

We have all made it to the end of another academic year. Again it's been a year unlike any other as we have had to continue to wrestle with COVID throughout the year but I am proud of all we have done to maintain a great level of education throughout. Whilst, like all schools, we were hit with our fair share of staff and student absences and I am proud that the school has remained open every single day. Then this week we have had to contend with the hottest days ever recorded in the UK – again we remained open for all who wished to attend and ensured that learning was able to continue.

I would like to start this Blog by thanking all of our incredible staff for all they have done all year, through and beyond COVID. Your children are all in very safe hands due to the commitment and dedication of our staff and I am very grateful to them. I would like also to thank all of you as our parents for all of your support this year; particularly those of you who have taken the time to come and meet with us whenever you have concerns. We deeply value face-to-face communication and always appreciate it when parents come onto site and speak with us in person.

I would also like to sincerely thank all those of you who recently completed our parent survey. We had over 300 responses which we have been analysing. We are making changes to how we do certain things as a result of this survey and I will provide further updates about these changes in September.

Finally a huge thank you to all our amazing students who continue to demonstrate great resilience and enthusiasm for their school.

We are making several improvements to the school site over the summer break and I am pleased to let you know that when we return we should see:

- A new refurbished main hall
- A new drama studio
- Improved queuing system in the canteen

- New 'wall-art' in Science to really brighten up that area of the school
- Some new and some improved student toilets in B Block and A Block
- Lots of new carpeting, blinds and painting in various areas of the school

This would not be possible without the efforts of many colleagues over the summer and I am grateful to those for all they will do here. I am excited to return in September to see all this in place and we will share pictures in our September blog.

In addition to the site being open for all of this work, site will of course also be open for the A level results day (18<sup>th</sup> August) and the GCSE results day (25<sup>th</sup> August). We are excited to see our Year 11 and Year 13 students on this date and hope to be celebrating with you all.

Finally at this time of year it is always sad that we must say farewell to some colleagues who are leaving us. This year we say farewell to Mrs Barnard, Miss Bennett, Miss Firestone, Miss Fox, Mr Gill, Miss Goddard, Mr Lee, Miss Lloyd, Mr Middleton, Mrs Uzochukwu and Dr Zhao. Mrs Villalta has been a huge support for the school over several years and is moving on to a more central role with our Trust in September; I thank her very much and wish her well. I would also like to say an enormous thank you to Mrs Sutton and Mrs Tanner who are leaving their current roles after many amazing years of service here, though I am delighted that both will still be here on a part-time basis in September, in new roles. Our appreciation to you all.

### **Key Dates 2022 -**

- **Thursday 21st July - Last Day of Term 6, School will Finish at 12:30pm (coaches and buses have been notified)**
- **Monday 5th September - First Day Back for Years 7 and 12**
- **Tuesday 6th September - First Day Back for Whole School (WEEK A)**

Next year we will welcome Mrs Arnold (Attendance) Mrs Brown (MFL), Miss Darlington (Science technician), Mr Faulkner (English and History), Miss Geldart (English), Miss King (Science), Miss Leighfield (Social Sciences), Miss Locke (Cover Supervisor), Mrs Morris (Media), Mrs Owolabi (Business), Miss Pathberiya (Music), Miss Peres (Social Sciences), Miss Read (PA) Miss Sheikh (Science), Miss Usmanali (Maths), Mr Williams (Maths) and Mr Wrigley (History).

My very best wishes to you all for a happy and relaxing summer. Thank you for all of your ongoing support and we look forward to welcoming everyone back in September.

Mr L. Preston  
Principal

## Equipment for September

A reminder that students should have with them, at all times, access to black, blue and green pens. Please see below, the use of these pens. Please also note the requirement, from September, for parents/carers to initial home learning and extended writing before student submission.

**Which colour should I be using?**

**WRITTEN WORK**  
We expect all written work to be completed in **BLACK INK**

**PROOF READING**  
**BLUE INK** to proof read homework and extended written pieces correcting factual spelling and grammar errors  
Proof Reading: This needs to be done before students submit their work and initialed by their parents also.

**STUDENT RESPONSES**  
Student responses and peer assessments will be completed in **GREEN INK**

Students who do not have the correct colour to complete the task set by their teacher will receive a sanction on their Reward and Sanction card.

## The Big Quiz - Round 2 Winners

Well done to the following students who made the top three in our round two Holcombe Big Quiz final. They will receive prizes on the last day of term - and progress through to the Trust stage of the competition in term one of the next academic year.

- Cameron Abbott
- Alex Novetschi
- Barayturk Aydin

Congratulations quizzers!

## Classcharts

We have been reviewing many of our internal systems this year, and have come to the conclusion that our current behaviour information system (Behaviourwatch) is not as effective as we would like. We will therefore be switching across to a new system in September – Classcharts. This system is currently used in some other schools in our Trust and they are seeing a great impact, both in terms of student behaviour, but also parental communication.

We will issue further guidance on the use of this system throughout September and the rest of the year to come, but we wanted to let you know that this system is coming and two of the main advantages we feel you and your child will benefit from:

### More parental awareness:

Parents will be able to download an app for smart devices which will tie in with our system. This will give you updates on the positive and negative points being earned by your child during the school day. It will also inform you if they have been set a detention, when it is and what for, as well as informing you when your child attends this. We are hopeful that this will both enable you to be more informed about your child's day in general, but also that it will spark more useful conversations at home where praise can be shared. You will get a feed of comments for your child, as well as charts and graphs which represent an overview of your child's achievement and behaviour data within a customisable time frame.



### More positive comments:

Our old system revolved around longer written reports, which would often reduce the amount of positive comments that students would receive. Positive comments on classcharts can be added en masse, and in a matter of seconds. We are aiming for those students who push themselves academically and may go less referenced in traditional reporting will shine and afford families the chance to see their efforts recognised.

**+1 John Doe**  
Good progress awarded by Mr C Potter.  
This is a preview note

**-1 John Doe**  
Arguing awarded by Mr C Potter.  
This is a preview note

## School Shoes

Many thanks to all parents for your support on our drive this year to improve standards of dress around the school. We have seen a significant reduction in hoodies being worn and the vast majority of students are now wearing appropriate smart school shoes.

There has been some confusion from families re: trainers so please allow us to reiterate that trainers *may* be worn as part of PE lessons, or whilst on the 3G pitch or field or playground at lunchtime. They should not be worn elsewhere or at other times on site. Students do not have access to the 3G or field before or after school, or at break time, so there is no other need to wear trainers. Some companies have begun marketing black leather trainers as school shoes, which has put families in a difficult position. Simply, we accept black, smart, leather or leather effect shoes, with no visible logos as school shoes. As smartness is a subjective matter, I have attached some guidance below to help in determining purchases of school shoes. However, a determination in any instance will come down to the school's judgement, so it is best for students to be on the safe side. Two of the popular styles that we are still seeing sometimes in school are Nike Air Forces and Plimsol style trainers, similar to Converse trainers. Both of these are trainers and will be treated as such (both are also pictured below).

If your child currently does not have appropriate school shoes, please use the upcoming holiday to purchase appropriate footwear for them. If this is an issue, please contact your child's head of year to discuss.

Non-exhaustive guidance on shoes:



These are all trainers, sports styles, canvas or other fabrics and other colours than black.



These are all appropriate school shoes, they are plain black, leather or leather effect. They are all suitably smart for school.

Furthermore, please do allow me to remind all that as stated in student planners, socks should be black or dark grey. Again, if this is not currently the case for your child, please ensure you use the upcoming holiday to purchase appropriate socks for them.

Many thanks for your ongoing support in upholding our standard.

## Gas Works on Letchworth Avenue, Park Crescent and Magpie Hall Road

We have been alerted about the below Gas works that are happening near to the school over the summer. Residents have been informed. As you can see the aim is that this work should be completed before term starts in September, but if they should overrun we wanted you to be aware that this may be an issue when we return.

*We will have two/three teams completing these works, Walderslade Road has two gas mains, one of which is a large diameter main. One team will spend the full length of school holidays working on the large size main down Walderslade Road from Maidstone Road to Wayfield Avenue. They will not overrun as they will have to have this road opened for the start on school.*

*Our other teams will be starting on Park Crescent and Walderslade Road. We are hoping these roads take 2 – 3 week and then they will go into Letchworth Avenue and Bournville Avenue. The aim is too get all of these works completed by the time of schools returning, currently we have Magpie Hall Road from Palmerston Road to Kitchener Avenue planned for September during school terms as there are sufficient routes around, I appreciate that summer school months would be perfect for all this works but we have over 3000m to try and complete in a six week period so some there was always going to be some that needed to be done in school term.*



## Behaviour and Conduct

As I am sure you are aware, we introduced a new behaviour policy in September which has largely seen an improvement in conduct around the site and in lessons. We have been reviewing the impact and implementation of this throughout the year and will be adjusting the policy into next September in a number of ways. These adjustments should build further consistency for your child, as well as addressing concerns raised in pupil, parent and staff surveys.

### Raised expectations:

Our policy makes clear that we expect our students to show good conduct and engage well in their learning as a matter of habit. As a grammar school, we feel this is reasonable and not something that is asking too much of our students. Therefore, we will be reducing the amount of warnings students receive before a reconciliation detention is set. We have found that the majority of students behave exactly as we would expect without warnings, and those who need warnings, largely behave at the stage before detentions are issued. This should help to eliminate low level disruption and lack of engagement across our school. We are also highlighting key Holcombe Habits that we expect our students to demonstrate in class and around school, which you should see them being rewarded for throughout the year.

### Simpler detentions system:

This year, staff have been issuing detentions ranging from 5 minutes at break, all the way through to 2 hours after school. This has led to confusion for pupils and parents of exactly when and for how long detentions are, as well as creating logistical issues in managing these. It has also led to students trying to rearrange detentions for another timeslot more convenient to them, creating unnecessary conflict.

Moving forward, we will be removing all break and lunchtime detentions. This means that staff and students will generally have the opportunity to have breaks throughout their day. Furthermore, we will be simplifying the types of detentions issued. Reconciliation detentions will now always be for 30 minutes after school with the issuing teacher. School detentions will continue as 60 minutes, run centrally. SLT detentions of 2 hours on a Wednesday will be removed. Should a student fail to attend a reconciliation detention, they will be issued a school detention. Should a student fail to attend a school detention, they will be issued with a day in the Bridge.

### The Bridge:

The Bridge, our internal exclusion unit, will also see some changes next year. The Bridge will run from 8:30-16:00, so any student who receives a day in the Bridge as a sanction will need to ensure they have appropriate travel arrangements in place. Students will also have their free time limited in the Bridge, and it will not be at the same time as other students.

In summary, we have listened to comments in student, parent and staff surveys to ensure that we are acting to encourage the best behaviours from our students and enabling our staff to apply these systems and expectations clearly and consistently. We hope that with these changes, as well as the introduction of our new classcharts system (introduced in another article in this blog) you will see your child continue to develop and achieve with us.

## Year 8 Thinking Day

These are the testimonies of our Thinking Ambassadors:

*The work was done up to an acceptable and good standard and we are pleased we were able to help others progress in their thinking knowledge, as well as our own.*

From Taylor Mortimer

*At the beginning of sessions, they had slight understanding of some of the tools but by the end of sessions they understood how to use the thinking tools, when to use them and their purpose. For example, most students did not have knowledge on a bridge map as it is the least used thinking map, but after some explanations they were able to make their own examples.*

From Joshua Sanni

*Last week, I was sent to 8 Conquest for the day to help and support them with the thinking skills. On an overall, it was very successful, as I feel that 8 Conquest, by the end of the day had a stronger idea of the skills that our trust strives to achieve. On this day, students learnt about thinking hats; thinking maps; growth and fixed mindsets; and finally, the science of learning. The teachers demonstrated these skills to a high standard, and I applaud all those who helped organise the day.*

From Henry Milner

*Overall, I enjoyed thinking day a lot, not only with the aspect of teaching others but learning as well. I feel as if I learned a lot personally from Miss Cook's science of learning class since I wasn't fully aware of what it was before. Thank you to all the teachers doing perfect as usual. Thank you Miss Cook, Miss Ortega, Mr Claessens, Mr Rayner and Miss Lee.*

From Harlem Hodges

## Artsmark

Holcombe Grammar School is currently on its Artsmark journey. Artsmark supports and celebrates education settings that champion creative education for all children. Part of that journey was the Artsmark's Day to Create, on 6<sup>th</sup> July. Day to Create was about enabling children to discover their creative potential, express themselves freely and take ownership with confidence. During that week, students were provided with opportunities including:

- Drama workshop
- Create your own workout plan in the gym
- Lego club
- The winner of the set design was judged by a professional performer
- Creative writing workshop
- Design an app workshop

### Shoebox Set Design Competition

Congratulations to Zachary Williams in year 7, who entered the drama competition last term. All entries were passed on to a professional performer and he had the very difficult job of judging them. Here is a photo of the winning entry and a message from Mr Richard Taylor Woods:

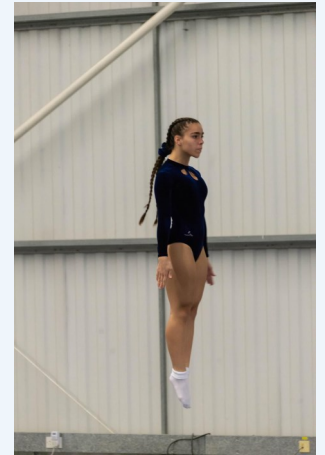
"All of the shoebox set designs are very impressive and it's been very difficult to pick a winner. Everyone should be very proud of their hard work. I have picked Alice in Wonderland as my winner. It has that extra bit of detail, is very colourful and eye catching. Congratulations to the winner and congratulations to everyone who created the designs. Keep up the good work in the future!"



## English Championships

One of our Year 12 pupils, Canay Sagbasan, competed at the English Championships for Trampolining on the 16th July. She scored eights in her first routine. She also competed at DMT the same weekend where she came 4th overall with a two mark deduction for landing in the blue zone. Without the deduction she would've been placed in 2nd place! She has nationals in September, Regional Training in a few weeks and 'Kent Closed' in November.

Well done!



### Summer Inter-House

Our final inter-house took place last week, the winning forms were:

- 7 Guardian
- 8 Barfleur
- 9 Shannon
- 10 Conquest

All the winning forms received a tag day to congratulate them.

### Year 10 Celebration Assembly

Our Year 10 students had their hard work throughout the year recognised in our Celebration Assembly on the last day of the term. Over 150 certificates were awarded and a large number of students received Amazon vouchers as recognition of their hard work and efforts in preparation for Year 11. Our Reward Card Raffle winners were:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> place - £20 of Amazon vouchers: Mathusan Athiththan (Guardian), Adam Fletcher-Evans (Guardian) and Clinton Nwaigbo (Conquest)  
2<sup>nd</sup> place - £30 of Amazon vouchers: Barayturk Aydin (Conquest)  
1<sup>st</sup> place - £50 of Amazon vouchers: Ola Thompson (Conquest)

A very big well done to all Year 10 students for their excellent efforts throughout the school year. We very much look forward to their further success in Year 11.

Thinking at Holcombe

The focus this edition is *Self-Regulation*.

Findings from the Education Endowment Foundation claim that self-regulatory practices can increase up to seven months of academic progress amongst pupils. At Holcombe we as educators provide a range of interventions and support in lessons to motivate pupils alongside self-regulatory practices. But what exactly is self-regulation?

Self-regulated learning can be broken into three essential components:

**Cognition** – the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning

**Metacognition** – often defined as ‘learning to learn’; and

**Motivation** – willingness to engage our metacognitive and cognitive skills.

This addition of Thinking at Holcombe is dedicated to the tertiary component – motivation. Being motivated as a learner, maintaining high expectations of one’s self and preparedness for learning contribute massively to our student’s success. It is essential that an outstanding school provides opportunity for pupils to reflect on and monitor their strengths and areas of improvement, and plan how to overcome current difficulties.

The 2022-23 Holcombe student planner will play a crucial role in this opportunity. Our traditional planner has significantly changed. Instead of listing dates of the week, students will be provided with fortnightly ‘notes’ pages. Going forward, the focus of the planner will delineate reflection.

Opportunities for reflection, motivation and self-regulation in the school planner include:

- What has gone well this week? What challenges have you faced?
- From this, what target can you set for yourself?
- List and elaborate on any memorable knowledge, skills and content from lessons this week.

Each week students will also complete a detailed reflection activity linked to both our academic and pastoral curriculum. The goal is for students to ‘Be Their Best Self’ - a phrase that has become something of a mantra at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. Included in this edition is an example of a reflection activity, and relevant tasks that will be included in the Holcombe planner for the next academic year:

### Knowing Your Mind

The science is clear—our brain responds to the resources we provide it. You may have seen the evidence of this in your own habits in class and around the school. Answer the following questions as they apply to your own character. Consider how you might use these responses to complete your reflection and target setting this week:

Certain foods can help support your brain health and boost your memory and mood. What is your favourite food? Is this food healthy? If not, how could you change?

HA HA HA

Laughter can increase problem-solving skills. What makes you laugh?

Sleep keeps your brain healthy. What prevents you from sleeping? What could you do to stop this from happening? What things help you fall asleep?

The way you think and feel about yourself can help or hinder your efforts. Thinking positively can help you achieve your goals. What do you like about yourself?

Physical activity boosts blood flow to the brain and improves concentration, focus and creativity. What physical activity do you enjoy? Could you do more? If yes, what more could you do?

Weekly Student Reflection: Week 8, week beginning 22.05.23

|  |   |
|--|---|
| What went well this week?  | What challenges have you faced this week? |
| What is your target for next week?   |   |
| What is the most significant take-away from this week's reflection activity? |   |
| Memorable content learnt this week:  |   |

DofE Update

Message from Mr Phillips:

As we quickly approach the end of term the summer holiday gives participants a perfect opportunity to update their eDofE account with their progress and get assessors comment completed and signed off. If anyone is not too sure of their login details for their eDofE account please email [gps02@tsatrust.org.uk](mailto:gps02@tsatrust.org.uk) from your school email account and I will reset your account and forward to you these new details.

Good luck and have a great summer!

## Cultural Capital at Holcombe Grammar

This term has been a very busy one for Holcombe Student Representatives. On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June students from Years 10 and 12 participated in the inaugural TSA Trust Student Leadership Conference which focused upon Equality and Diversity, Charity and Wellbeing, Student Magazine and the Students' Council. Students from Holcombe collaborated with others from across the TSA Trust on issues that are common to young people across the Trust. They came away with new ideas which they will implement in the new school year.

The second TSA Trust Student Conference was called Earth Alliance and took place on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July. Holcombe students got the opportunity to express their views on the impact of climate change on our planet. The students enjoyed the time spent collaborating with others. Here is what they had to say:

'I found the conference very useful and impactful. 'There is more plastic in the ocean than stars in the milky way,' was the boldest statement from the conference. I learnt that smart meters are being installed and our school should have one to make a difference in our energy usage'. **(Henry Stephens, Year 10 Student Representative)**

'My favourite part of the meeting was learning about the wildlife and the trees and how we have affected them as it made me aware of this ongoing issue and want to help these things. Specifically, the facts like only 4% of animals are actually free animals and that over half of the trees have been cut down.' **(Raza Haisnain, Year 10 Student Representative)**

'Overall, I found this meeting interesting as I learned a variety of information and sought opportunities to make my local region and school more environmentally friendly and carbon neutral.' **(Baryaturk Aydin, Year 10 Student Representative)**

Student representation continued to shine as Holcombe was represented at the Medway Youth Council Conference which was held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July. Holcombe was represented by Finn Dewane (year 8) Toluwanimi Williams (year 9) and Henry Stephens (Year 10). The students discussed issues around the topic, '**Poverty- The impact on young people**'. It was an enjoyable day and by all accounts these three students represented our school well.

'I was very impressed with the 3 students who came with me yesterday and thought the whole conference was very well organised and engaging for the students. They interacted well with other schools and they used the opportunity to discuss important issues several times to raise concerns and address the panel for the Q&A. It was a rewarding day all round.' – Mrs J. Fox.

