



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

5th July 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write towards the end of another very successful year for the Academy. Once again, in all areas, our talented students have made their mark and they can all feel very proud indeed of what they have achieved.

The year began in the best possible way with another set of outstanding GCSE results. The degree of progress made by our Year 11 students since they joined the school in Year 7 was judged to be the sixth best of all state schools in Suffolk.

Following on from this, the tremendous hard work put in by students and staff over the last few years attracted further recognition earlier this term from the Lead Education Adviser at the Regional Commissioner's Office. The RCO works hand in glove with Ofsted. Following visits to lessons and interviews with staff and students, Mrs Prince found that at Holbrook *"there is strong evidence of individual pupil development, a strong work ethic in all the classrooms and that high expectations of engagement in class and in workbooks were apparent"*. Following an extended interview with a group of students in Years 8, 9 and 10, Mrs Prince reported that *"They were unanimous in saying they attended a great school, and felt happy and well supported"*.

A notable development this year has been the re-launch of a Student Council and a fresh approach to the role of the Senior Prefect team within the Academy. It has been our objective to increase the volume of the pupil voice within the school and to ensure that students have the opportunity to contribute to the process of leading and managing the school, both now and in the future. Our new team for next year has already been installed and we are confident that our new Head Boy, James Young, and Head Girl, Helen Warner, together with the other members of their talented team, will strongly contribute to this process.

Our Year 11 leavers left in a confident mood following their GCSE examinations. They and their peers nationally are the first to sit the new-style English and Maths papers. Although staff and students felt that the new papers were reasonable, as has been widely reported in the national press, there is a strong degree of uncertainty about what the results will look like this year. It will be difficult, for example, to make comparisons between students' performance this year and in the past. As I reported this time last year, the key performance measure for schools like ours is the overall degree of progress students make across their eight best subjects, including maths, English and the sciences, since they joined the school in Year 7. This figure is known as 'Progress 8' and we do feel that it is a fairer way of judging how well schools are performing. In the interests of clarity, when we report our results to you this year we will again make reference to both the old and the new measures.

One of the major highlights of this year was the incredibly professional staging of the musical 'Cats' in February. This was our third major production during my time at Holbrook and many of those who came to see it felt it was the best yet. The show included students from across the whole age-range, working together as a team. Over 600 visitors watched the four sell-out performances and were mesmerized by the amazing standard of our students' singing and dancing. We have established a reputation for the very high quality of our performing arts and we are already in the planning stages for next year's show. More information about this will be published next term.

Please note that there are two other public performances taking place before the end of term. Mr McGlone's always popular *'Summer Soirée'* takes place on Thursday 6th July and Miss Shelley's performing arts group will be putting on their *'From Stage to Screen'* production on Tuesday 18th July. The show pays homage to the world of theatre and entertainment and our talented students will be performing some stage and screen classics. Tickets for both events can be obtained from the main Academy office.

As we have previously advised, the Academy uniform will be changing in September 2017. Students in Years 7 to 10 will no longer wear polo shirts and sweatshirts, but will move to standard collared shirts with ties and a V-neck sweater bearing the Academy logo. This will bring the lower and upper school uniforms more closely into line and we feel that our students will look smarter overall. If you have any queries about uniform then please do contact the main office before the end of term.

Once again, I need to make a plea for your support for our efforts to ensure that all students comply with our uniform regulations. I have written to you on several occasions about the issues we are consistently and frustratingly having to deal with. These mainly involve length of girls' skirts, the wearing of leggings rather than trousers and wearing trainers. We will be adopting a 'zero tolerance' approach to breaches of the uniform code from September, including failure to comply with Academy rules on facial piercings and makeup.

Parents should be aware that we are planning to offer a number of trips, some of them overseas, during the coming academic year. Our annual Year 9 trip to Paris will continue to run, despite the retirement of Mrs Reynolds. The programme will be adjusted and the trip will have a broader humanities content and will be organised by Mr Barrett and Mrs Crabtree. It will take place during Activities week in July. Secondly, Mr Hart has already written to you to advertise his proposed trip to New York in October 2018. The trip is open to pupils currently in Years 7, 8 and 9. Both of these trips will offer 'staged payments' to help parents plan their finances and you will receive further information about this and a number of other possible trips in due course.

There are a number of staff changes for next year I would like to make you aware of. Staff leaving us are Mrs Reynolds and Mrs Wiles, both of whom are retiring and can boast over twenty years on the staff at Holbook. Our other leavers are Mr Wright, our SENCO, who is taking up a new post in Dubai and Mr Blay, who is departing to pursue his other interests. We wish them all well in the future. Internal adjustments will see Mr Anstee-Parry stepping up to take on the role of Assistant Head with responsibility for Learning Support and transition. Mr Bartholomew is becoming Head of PE and will continue to teach some maths. Our external appointments are Mr Piet du Toit to teach maths, computer science and to coach some rugby, Mrs Jill Graves and Mrs Lara Townshend in the languages department, Mr Carl Moore will be our new Head of Science and Mr Steve Edwards has been appointed to teach chemistry. Mr David Sansom joins us as our new Cover Supervisor and to teach some music and finally, Mrs Stevie Kent, who left Holbrook several years ago, is returning to teach some RE. We are delighted to have made such good external appointments to key posts this year, when nationally, teacher recruitment is such a major issue for schools.

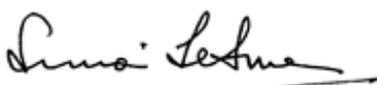
I am very pleased to report that we have been successful once again with our bid to the government for additional capital funding. You will remember that last year we were awarded over £400,000 to replace our flat roof and in 2014 received a similar sum to replace our ageing heating system. This year we have received a grant for £136,000 to refurbish the old boys' and girls' changing rooms. Students will return in September to enjoy modern state-of-the-art changing and washing facilities.

From the Finance Office, the new cashless catering system is working really well and, if you'll forgive the pun, all the new Year 7 students were given the opportunity to have a complimentary lunch on their recent taster day. All new starters have had instructions on how to load up the School Gateway system and existing users should remember to top up your balances ready for the start of the new term in September. This can be done at any time over the summer holidays.

In conclusion, as I hope you can see, we have all been very busy indeed this year as we continue to work hard on improving the experience of our students at the Academy. Once again, I would like to thank you all for your strong support.

We wish you all a good summer and we hope that your children will return to us in September reinvigorated and ready to face the many challenges of a new and exciting academic year.

Yours sincerely



Dr Simon Letman