

HOLBROOK ACADEMY



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

14th September 2018

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am pleased to report that the new academic year has got under way very well. We are particularly pleased with the way the new Year 7 cohort has started to settle in and with the way that the older students have returned with a purposeful and mature attitude. In general terms, uniform has been smart, although I would please ask you to be mindful of the fact that nose-piercings are not allowed and would remind you that persistent offenders will be sent home until Academy rules are complied with.

We start the new academic year with 560 students, compared with 409 when I took on the Academy back in 2013. Our growth has exceeded expectations and results from our consistently high standards in relation to other schools in our area and the recent growth of the local population. We expect the Academy to be full in September 2019 (590) and we have been taking steps for some time to ensure that we have everything in place to cope with the largest number of students in the school's history when that time arrives. Competition for places outside our catchment area is very fierce, as befits what has become one of Suffolk's consistently high-achieving state schools.

One issue which is becoming more of a problem is the volume of traffic in and around the Academy both in the mornings and after school, caused by parents dropping-off and picking-up. I have written to parents on many previous occasions requesting that they do not drive on to the site due to the hazard this creates for children trying to get to their buses and the buses trying to get off site. A similar hazard is present in the Clench Road area where residents continue to complain to us about thoughtless and inconsiderate parking on the part of some parents and rude and aggressive attitudes when residents speak to drivers direct. I am afraid that it has now reached the point that I have asked staff on duty to record the numbers of vehicles consistently driving on to the site, particularly at the end of school, with a view to reminding them of our powers under the relevant legislation relating to causing a nuisance on educational premises.

You will have seen on the Academy website and in the regional press at the time that we enjoyed another solid set of GCSE results in the summer, although I would like to offer clarity on one issue raised by a number of parents. The headline figure of 66% of Year 11 students achieving Grade 4 or better in English and Maths was lower than last year (88%). However, when this year's so-called 'Progress 8' outcomes are published by the government, the overall results of this summer's cohort are likely to be better than in 2017. The explanation for this is that the key performance indicator for schools these days is *progress* and not *raw attainment*. In other words, this year's much smaller and slightly weaker cohort of 64 students will have done better than might have been expected on the basis of their Key Stage 2 results than the previous year's cohort. In short, the performance of our subject departments was at least as good as last year and, in some cases, even better. Sadly, this is something that the blunt-instrument of media league tables does not take into account. I appreciate that all of this might appear quite confusing, but, quite literally, we live in a world of progress, and we continue to perform very strongly. The official Progress 8 results will be published sometime around Christmas and will be posted on the Academy website.

We have a very busy term ahead of us. This year's open events are on the morning of 2nd October and the evening of the 3rd October. Please refer to the poster on the homepage for timings. Mrs Tinker would also like to draw your attention to the fact that this year's Careers evening on Tuesday, 25th September, for Year 9, 10 and 11 students is being arranged in collaboration with Ipswich High School, who will host it this year. The event promises to be the biggest and best yet and all parents in those Year groups are strongly urged to attend to see what is on offer for young people in our region in the future. The evening at Ipswich High School commences at 6:30 pm and ends at 8:30pm and directions can be found on the Ipswich High School website – www.ipswichhighschool.co.uk

We are proud of the relationship we have with our parents and your input into the way we organise and manage the Academy is vital. The time is fast approaching when I will be asking all parents to complete the Ofsted 'Parent View' questionnaire via the Academy website. Existing parents will be familiar with my regular pleas to spend a few minutes online telling Ofsted (and us) what you think we do well and what we could do better. The results provide us with tremendously useful information about how we can improve things even more for your children and so please do respond to my request to complete the questionnaire when it comes out next week.

I would like to thank you all in advance for your support as we embark upon another exciting year. News about our February school production will be published soon and I know you will all look forward to another spectacular show, exemplifying the spirit and the talent of our remarkable children.

As ever, I would welcome your comments and observations on any aspect of what we do. You can make your views known by e-mailing Mrs Beazley through the given published e-mail or by contacting me direct on simon.letman@holbrookacademy.org

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Letman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr Simon Letman