



**Headteacher : Dr Simon Letman BA, MA, EdD**  
**Deputy Head : Nicola Shelley**

14<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write at the end of another very busy and successful term. It has also been an exhausting one and I know that all staff and students are looking forward to a well-earned rest over Christmas.

There are a number of things I would like to draw your attention to at this point in the year. You will remember my report at the start of this term when I informed you that we had produced another excellent set of GCSE results.

Since then, both regionally and nationally, further analyses have been carried out, and the results are even more impressive. Taking the country as a whole, our results were better than 79% of 'Good' schools and better than 44% of 'Outstanding' schools. This is a far cry from four years ago when the school's progress score placed us in the bottom 1% of schools nationally. I hope you will agree with me that this news is well worth celebrating!

As far as Year 11 students are concerned, you may sense that your son or daughter is feeling a little battered and bruised following their mock GCSE examinations after half-term. This is quite early to run a mock programme and so we do fully expect a number of students to struggle. However, those who did not do as well as they had hoped should not panic, but heed the advice from their teachers.

There is another mock exam programme in March which gives them the opportunity to show us how much they have improved in the interim and these results will be a much more accurate indicator of what they are likely to produce in the summer exams themselves. Significantly, the performance of last year's Year 11 cohort was very similar at this stage with these students going on to achieve some of our best ever results.

I wrote to you last month to say that we were considering introducing a few changes to the school uniform in Years 7-10 from next September. The proposal is that we move away from polo shirts and sweatshirts to shirts, ties and sweaters. I invited you to comment on this proposal and I would like to thank those who did for their very constructive suggestions. 21 parents responded to my invitation, with 17 being either in favour or strongly in favour, and three being opposed. One parent could be described as 'neutral'.

I must assume that this feedback is broadly representative of the views of the parent body and that the proposal is more popular than unpopular. On this basis, we intend to proceed with the proposed changes across Years 7-10 in September 2017. Our main uniform suppliers, Coe's of Ipswich, have dressed a mannequin with the proposed new uniform and this is displayed in the Academy foyer for parents and students to see how it will look from next year. Please note that the tie will be the 'clip-on' version.

As we are fast approaching the time of making New Year resolutions, I would ask you once again to support us in our efforts to ensure that students comply with the current Academy Uniform Policy, which is published on the Academy website. We would ask that you have another look at the policy, particularly in respect of girls' leggings, 'bomber jackets' and the wearing of non-uniform hoodies. Complying with the policy would be the best present I could have this Christmas from our students!

You will also recall that just before we broke for half-term, the whole school, students and staff, walked the eight and a half miles around Alton Water to raise money for our forthcoming school production and two major charities chosen by the students. To date, we have received nearly £5,000 in sponsorship money, which, although apparently impressive, is from less than 40% of the student body. I would be very grateful, therefore, if you could send in any remaining sponsorship forms, with the cash, before the Christmas break. Alternatively, a donation may be made direct via the BT 'My Donate' website. This can be done very simply by first logging on to <https://www.btplc.com/mydonate>. Then, in the 'Donate to Charity' box on the homepage you need only to enter 'Holbrook Academy' in the text box and this will take you directly to the donation page. I would like to thank you in anticipation of your support of our important projects this year.

Further to my recent letter to you concerning the introduction of our new cashless catering system, this will be in place by the middle of January. Parents will be able to log onto the '**Schoolgateway**' to make online payments for school meals from this time. We will be issuing instructions on how to use this new service when we return to school in the New Year.

Over sixty students act as Student Ambassadors and they make a tremendous contribution to the smooth running of the Academy. This week, a new leadership team has been appointed and congratulations are due to Nathan Waller, George Baker, Lois Graham and Martha South for joining the head student ambassador team and to Tyreese Ross and Ethan Colwill for recently becoming part of the ambassador team. Student ambassadors have recently met with the governors, where they discussed the ambassador programme and the importance of having it at Holbrook.

Rehearsals for our 2017 production of 'Cats' are going well and we are on course to deliver another musical spectacular in February. Once again, we are working with our local primary schools and their Year 6 students will be involved in the production. Because of this, and the large cast, tickets are likely to be in very high demand and we anticipate that they will sell out very quickly. Tickets for the four evening shows from 7-10<sup>th</sup> February will go on sale in early January and I would advise you to put a reminder note in your diary in order to avoid disappointment.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and New Year and a final reminder that students return to school on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January** (week 2).

Yours sincerely



Dr Simon Letman