



Howden
School



Howden School

Derwent Road

Howden

DN14 7AL

Tel 01430 430448

office@howdenschool.net

www.howdenschool.net

23 October 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

You will see the new calendar on our current website which shows term dates, all of which will hopefully help you with planning for next academic year, especially holidays. My thanks to the significant majority of parents who send their children to school every day; they will reap the benefit when they come to sit exams.

The year 11 workshop evening for parents last Wednesday was appreciated by those who attended so my thanks to everyone who was there. Supporting your child through examinations is much more complex than it has ever been, not only in the standards that are expected but also the myriad of self-study methods and help that is available. The skill of preparing for an exam is crucial, and revision is a key part of success. There are so many ways in which you can help, from the general to subject specific. Often you do not have to possess any subject knowledge as it is about quizzing your child using their revision guide or exercise book. Success is often based around routines and good habits so the earlier your child gets into a routine, the better. It is the same for musicians or anyone who plays sport. Routines and training or practice are at the very heart of success.

When I first arrived, I mentioned that ongoing evaluation would be a theme at Howden school and that when initiatives were introduced, we would be constantly monitoring their effectiveness and making changes based on what we found. This has been a theme with our behaviour policy and has played an important part in its success. Last Tuesday at Senior Leadership Team meeting, we reviewed our behaviour policy specifically in relation to the trial of having pre-warns for SEND students. This aspect of the policy is quite unique to Howden and has, in many cases, been a success. However, having analysed how it has evolved since September and looking at the data, it is clear that some grey areas have developed. Whilst the intent has been laudable, the initial proposal was that students who have been formally diagnosed with specific needs would be allocated a prewarn. It is therefore our intention to return to the notion of a formal SEND diagnosis which, in the professional judgment of the SEND team, requires a prewarn. This will be introduced straight after half-term, so we will be explaining it to students who are affected next week. We will then evaluate how it works in the first few weeks back. Another amendment is that any students from the ERP who are having difficulty in lessons will go straight back to the ERP rather than The Bridge. Again, this will be from after half-term. Our aim is to support all students whilst ensuring a calm learning environment in lessons.

Part of the improvement to the school environment was the refurbishment of a small area in the Key Stage four canteen. This area has been completely redecorated and now has new furniture as well, so it looks very smart. There has been some speculation from students about how it will be used so Mrs Doyle spoke to the Behaviour and Attitude Senate and asked their opinion. There was a strongly held view, especially from the older students, that the boys take up almost all the field for playing

football so it would be appreciated if there could be a quiet area for girls. We then spent the next few days analysing how spaces around the school are used and concluded that they were right. As a result of this compelling feedback, we are going to be letting students know that as from after half-term, the sectioned off space in the canteen will be a quiet area for key stage 4 girls only. It is the first decision the new student senate has made under our new structure so hopefully they will be able to see the impact of their voice in improving our school community.

I continued with my "work ethic" walks last week and overall, I have been pleased with what I have seen. I go into all lessons and in a variety of year groups. Last Tuesday I took a guest around the school - a Deputy Headteacher from another school - who was impressed with what she saw. In particular our ACE period first thing in the morning is going well and having quite an impact not only on the students as individuals but the school as a whole. Classroom routines are now well established which is also pleasing to see.

As I said in my short communication on Friday, regarding the school closure, we were faced with a number of technical issues, but staff and students pulled together. I was pleased that we managed to get all registers taken and parental permission whilst organising buses and taxis. A number of students weren't able to get a mobile signal. We were also not able to provide food. My personal thanks for the understanding and patience that was shown as we were ensuring that all students were safe as that is our priority.

Next Friday, we have a staff training day where everyone in TCAT get together. I am really looking forward to it as it is a golden opportunity to share good practice and for schools to learn from each other. As a result, there will be a brief email on Thursday.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J Nixon', written in a cursive style.

Mr J Nixon
Headteacher