 13 a wide range of GCSE and A Level Subjects are available and whilst all students follow the core curriculum of English, Mathematics, Science and either History or Geography, they are able to choose optional subjects, based upon their preferences and interests, in addition to their career and higher educational aspirations.







# Thinking

In order to support our students in achieving their aspirations we believe in developing our students' ability to think and learn effectively.

At Holcombe we have adopted the Thinking School's approach to teaching and learning. Research from organisations such as the Sutton Trust has repeatedly demonstrated that students who understand how their brains work and, therefore, use their brain more effectively, achieve better academic and personal outcomes than those who do not.

We like to call it the Thinkers' Toolkit. Students are taught a variety of thinking approaches and techniques that they can use to support them in whatever activity they are engaged in. These tools include: Thinking Maps, De Bono's Thinking Hats and Art Costa's Habits of Mind, which we have adapted into the Holcombe Habits.

We are also developing the use of memory tools such as; spaced learning and testing, mnemonics, acrostics and memory bumps such as rhythm and rhyme. This common approach to teaching and learning across a student's lessons means that the school is developing a common language of learning between subjects, teachers and students.

In this way students always have a thinking or memory tool to use to help them complete whatever task they are challenged with, thereby making them much more able to succeed in completing any intellectual challenge they face either at school or later in life.

We also teach our students the skill of Reflection. By developing personal reflection skills, students are able to effectively reflect on their learning and work with teachers to ensure they all make excellent progress.



**“The school’s vision to develop pupils’ thinking skills is having a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching.”**

**Ofsted 2018**

# The Extended Curriculum

There are a number of additional activities available to students. The School offers a huge amount of support outside school, where students can access the expertise of our well qualified, dedicated and experienced staff. Support is available after school, during the school holidays and at weekends in order to help our students to achieve as much as they can in their GCSE and A Level examinations. Whatever the student's talents or abilities the school strives to grow the whole person.

This is why we believe in giving young people responsibilities and opportunities to pursue their passions throughout their time in the school. The outcome of this is the large number of societies and activities the school runs, which are often self-starting, student led and grown to meet the needs of the school community at any given time.

These opportunities are rich and diverse, for example, Sixth Form mentors work with and support younger students; the student library team runs the dedicated fiction library, the School's Captains' team and prefects organise events throughout the year. In this way students develop their passions and achieve their personal ambitions, developing the key "soft skills" of leadership, teamwork and independent action that are critical to the long term success of our students.

In addition to these many activities we also nurture, support and encourage every individual's talents. We have international sportsmen, national club sportsmen with professional contracts and have established a Football Academy in partnership with Maidstone United Football Club and The Victory Academy.

Whatever your ambition, at Holcombe we will support you in achieving your goals.

Extra-Curricular activities are very important to us and we offer a wide range of sports including football, hockey, rugby, athletics, cricket and tennis at levels accessible to, and appropriate for, anyone who wishes to participate. The school encourages students with aspirations to play football at a high level, to receive coaching and support from older, more experienced students, already playing good quality football and who have been supported by the school to work towards coaching qualifications. The House system allows for internal competition, whilst school teams and individuals compete very successfully against local schools, in county competitions and at national and international level. Music offers opportunities for students to participate for fun or to gain qualifications and to perform at a high level.



KERR Ethan  
8048



# Success at Sixth Form

The Sixth Form at Holcombe has successfully supported students in their final transition into the “real world” for many years.

Sixth Form students begin their time with us at a ‘Raising Aspirations Day’. This is a dedicated time during which each sixth former considers their goals for when they leave Year 13 and what they need to do during the Sixth Form to achieve their aspirations. This means from the very outset of their time in the Sixth Form, students understand that this is the final preparation for the next step in their life journey and are consciously thinking about what they are trying to achieve at the end of their time in the Sixth Form.

At this point students accelerate the responsibilities they take in the school: the School Captains’ Team takes responsibility for the organisation of such events as Founders’ Day; House prefects take on the running of their Houses; and academic prefects run the school support programme for fellow students who find a subject challenging.

With the new gym, 3G pitch and our three newly refurbished science laboratories and maths block, we have been able to further enhance the provision and support for our sixth formers. The Sixth Form Centre is built around the same model as a university library with a cafe available for students as well as quiet work areas and computer facilities. Thus students experience and develop the work habits necessary to be successful when they move on to university or the world of work.

“The Sixth Form curriculum provides an appropriate range of courses which is responsive to pupils’ aptitudes and future needs, as evidenced through the high staying-on rates.”

Ofsted 2018



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