

24 November 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we get deeper into winter, we all notice how quickly it gets dark in the evenings and the impact it has on your child. This is especially the case with those who have to walk or cycle as part of their journey. Wearing the right clothing and having lights on their bike plus being mindful that cars and other traffic wouldn't be able to see them clearly is a reminder that is well worth giving them.

On Tuesday we had our Local Governing Body meeting. It was great to see our two new parent governors (Mrs Oates-Dibnah and Mrs Bahadur) there plus Ian Furlong who is Chair of the Trustees. It was a packed agenda with much of the time spent on our Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and the School Development Plan (SDP). They are two crucial documents, the first highlighting where we see ourselves against the Ofsted criteria and the second is focused on strategies to improve the school. Senior leaders live and breathe the SDP, using it in meetings and as a guide for decision making. Part of the evening was also reading reports from Governors who had visited the school since our previous meeting in September. It was a late night but a very valuable one as governors are crucial to us moving forward as school.

On Wednesday we appointed Jennie Doyle as Deputy Headteacher. Previously Jennie was Assistant Headteacher focusing on behaviour and attendance however this new role sees her added responsibility including developing a curriculum for those students who may be struggling in school as well as overseeing one Key Stage 4 area. Given that the interview panel was Lizann Lowson (CEO), Sarah Warnes (Chair of Governors) and myself, it will come as no surprise when I say that it was a rigorous and challenging process. My congratulations to Jennie who I am sure will do a great job.

The Presentation Evening on Thursday was such a positive and happy event, not only seeing last year's year eleven students, but also hearing all about what they are doing now. It was packed out and for those of you whose children are in year 10, we are looking to have the same event this time next year. The exact date will be announced once we have had confirmation from Howden Minster. My speech was short, mainly highlighting what we can achieve as human beings and the fact that they are at the start of a long and exciting journey. In addition, I also thanked all the parents and carers for the amazing job they had done to turn their children into such mature and courteous young people.

I would like to ask that if you contact the school, our receptionists and staff will do all they can to respond as quickly as they can. We live in an age where everything moves extremely quickly so I thought it might be pertinent to highlight some constraints that our staff are working under. As a small school everyone has a multitude of responsibilities, so our receptionists are dealing with staff, students, phone calls, visitors, communications to name but a few all at once. Our teachers are in front of a class throughout the school day so are very restricted for time. Nationally, teachers are given 10% PPA time (planning preparation and assessment) which means for many staff at Howden, there are only two and a half lessons a week when they are not teaching, and that time is spent on planning and marking to make the lessons as best as they can be. That is why if you live in a

household where an adult is a teacher, they are working in the evenings and at weekends. I would therefore re-iterate that we will respond as quickly as we can and ask you, as I do all the school community, to be courteous when communicating with us.

I had a very enjoyable time at Howden Junior School this morning, speak to Mr Quinn-Hill, going into lessons and looking at student work. We are currently restructuring our primary into secondary transition programme so that it runs throughout the year and includes year five as well as year six. Much of transition has historically been concentrated on pastoral care, as is the case in many schools, so we want to include more curriculum development work as well. This will help us ensure that when new year seven students join us in September, we are much more aligned with their prior knowledge and understanding.

We also had Mock Results day today. This is our first strong indicator to where year eleven are regarding their results, but with time to address as many concerns as we can before the actual exams whilst continuing to encourage those that are doing well. These results will be available on the Arbor App next week, we will update you when they are available.

In my letter dated 23 October I wrote to you explaining following ongoing evaluation it had been decided to change the pre-warn system to those students who have a formal SEND diagnosis. Following the success of this change, we are going to apply this same principle to the students that access The Bridge, this will now be the provision for students who have formally diagnosed with specific needs. We will continue to review these changes to ensure that all students receive the appropriate support whilst maintaining a calm learning environment in school.

Finally, you may have seen that Mr Gardiner was nominated for a National Teaching award recently, he is attending the awards ceremony for the top 5 nominees in London this weekend, we are extremely proud of him and wish him the best of luck.

I hope you have a great weekend.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jim Nixon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Jim Nixon  
Headteacher