



Dear Parent or Carer

26<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Welcome back to a new school year and to the many parents new to the school, a very warm welcome to our Holcombe community.

I would like to start by thanking Mr Bassan for standing in as Executive Principal of Holcombe from January to the start of this year. I am excited by this new opportunity as I lead two 'good' schools, working together, on their journeys to delivering outstanding education in Medway. I am immensely proud to be joining Holcombe on the next leg of its exciting journey. I will continue to develop the vision for the school based around Mastery, Endeavour and Thinking. This vision, along with a focus on deeper thinking skills, will ensure that students at Holcombe continue to secure successful futures.

We have had an exciting start to the new academic year with the opening of four new Maths classrooms, a dance studio and the 3G football pitch. The school welcomed Tracey Crouch to the opening of the 3G pitch and we are excited about the opportunities this facility has created for our students as well as for the local community. It has been fantastic to see Holcombe students rushing to change and use the pitch at break and lunch times.

I look back on the past year with the knowledge that a firm foundation has been laid for Holcombe to build upon, particularly with the 'Good' Ofsted outcome in April. I credit the outcome of this visit to the fantastic commitment and hard work shown by the staff and students at Holcombe. The sense of pride that they show in their school is one of the main reasons I am so excited to be working with them.

The results this summer were very pleasing. Holcombe achieved its best ever A-Level results. Almost a quarter of all grades (24%) at HGS were A\* or A, and half of all grades were A\*-B (50%) – both of which are impressive improvements on last year and make for another year of extremely strong results at HGS. The work ethic of the students, who have gone on to some of the top universities in the country, is an excellent example to the students who aspire to follow in their footsteps. GCSE results followed and were also strong. A third of all GCSE results at HGS were a grade 7, 8, or 9 – equivalent to an A or A\* – and in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, more than half of students achieved a grade 7 or higher. 90% of all GCSE students achieved a grade 4, which is a pass, or better, and 82% of results were a strong pass (grade 5 or better). These results have been achieved in spite of this being the first year in which all GCSEs are at a new, tougher standard, including more challenging content and questions.

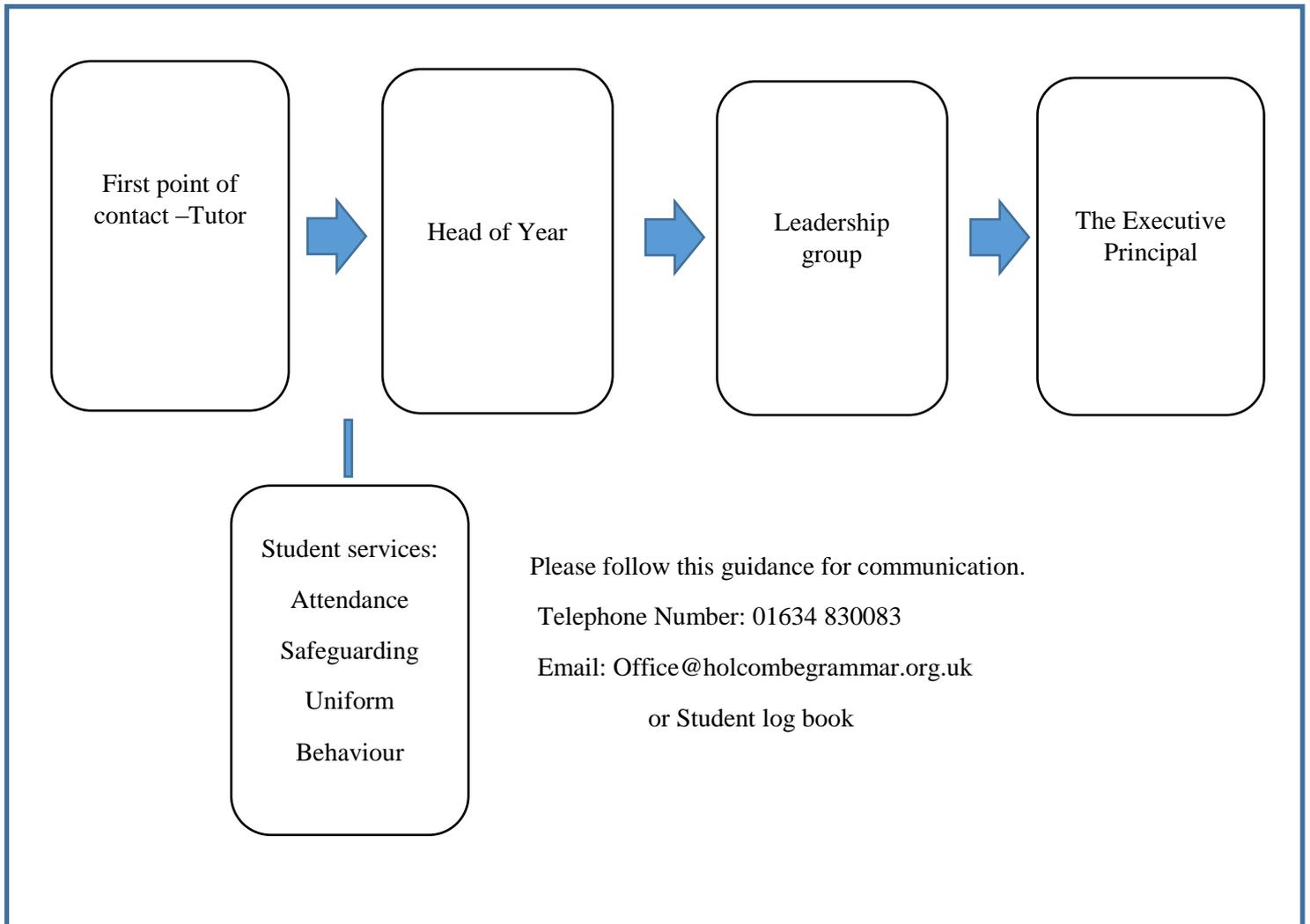
Looking forward to the year ahead, there are a number of areas that I would like to address:

**Parking**

It is important that parents remember to avoid parking on the hatchings outside the school and not to block the drives of the residents that live close to the school. If you are dropping off or picking up your son or daughter by car, please **do not bring your car on to the site, use the school entrance to turn your vehicle, or park on the zig-zag lines.** Your understanding regarding this issue is much appreciated. We are working with the council to ensure that our neighbours are respected by all members of the Holcombe community.

**Working with parents and carers**

I want to clarify our procedures for communicating with you, as parents and carers, effectively. I have included a flow map to show who should be contacted to deal with concerns.





We will strive to deal with all issues in a timely manner and will welcome parents sharing concerns so that we can improve our education provision for our students. If your concern remains after the initial point of contact, this can be escalated as seen above. May we respectfully remind you that any meetings need to be booked in advance; we are unable to see parents who come to the school without an appointment unless this is an emergency.

### **Uniform**

I would also like to remind you of the uniform expectations at Holcombe. Maintaining high standards of uniform is an important part of the overall aspirations at Holcombe Grammar School. Instilling high standards teaches students to comply with a dress code which will be an important workplace skill for them in later life. Most importantly, our uniform reflects our identity as a community and encourages students to take pride in themselves and their school. The expectations for uniform are displayed on the school's website. I would like to draw particular attention to the guidance regarding school shoes.

Shoes – plain black formal shoes (no boots, canvas shoes, branded shoes or trainers allowed)

I thank you for your support in upholding the high standards we set at Holcombe.

### **Marking and Feedback**

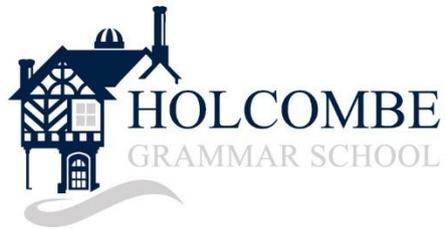
Within the school we have updated the marking and behaviour policies for the new school year. Following the EEF Marking Review of April 2016 Holcombe has been reviewing its approach to marking to make it 'meaningful, manageable and motivating'. New strategies are being deployed based on the latest educational research, with a focus on regular formative assessment and feedback to enhance student progress. Staff will continue to give deep feedback on 1 piece of work per term (2 pieces of work in KS4 and 5) together with using proven feedback strategies to ensure that students are clear on how to make sustained progress throughout the year. Marking will continue to be monitored throughout the year within departments and through whole school processes.

### **New staff**

There have been a number of new additions to our staff team who are settling in well and proving to be assets to our community. Of note will be Miss Gould, who as Student Services Manager is often the first point of contact for any welfare issues your son/ daughter may experience. Further pastoral support has been added to the school with Mr Curry as Head of Year 8 also working as second in Maths. Mr Conway has also taken up the role as Head of Year 10. I am also pleased to welcome new Heads of Department to MFL, Physics and History as well as new staff in teaching roles across the school.

### **Holcombe Association**

I was delighted to meet the Holcombe Association recently and learn about the work they do supporting the Holcombe community. It was good to see new members at the first meeting this year and I would like to encourage any parents that want to support the work of the school to contact the Holcombe Association and become part of this excellent team.



Email – [chair@holcombe.org.uk](mailto:chair@holcombe.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/HolcombeAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/HolcombeAssociation)

Thank you for your continued support for our school, and I look forward to meeting many of you at our various events throughout the year.

Yours sincerely

**Mandy Gage**  
Executive Principal