The transition from primary to secondary school will be an exciting and significant life event this September. We have constructed this booklet to provide useful information and respond to frequently asked questions from parents of new year 7 students. You might need to refer to this in September and later in the year as you settle in to our school community. May this summer to be a wonderful time of preparation and we look forward to welcoming you to Holcombe next year. In the meantime, if you have any questions that are not answered in this booklet, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Rebecca Martin
Head of Year 7

School phone number (01634) 830083
Student absence line (01634) 821965
If I have a question, who do I contact first?

Your first port of call will depend on what your enquiry is about. If it is subject related, you will need to talk to the member of staff who teaches your son. You will find such information on the timetable your son will be given at the start of term. The easiest way to do this is to email office@Holcombegrammar.org.uk for the attention of the named teacher.

Your son’s form tutor will be the person to contact if you have any worries about him pastorally. The best way to communicate is also by email.

For any other issues regarding your son you should contact myself as Head of Year 7. I am here to oversee his behavioural development and academic progress during his first year with us at Holcombe. With the team of excellent form tutors and pastoral staff, we will work closely with parents to support your son as he settles into the expectations and learning environment at our school.

How can I help my son fit into life at Holcombe?

The main worry your son may have is likely to do with social concerns such as making new friends. If he does express these sorts of thoughts, please remind him that almost everyone feels nervous at the start of the year so he will not be alone. Your son has already met the rest of his form class during Induction Day, and although these worries are quite common, most boys will report that after a couple of weeks there are no such issues at all.

Reaching this milestone marks the beginning of new expectations for your son in key life skills such as independent thinking and self-organisation. The biggest thing is achieving that balance between doing too much or too little for your son to enable him to learn to take more responsibility. A useful guideline is never to do anything for him that he is capable of doing for himself. Getting into a routine during his first few weeks at Holcombe will save endless battles and headaches later on. The habits that your son will develop in Year 7 are those that will stay with him throughout his entire secondary schooling and often his working life and will be worth the effort.

What different experiences might my son have at Holcombe in comparison to his primary school?

Your son is expected to be more independent, self-reliant and self-organised. This is a welcome development for many boys but can be a big change for some. Your support is greatly appreciated in the first few weeks to establish these expectations:

- Your son may be travelling to school independently for the first time and acting responsibly whilst using public transport unsupervised might be a new challenge.
- He will be expected to wear full school uniform and remember how to present himself properly at all times.
- The school site can be more complicated than primary school, so in the first few weeks he will need to ask advice or use maps where possible to avoid getting lost.
- He will be moving between classrooms for subjects with different teachers during the day and must be punctual.
- He will have to learn how to interpret a timetable and how to use the school planner effectively to record homework.
- Your son will be responsible for keeping all of his equipment/books/PE kit safe.
- Times for eating and toilet breaks will be restricted to break and lunch times.
Frequently asked questions by parents:

1. Will my son have anywhere to keep his equipment in school?
We have a large number of lockers available on a first come first serve basis. Your son should bring a combination padlock to school if he wishes to claim one of these lockers. They are simply a location for heavy items such as books but are not a secure place to store valuables. There is no reason for your son to bring valuable items such as money or a mobile phone to school, but if he chooses to they should be kept in the PE Office or Holcombe Office securely.

2. What will my son need on his first few days in September?
On your son’s first day he will have time with his form tutor ensuring that he is organised and prepared for the term. They will check he has the writing equipment/calculator necessary and issue the following items that your son must bring with him every day:

- A school planner.
- A reward/sanction card
- A timetable of all his lessons (You should make a copy of this timetable at home and help your son prepare his bag each evening for the first few weeks).

3. What is my son’s school planner for?
This contact book is mainly for your son to keep a record of his homework including deadlines, assignments and assessments to prepare for. Teachers may also write comments of praise or sanctions such as detentions on the relevant dates. There is a space you will need to sign weekly to show that you are keeping track of this. Your son’s form tutor will also sign it regularly to keep a dialogue with yourself throughout the year.

At the beginning of the planner, you will see a home-school agreement to be signed. This is a contract which parents, students and the teachers agree to which ensures behaviour expectations and standards of learning are agreed upon at the beginning of each year.

As well as this, you must sign an emergency closure section with contact details and indicate if you give permission to send your school home in the event of extreme weather.

4. What is a sanction/reward card and how is it used?
This is a small card that all students are expected to carry around the school with them. House points or sanctions will be issued by staff for good or bad deeds they see around the school. If a student receives five rewards he will be entered into a prize draw at the end of term. If he receives three sanctions first he will be issued with a detention for one hour after school. Your son’s house points will be kept on an electronic register and tally up against any behaviour points working towards bronze, silver and gold badge awards.

5. What happens if my son loses something?
If your son loses something there are a few things he needs to do. Firstly he needs to check all the areas he might have left that item. Then he needs to check at the school captains office and the Holcombe office to make sure it has not been handed in. If it still cannot be found he will need to inform his form tutor and they can assist in the search by sending an email to all staff enquiring who might have seen the missing item. In order to avoid this happening please ensure all your son’s belongings are named, including his bag, uniform and PE kit as our students have very similar belongings.
6. Can my son bring a mobile phone to school?
Our school policy is that mobile phones are not allowed in school. However, we are aware that your son may need to have his phone for travel purposes to and from school. In this instance, we ask that your son ensures his phone is turned off once he has arrived safely, kept safely on his person and left off throughout the school day. If he has PE then he must hand over the phone to be locked in the PE office. Your son may then turn his phone on at the end of the school day after he has left the gate.

Should your son be caught abusing this rule it will be confiscated from him and kept in the Holcombe Office until you can come and collect it. Should your son need to use a phone during the school day he should make his way to the Holcombe Office where he will be allowed to use a school phone to make a call.

7. Do Year 7 have a separate area to play at lunch and break times?
Yes; the year seven and eight students are allocated a tennis court during break and lunch times. Members of staff are around during this period to ensure that all the students are not allowed into this area. Should any problems arise during this time your son should talk to duty staff as soon as possible to enable us to address any issues.

8. What is the procedure for getting food at break or lunch?
During your son’s first week in school he will be allowed an early lunch break 15 minutes before the older years in order to avoid the queues in the hall. After this time, your son will have to join the same queue as older students. Year 11 have priority, however the canteen will not close until the last boy in the queue has been seen so he should remain patient until he is served.

As referred to in previous welcome pack information, we operate a cashless school canteen system. Although the kitchen will accept cash for the first few days, you will be given a Parent Pay account which you should top up online. Your son will then be able to buy food through a biometric system using his fingerprint which links to his account. Please be aware it may take up to 24 hours for a top up to be active so do not leave this to last minute.

9. What happens if my son is not very well? What should I do?
On the first morning that your son is not very well you should phone the school absence number and leave a clear message stating your son’s name and form group and the reason why he is absent. This should be done every morning that your son is not in school following the first day. Please be aware that if there are concerns about the amount of time your son is having off you will be contacted by the school or local authority.

10. What happens if my son has an accident in school?
Your son should attend the Holcombe office where his injuries will be assessed by first aid trained staff. If it is deemed serious you will be contacted. Depending on the injury, an ambulance might be called, however most injuries can be treated with a plaster or an ice pack. You will see a blue sticker in your son’s planner if he has attended the first aid room for any reason.

11. What is office duty?
Whilst your son is in year 7 and 8 his form group will be required to do office duty. This is for a week each term and done on a rotational basis. Your son will only be doing it a few times during his time in key stage three, and work from any lesson he misses should be completed whilst doing his duty. Office runners will support the office staff with relaying messages around the school, helping the site team prepare the hall for break and lunchtime and other general jobs.
12. How do I know what is going on in and around school?
Parent Mail is our mailing system whereby you will be contacted regarding news and important dates by email. In addition, a newsletter is sent home regularly throughout the year to let you know what we have been getting up to and events that are happening in the future. This replaces most paper messages sent home and is a quick and easy way to stay informed about all the latest at Holcombe Grammar School. Please make full use of this facility and contact the office if you need support setting it up.

13. Are there any rules regarding jewellery and haircuts?
Jewellery is not allowed on health and safety grounds. Any earrings will be confiscated. Boys should have tidy haircuts and hair should not be obstructing the face. No tramlines or designs should be cut into the hair. We also do not allow bright colours.

14. What happens if my son gets a detention?
Hopefully this will not happen, however you will see further information in his planner regarding our detention policy. If a student is late to school/late to any lesson during the day he will be issued a 30 minute punctuality detention on that same afternoon. Teachers may also set a personal detention for poor behaviour such as lack of homework after school on the same day. If a student further fails to meet our expectations this may be escalated to an hour-long School detention or even a two-hour Headteacher detention which will be written in his planner. Parents are expected to make alternative travel arrangements when necessary and support the school in establishing high standards for conduct and work ethic. The planner is our most important tool for communicating such information.

15. When can I meet my son’s teachers?
Early in the first term you will be invited to an information evening where you may also book an appointment to speak to his form tutor if you have any concerns. After this you are able to meet subject teachers directly on the Parent Teacher Consultation Evening in term 3. Students will be encouraged to attend as well so they can play a part in the discussion about their learning progress.

16. Where can I find out about school buses?
Please find the attached link giving details of the Medway MY School Bus timetables: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200161/travel/516/bus_timetables/3 or visit www.medway.gov.uk and search for “MY School Bus” (there are limited places available).
The MY1 bus covers Lordswood - Holcombe. The MY9 bus covers Isle of Grain to Holcombe.
Places on MY School Bus must be pre-booked and there is a waiting list for some services. Phone 01634 333 455 for any MY Bus Issues.
If you would like your child to go on one of the MY Waiting Lists, email MYbus@medway.gov.uk with the child’s name, parent’s contact details, address, school child will be attending and MY route required.
A one term pass is £55 from July 2018. A two terms pass is £105 from July 2018. A six terms (whole school year) is £300 from July 2018.