



## Principal's Blog

A belated welcome back to you all. I am sure that we have all reflected on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and in our own way given thanks for her 70 years of service. We have respectfully observed the national period of mourning and as a result have delayed publication of our first blog of the year, until now.

We had a very successful summer at the school with Year 13 and Year 11 students celebrating some excellent examinations results. We published details about these results earlier in the month but if you missed it then you can read their successes on the attached documents.

In addition to the examination results, I am also pleased to inform you all that many improvements were made to the school this summer. The major improvement was to the main hall which is now a first rate performance venue with new seating, lighting and sound in place. We also have created a brand new drama studio which should lead to even greater drama performances this year under the leadership of Mrs Willis, building on the great successes of last year. B Block is also transformed after a significant amount of work has gone on to improve the look of the corridors and the toilets. Smaller projects included new toilets for 6<sup>th</sup> formers going in near to the Hive and a range of carpeting, painting and general sprucing up work which has made the site look as good as it has in some time. We still have plans for further improvement but we are very pleased and proud of the works completes this summer.

In this first blog of the year I wanted to update you all on the parents survey that many of you completed for us back in the summer. Thank you to all those who contributed to this survey. We have listened very carefully to your comments in making the range improvements set out overleaf.

Enjoy reading the contents of this blog. I will look forward to updating you further in two weeks time.

Mr L.Preston

Principal

Holcombe Grammar School

## Key Dates 2022 -

- **Tuesday 27th September - New Year 12 Evening**
- **Thursday 29th September - Year 7 Settling in Evening**
- **Saturday 8th October - Open Morning**
- **Thursday 20th October - Last Day of Term**
- **Friday 21st October - Staff Development Day**
- **Monday 31st October - Staff Development Day**
- **Tuesday 1st November - First Day of Term**
- **Friday 18th November - Day off in lieu of Open Morning**

## Parents survey feedback

At the end of last term we asked parents to complete an online survey for us and we are hugely grateful that nearly 350 parents took the time to do so. I wanted to feedback on the outcomes of this survey in this first blog of the year.

First of all, it was heartening to read your thoughts on what the school is doing well.

- 87% of parents agreed that your child is happy at the school
- 91% felt that your child was safe at school
- 87% said that the school has high expectations for their child
- 88% said there was a good range of subjects available
- 81% would recommend the school to another parent

The below positive comments were each made by more than 30 parents when asked what you thought were current strengths of the school:

- Communication (especially the fortnightly blog that is sent home)
- Discipline is good
- School is friendly / supportive / caring
- Range of subjects, taught by caring specialists
- Range of extra-curricular clubs available

These numbers are of course very pleasing but we still have work to do in some of these areas to try to ensure even more parents agree with these statements in future.

The survey also highlighted where we need to do better:

- Only 46% agreed that the school made them fully aware of what their child will be learning
- Only 69% felt that there were regular updates of how their child was doing (behaviour / attendance / rewards etc)
- Only 61% felt that the school supports wider personal development

The most commonly mentioned 'Even Better If' comments were:

- More updates needed on how my child is progressing (behaviour / attendance / rewards etc)
- Behaviour of some students disrupt learning of others
- Communication could improve further – such as daily updates
- Personal development work should improve
- More time for parents evenings appointments / return to face to face parents evenings

It is so useful to receive this feedback so thanks to all of those who took the time to complete the survey. In response to this feedback I thought it useful to update you at the start of the year on how we are aiming to improve the school in light of these comments this year:

Comment	Our response
Parents need to be more aware of what their child will be learning	The curriculum section of our website has been updated over the summer so students and parents can now be more aware of what your child is learning.  Each subject now lists what is being taught during the year and 'Learning Journeys' can be seen for each subject. <a href="https://www.holcombegrammar.org.uk/learn-with-us/subjects/">https://www.holcombegrammar.org.uk/learn-with-us/subjects/</a> We will also be asking parents to sign significant pieces of h/w that students complete so that we know that parents have seen the work that their child is producing. More information will follow on this.
More updates needed on how my child is progressing (behaviour / attendance / rewards etc)	We have invested in the 'Classcharts' App. This will allow parents much greater access to see how your child is doing at school. Information on this was published in the blog at the end of last term.  **For further information on Classcharts please see other email sent out today, Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> September
Behaviour of some students disrupt learning of others	Our behaviour policy has been strengthened and training for staff has been completed in September. No student should have their learning disrupted by others and staff will be equipped with tools to ensure this does not happen. The Classcharts App will also quickly and clearly show parents how your child is behaving in school.
Communication could improve further – such as daily updates	We believe that the new Classcharts App will dramatically improve parents awareness of how your child is doing at school. This will provide real-time updates on your child's attendance, behaviour and rewards received.  We are also looking at our Social Media presence to see how we can improve here too.
Personal development work should improve	We have revamped our 'life skills' curriculum into 'Personal Development'. These lessons will now be taught weekly (Tuesday p5 each week) by the Form Tutor for all years 7-13.  In addition to this the planner has been changed for the coming year and Tutors will complete more personal development activities with their Tutees.  Please do ask your child to share their planner with you, or get them to tell you what they are learning in Personal Development lessons this term.
Lengthier online parents evenings appointments / return to face to face parents evenings	We will continue to consider this as a Senior Team and will provide updates later in the term. We understand that many parents, particularly of older students, want either more lengthy online discussions about their child's progress and/or the return to face to face discussions. Others though have spoken very highly about the benefits of holding brief parents evenings online.

## Second-Hand Uniform at HGS

Further to our consultation with parents we are pleased to announce the launch of Holcombe's second-hand uniform initiative

**DROP** off unwanted uniform,  
**SWAP** for an alternative,  
**SHOP** for a small donation

We will be open for parents/students to drop unwanted, outgrown uniform to the school over the course of 2 weeks.

Please see attached feedback from the consultation, which informed this scheme. We welcomed your feedback and thank you for taking the time to complete our survey.



### Term 1:

**Drop: 3<sup>rd</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October 22**

**Swap: w/c 17<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> October 22 for students at break/lunch**

**Shop: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 3.15-6.00 pm**

### Term 2:

**Drop: 9<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> January 23**

**Swap: w/c 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 23 for students at break/lunch**

**Shop: Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September 3.15-6.00 pm**

### Term 3:

**Drop: 17<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 23**

**Swap: w/c 2<sup>nd</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> May 23 for students at break/lunch**

**Shop: Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 3.15-6.00 pm**

Who is responsible for the scheme?

The scheme will be overseen by the Student Services Department, with assistance from the 6<sup>th</sup> form student leadership team and parent/student and staff volunteers.

Drop request:

Please ensure any clothes being dropped to school are clean and are dropped to the main office/reception in bags within the designated drop dates and not outside of these please. Clothes will then be sorted and groups by type, size, etc. ready for swapping/shopping dates.

Where will swap/shop be available from:

Clothes will be displayed for swap/shop events in the building opposite reception and will be signposted on the dates designated. The area will be manned during the times advertised.

Access to stored second hand uniform may be available on special request at alternative times of year, dependent on need.

Hardship support

Please contact student services if your child is in receipt of free school meals and you require financial support to obtain items of uniform required by the school.







If not in receipt of free school meals, but experiencing difficulties, please do contact Student Services who will do their best to support you.



## Seneca

Seneca Top tip – if you have forgotten your password, your teacher can reset it for you.

Holcombe Grammar still topping the local league table for use of Seneca.

1	 Holcombe Grammar School Chatham, Medway	School synced	190,761
2	 Rainham School for Girls Gillingham, Medway		43,078
3	 Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School Rochester, Medway		36,216
4	 St John Fisher Catholic Comprehensive School Chatham, Medway		31,976
5	 Rainham Mark Grammar School Gillingham, Medway		31,540
6	 The Thomas Aveling School Rochester, Medway		30,729

## Year 7 and new Year 12 Students - What is Seneca?

[Seneca Learning](#) is an online learning platform that has high-quality courses for all subjects at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, GCSE and A Level. This will add to the comprehensive resources that your child can already access through Microsoft Teams.

Your child will be able to log into Seneca on phone, tablet or computer and study any of their school subjects. Seneca's Premium pass offers them access to:

- Over **800 online courses** such as Hardest Questions, Predicted Papers, and HyperLearning.
- **Smart Learning Mode** which uses data & neuroscience to tell your child exactly what to learn and when to learn it.
- **Wrong Answer Mode** helps students learn as quickly as possible.

## How should your child use Seneca Premium?

For your child to make the most of this fantastic resource, we recommend:

- Students should complete the homework set by their teachers on Seneca.
- Students should use all the different course types available on Seneca.
- Students should use Seneca little and often throughout the year rather than using it to cram in the weeks before their exams.

**All student accounts have been set up with their school email addresses.**

Seneca also provides free parent accounts. Their free parent accounts allow you to track your child's learning or learn alongside your son. This can help make conversations about school and learning easier.

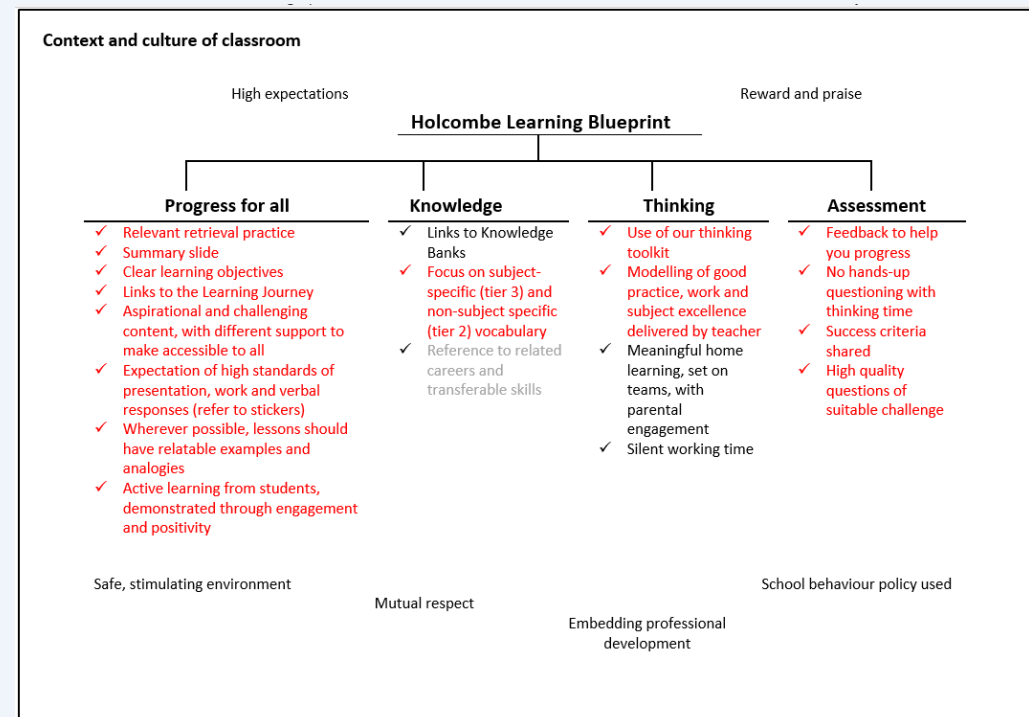
You can sign up for a free Seneca parent account here: [app.senecalearning.com/parent](https://app.senecalearning.com/parent)

Seneca have made this handy [2 minute video](#) to help you get started. Or you can [read how to get your free account](#) if you'd prefer.

If you have any questions about how Seneca works, you can get support from the Seneca team using the live chat on their website or you can email them at [learnmore@seneca.io](mailto:learnmore@seneca.io).

## Holcombe Teaching and Learning Blueprint

Our Thinking, Teaching and Learning Drive Team have, in consultation with Senior Leaders, developed a Teaching and Learning Blueprint detailing what we would like a lesson to contain or demonstrate. Below is a student and parent friendly version of the blueprint:



Points in red should be seen in lessons regularly. Those in black are as appropriate, whilst those in grey might be less frequently seen. You may wish to use this as a point of discussion with your child when reflecting on their academic day.

## Thinking at Holcombe

The focus this edition is *The Be Your Best Self Student Planner*.

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. Much of these practices will be evidence in the new 2022-23 academic planner. For parents, we would like to communicate just what will be included in this planner as well as how to use it to track your child's progress at Holcombe.

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

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 weekly 'notes' pages, which can be used for recording notices, notes between school and home, key events, reminders etc. 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:

**Callout 1:** 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?

**Callout 2:** Laughter can increase problem-solving skills. What makes you laugh?

**Callout 3:** 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?

**Callout 4:** 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?

**Callout 5:** 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?

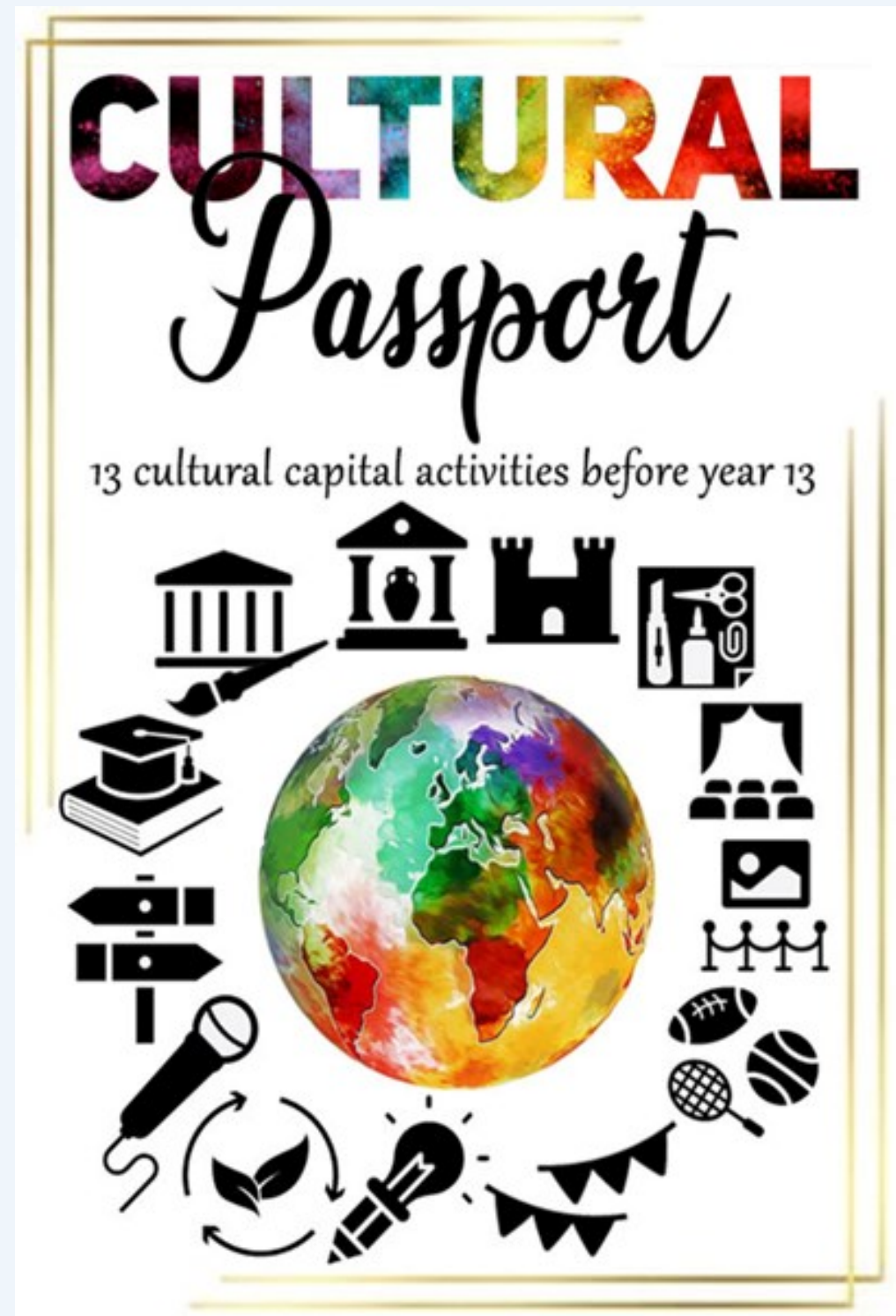
Weekly Student Reflection: Week B, week beginning 22.05.23	
What went well this week?	What challenges have you faced this week?
What is your target for next week?	
What is the most significant take-away from this week's reflection activity?	
Memorable content learnt this week:	

**Another significant change to the planner is the Cultural Passport:**

The Cultural Passport will allow students to track and document cultural activities and events both in and beyond their school life including any experiences, creations and participations. In this component, students will explore the benefits of cultural participation in their life. Please have a glance at the planner to see the many different cultural opportunities that your child will experience throughout their journey here at Holcombe.

**Some other key content for parents that will be included in your child's planner include:**

- A contact list for student support
- Policies and expectations for students
- Term dates and lesson timetables
- Toolkit and guidance on using thinking skills (Hats, Maps, Keys and Habits)
- Core revision strategies
- Learning materials to support with literacy, questioning and answering and subject specific resources







Holcombe Grammar School Presents

DREAMWORKS THEATRICALS  
**SHREK**  
The Musical JR.  
**AUDITIONS!**

Wednesday 28th September 2022

3:15pm

Main Hall

If you wish to have a singing role, you will sing a chorus from a song of your choice. You will be given a script at the start of the audition and will perform this.

Based on the DreamWorks Animation Motion Picture and the Book by William Steig.  
Book and Lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire. Music by Jeanine Tesori.  
Originally produced on Broadway by DreamWorks Theatricals and Neal Street Productions  
Original Production Directed by Jason Moore and Rob Ashford.  
"I'm a Believer" by Neil Diamond.

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International.  
All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI [www.mtishows.co.uk](http://www.mtishows.co.uk)



WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER

3:15PM

**OPEN TO ALL**

Musicians, singers, dancers, rappers, actors, comedians, magicians, football freestylers, lip syncers etc

**MAIN HALL**

for more information visit

MRS WILLIS IN THE DRAMA STUDIO

## Sixth Form Sporting Successes

### Canay Sagbasan 13.7

On the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022 Canay competed and represented the Southeast, in the Inter-Regionals Challenge Cup Trampoline Championships, held at the English Institution of Sport in Sheffield.

She competed in the DMT (Double Mini Trampoline Event), achieving second place overall, meaning she is the second best in the UK, having competed against competitors from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There were three qualifying competitions throughout the year leading up to the Inter-Regionals Challenge Cup. There were 12 regions in the UK, and the top two from each region were then selected to represent their region. Canay came first in her region and was selected to represent the Southeast in DMT for internationals. This was held in Sheffield at the English Institute of Sport, with the competition being held between the 2nd and 4th of September. Canay competed against 24 other individuals from the other 12 regions which includes Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. At the end of the competition Canay achieved 2nd place overall with a points difference of only 0.2 separating her from first place.



### Bella Poole 13.2

Bella has played rugby union for almost 4 years now, at U15s Level she was selected to play for Kent, and has played for them ever since. Most recently, she was put forward by her county to trial for the rugby centre of excellence and received an offer meaning she would be training and playing for the premiership team Wasps RFC for a month.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> September Bella was, informed that as a result of her impressive performances at the Malvern Rugby Festival with Wasps, she has been invited back to play with Wasps throughout the 22/23 season and is to attend her first training session on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022.



### **TSAT: Parent/Guardian Digital Communication Questionnaire**

We are currently undertaking a review of our Digital Learning provision in school, how we communicate with parents regarding digital learning and how students engage with our digital provision.

Please follow this link to an online questionnaire, which should take around 5-10 minutes to complete: [Parent/Guardian Digital Communication - TSAT eDCR](#)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short form. It is designed to help our school better understand our use of technology and how it can improve to benefit all areas of school life.



# ICON

An Icon Theatre Production

★★★★★  
**'SIMPLY TERRIFIC'**  
The Times (on Release)

## The Ballad of St John's Car Park



**WED 5 - SAT 8 OCT 7.30PM (& 2.30PM SAT)**  
**ST GEORGE HOTEL, CHATHAM**

### ICON Theatre

Holcombe Grammar School students have been busy rehearsing with ICON Theatre, to prepare for their performance in a local piece of theatre, 'The Ballad of St John's Carpark'. It takes inspiration from real tales of local activism and draws on real-life events specific to the Medway towns and its people. The show celebrates the positive power of community protest and activism in Medway, from the closure of Chatham's Dockyard in 1984 to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. Please see the flyer for more information.



### Year 7 Computer Science

Year 7 in Computer Science were challenged this week to create their ideal online citizen. 7 Conquest showcased some fantastic creativity and emotional thinking about not only the techniques and skills of a good digital citizen but also the impact of their actions on others.

Well done 7 Conquest!!

