



19 December 2018

Dear Families,

Firstly we would like to take this chance to thank you for a warm welcome to The High Weald Academy. It has been good to meet so many of you at the various events that have taken place since September particularly at our parents evenings and curriculum information evenings. Your feedback and comments have been good to receive and we will always want to hear from you about how we can be the best we can for you and your child.

As we reach the end of term we would like to update you on some academy news and give you important information regarding next term.

Curriculum Changes:

Over the past term we have taken time to learn about the needs of students and also to understand the many areas of strength that we have as an academy. We have also looked at the most recent assessment and progress data and consequently want to update you on some changes to how and what we teach that will come in to effect in January.

Year 7 and 8: We will be balancing the amount of time spent in subjects to ensure we are giving students the right amount of time to make the progress that they should. There will be an increase in the number of lessons students study Geography and History from two lessons a fortnight to four lessons. We will also increase the amount of time in ICT. We have gained this time from slightly reducing the time spent in Science and by taking a fresh approach to how we deliver Art, Technology and Food Technology. These three subjects will be delivered through a carousel across the remainder of the year and will make up three hours a fortnight. We will also schedule some 'Technology Days' to ensure we maintain a full and balanced curriculum for them. All other areas will remain the same.

Year 9: In order to ensure we prepare students well for Year 10 and for their important GCSE options choices we will use the time currently spent in Performing Arts to provide them with opportunity to gain more experience in qualification based subjects. Using a carousel in a number of subjects we will maintain the amount of time they currently spend in each subject but will introduce the ECDL qualification through their ICT lessons and the nationally recognised Sports Leaders Award. We will slightly reduce the amount of time spent in French in order to introduce specialist reading lessons to increase students' reading ability. This is to help students access the range of material needed for their examination courses.

Year 10 and 11: The GCSE curriculum in these year groups will remain exactly as it is.

Your child will soon be issued with a new timetable. Please take a look at it and if you have any questions please get in touch with Mrs Barker.

Homework:

Next term we will be introducing Show My Homework for all students. This is an on-line platform that brings all the homework set in to one place. The system means that it is much easier for students to manage their homework and also their time as deadlines are also in one place for them to refer to. Parents are also able to log on and look to see what has been set and help students manage their work. We will also be able to monitor the impact and effectiveness of our homework tasks more closely. The new system will be introduced to students during the academy day and there will be an information session for families in January. We very much hope you will be able to join us so we can demonstrate it to you.

Whole School Reading Strategy:

We will soon be introducing a new strategy to help develop students' reading ability. We will be using an approach to whole group reading called 'Reading Reconsidered'. The idea is to read the same book, regularly and together as a group. Of course we will focus on understanding the plot of the novel but mainly on increasing the words we know and use. As well as developing students' active vocabulary and confidence with demanding texts this initiative is an important part of building a culture of reading for pleasure. We firmly believe that reading = knowledge = confidence = success. We know that in order to access the language of an average GCSE paper students will need to have a reading age of around 15 years and 9 months. We will be using this system to work with students in developing their reading age and will keep you posted of their progress. Your child's current reading age is always sent to you on their report card so please refer to that if you are unsure.

Staff changes:

We say good bye and good luck to the following staff who are leaving us at the end of this term. On behalf of all of us at The High Weald Academy we thank them for the commitment they have given to our school and the students they have worked with: Mrs Downing (Art/Technology); Mr Dann (Head of Years 7 and 8); Mr Hollingsbee (English). We will introduce you to our new colleagues, next term.

Mr Endicott will be stepping down from his role as Assistant Principal at the end of this term. Mr Endicott has taken this decision for personal reasons and to afford him more time to spend with his young family. He will remain in the academy and will take up the post of Head of Years 7 and 8. He has worked closely with these year groups along with Mr Dann and so knows them well. We are glad we will keep his expertise in our academy and that it will mean a smooth transition for students and families.

Requirements for next term:

We have high expectations of students and the way they wear the academy uniform. Please ensure your son or daughter has all of the basic equipment and uniform that they will be expected to have.

Trainers are not permitted under any circumstances whilst wearing the academy uniform. If students arrive without their full uniform we will contact parents and ask you to bring in

missing items in order for your child to remain with us. Failing this students may be asked to go home and collect them.

These non-negotiable and basic requirements are an important part of the rigour behind successful learning and progress in lessons. We are a school and focus on learning. We work hard to ensure a bright and successful future for our students and we are determined that they will succeed in all that they do. In order that we achieve this we will never expect staff to spend time away from teaching and supporting students in order to have discussions about basic requirements and uniform. I must call upon you for your support in making sure students are prepared well for the daily expectations. If you wish to discuss how we can support you please do not hesitate to contact your child's Head of Year, in the first instance.

Behaviour for Learning:

We also have high expectations of behaviours which support excellent learning. Our students are brilliant ambassadors of this and take their learning and achievement seriously. There are times however when we need to deal with things that do not fit standards and expectations. We consider this part of our commitment to a holistic education and thank you for your on-going support with this. There are some areas in which we remain immovable. There continues to be no place for fighting, general anti-social behaviours, use of foul and inappropriate language or smoking. This includes during the journey to or from school, whilst wearing the academy uniform. The High Weald Academy community will be a safe place where students can be comfortable, be themselves and study and achieve without distraction. I make no apology for this and know you would not expect anything less.

Please take some time to look at our December newsletter which will be sent to you separately and is available on our website. It is a pleasure to read and see what exciting activities our students have been involved in and an outline of their achievements, this term.

It is our real pleasure to spend every day working with our students, enjoying their successes and supporting them in working towards their aspirations. On behalf of the whole academy community we wish you and your families a happy Christmas break and very much look forward to welcoming students back on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at the usual time.

Yours faithfully,



Daniel Hatley
Executive Principal



Lisa Barker
Senior Vice Principal