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Highdown Link

Aspire Achieve

From the Headteacher

Dear Parents

I hope that all parents are as excited as I am to read about our award for great examination results.

SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers Network, recently undertook its annual in-depth analysis of official Department for Education data on all state-funded schools in England and identified Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre's success. The school has qualified for an SSAT Educational Outcomes Award by being in the top 20% of non-selective schools nationally for high average grades achieved by students.

The school has been invited to receive their award at a regional celebration ceremony hosted by SSAT at Holland Park School in London on 12 May.

Sue Williamson, Chief Executive of SSAT said: *'Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre should be congratulated for their exceptional achievement. They have proved themselves to be leading the field in improving GCSE outcomes for their students. There is so much good practice that this school could share, and I hope they will join us at the celebration evening for the chance to network and share strategies with award-winning schools. These results are testament to the commitment and hard work of the students, teachers and leadership team at Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre, and show what can be achieved when skilled teachers have high expectations and ambition for every young person. I am proud that this school is a member of the SSAT network.'*

We are working hard with the examination groups to make sure that 2015 achievement is equally great!

Rachel Cave



Giving and receiving inspirational lessons for curious minds

Will.i.am gives computer coding advice and primary school takes lesson from student leaders

Why coding matters



Radio 1 DJ Clara Amfo brought coding to life for computing and ICT students in a BBC live lesson.

Will.i.am's coding mentor Lilly Kam explained some key coding concepts;

Muki Kulhan, The Executive Digital Producer of The Voice, revealed the secrets behind the new Voice app, and code master Dr Sam Aaron showed how he could digitally remaster the closing music. Will.i.am, who started out with coding, explained how coding and digital creativity will become increasingly important in the future. During the Q&A session, remote viewers learnt how coders can earn £400 – 500 a day!

Collaborative learning

Highdown recognises the importance of developing leadership and teamwork skills and instilling students with a sense of community responsibility. Education in global citizenship is also vital: to instil respect for diversity and an understanding of different cultures.



Members of the student leadership council presented how Chinese myths influence customs and festivals to Emmer Green Primary School. The Year 5 students had fun with an art related project and the council demonstrated how the theme is extended at Highdown with further cultural research and pottery making. The younger children received a certificate and personalised feedback from Year 8 students.

Discovering sociology

**Do mobile phones make our lives more or less stressful?
How do societies control love and marriage? Does the media contribute to ageism?**

Sociology investigates these types of questions and tries to make sense of human social behaviour. It explores what makes people act the way they do, how groups of people and societies are organised and how this affects each of us. The subject matter is diverse, fascinating and relevant to everyday life ranging from key concepts such as power, gender, ethnicity and culture to topical issues such as the family, beliefs, education and crime.

Marketable skills

By analysing and interpreting social life, sociology develops qualities highly desirable to employers: a cross-

cultural understanding, research, communication, interpersonal, analytical and leadership skills. Sociology trains you to answer the 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions about human societies giving students a strong intellectual background for careers in the professions or business. There are many employment opportunities including marketing, administration, health and welfare services, education, journalism, public relations, the police and research.

Finding out more

Whether you are a curious people watcher or are thinking about studying sociology at A-level, open your mind to the subject at www.britsoc.co.uk.

'Studying sociology has helped me personally to have the confidence to structure and write a strong academic essay, as well as to think critically.'

Emily Maybanks Sixth Former June 2012

The **UCAS** website has practical advice and timely information for parents to help their son or daughter through the application process including a newsletter, interactive information tool and parent blogs. www.ucas.com



On 18 March 2015, Year 12 students attended the annual **Thames Valley Higher Education Convention** at Rivermead. This brought together 150 higher education institutions and professional organisations together under one roof. It made a perfect opportunity to talk with uni representatives and hear first hand some great tips and advice in seminars - covering everything from finance to student life.

Careers guidance

Insurance industry pledges to double the number of apprentices by 2018

Steve White, CEO of the British Insurance Brokers' Association

Comment

Gavin Rennie

Head of Corporate Responsibility, Prudential

Employing over 300,000 people, the insurance sector makes a vital contribution to the UK economy offering roles and opportunities across a wide range of business functions and specialisms. So how do you get into the industry?

An apprenticeship scheme is a great career choice for school leavers as it provides structured workplace learning and a professional qualification whilst earning. Hard work and commitment are a must.

There are a variety of careers including information technology, customer services, marketing, retail and sales, communications and human resources.

What we look for in an applicant

With a minimum of 5 GCSEs including Maths and English, we are looking for people who can demonstrate good communication and organisational

skills, teamwork and an ability to work on their own initiative. How do we expect you to demonstrate these skills? Tell us what your interests are and why you think you are suited to a role in insurance. Some basic research about the sector and organisation goes a long way here.

To find out about you as an individual we would invite you to an assessment centre. You will undergo group exercises and a competence based interview. You shouldn't be scared of these, we try to make it fun and the best advice is to be yourself.

The real secret to success for competence based interviews is to get involved in a variety of activities and be able to tell us your stories when we ask you. You need to tell us what you have done rather than what you think you would do in any certain situation. For example, tell me about a time you worked as a part of a team. What was your role, what were you trying to achieve, what was the outcome? Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem. What was the problem, what did you do, what was the hardest thing to resolve? Think about these type of questions and have some real examples ready for interview.

Find out more at www.pru.co.uk/careers/apprenticeship



Arrtu Rajantie

Parent Governor

As a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee and one of two Curriculum Link governors, I focus on ensuring the school delivers a broad curriculum in line with national priorities and local needs.

Originally from Finland, I have been living in the UK since 1998 and in Reading since 2005. I have three children, the youngest of whom has only just started primary school, so I will have children at Highdown for many years.

Because of this, and because I think education is very important for our children and for the whole society, I felt I should do my bit to help the school in their fantastic work.

I enjoy the inside view to school education I get as a governor, and in return I hope that I can provide a useful perspective through my own experience of working in higher education.

I am Professor of Theoretical Physics at Imperial College London, where my research is in particle physics and cosmology. Rather than practical applications, its main impact is better understanding of the Universe and our place in it. I think is it very

important to pass this on to next generations, and I often give talks to Highdown Physics Students.



Rob McConnell

PGCE trainee

Trainee teacher Rob McConnell is proving a hit with the students and knows he's made the right decision to go into teaching. When asked 'How does that work sir?', Rob is encouraged to have stirred curiosity with a fun experiment. 'Concepts can be abstract, so it's good to bring in practicality to ground ideas'.

Rob shares his enthusiasm

for science by making reference to the latest research where ever he can, for instance using stem cells in 3D printing to build bones.

A biology graduate, Rob spent a year as a teaching assistant to gained invaluable insight into teaching.

Studying towards a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Rob's time is split between practical teaching at Highdown and training at Oxford University.

Rob is thriving off Highdown's lively community, phenomenal support and training from staff, and great bunch of students.

Literacy

Students and staff celebrated **World Book Day** with oodles of activities across the week. The Year 9 Book Group shared favourite reads with all teachers and were joined by 6th formers at the Writing for Teenagers Conference at Leighton Park. Library fines and profits from book sales boosted international and Berkshire charities. The DO NOT READ THIS campaign challenged us to consider how impossible it is to not read, how ubiquitous literacy is in our everyday lives and raise awareness of world illiteracy. Year 7 students ran an inter-tutor literature and media quiz with Kit Taylor (8J) writing some of the questions and student librarians marking the scores. The winning tutor was 7D—Nieve McDonnell, Ayesha Onil-Ere, Zaydan Aziz and Max Jackson. Highdown Radio ran a competition to podcast book trailers; overall winners were Susannah Jones and Rachel Outhwaite. Students were given a £1 book token, staff swapped books and at 10.30 am on World Book Day, the whole school 'dropped everything and read'.



On the button

Share your educational and inspirational websites, apps, books, videos, games etc. at editor@highdown.reading.sch.uk.

www.thestudentroom.co.uk	QuizUp	Book of the Human Body	Airkix, Basingstoke
Forum and wiki where KS4 and KS5 students can share academic and social knowledge and experiences. Includes study help, choosing a university, careers, and life.	The biggest, free trivia game in the world with over 700 topics. Deceptively intriguing and devilishly addictive because of its league tables.	Part of the How it Works series. With amazing illustrations, the 170+ page magazine is packed with curious questions, facts and trivia.	Experience the thrill of indoor skydiving, learn to ski, surf and even climb all under one roof.
WEBSITE	APP	BOOK	GIFT IDEA

125 miles of endurance

Respect to Year 11 Conor Macnab (rear) and his paddle partner as they take on the world's longest Kayak race.

The gruelling Easter challenge from Devizes to Westminster will call upon their physical and mental strength. Conor and his paddle partner are aiming to complete the race in under 22 hours, to raise awareness and funds for registered charity Reading Sea Cadet Corps. Last September, Conor along with another Reading cadet became the Sea Cadets' National Kayak Champions, winning both the 500 metres and 2 kilometres K2 (doubles) race at the Excel Centre, London.



Hockey

The U13 hockey team hassled the opposition to finish 4th in the plate competition of the Berkshire Schools U13 In2Hockey County Tournament.

With a testing start, rain didn't dampen spirits as defence held strong against Lambrook who had been thrashing everyone else 5-0 and 6-0 in the pool games. Bethan Robert's saves and a sharp defence increasingly frustrated Lambrook. The final score 0-0 - a fantastic result against very strong overall winners. The girls should be highly commended for their positive attitude throughout the day and the excellent hockey they played throughout the tournament. The team includes Yasmin Sharples, Vicki Jones, Natalie Neville, Ella Harrison, Sophie Lin, Holly Brian-Boys from Year 8, and Bethan Roberts, Daisy Golledge, Tabitha Tubb and Eve Sherwood from Year 7.

Miss Clark, PE Teacher

Netball

Year 7 A team finish 5th overall in Reading School Netball League.

With so many students regularly attending training at Leighton Park, we have been able to field two teams and both of them have performed well this term. The highlight was the A team's fantastic top half finish. This was particularly encouraging as the only teams to beat them were the Abbey A & B teams, Kendrick and Leighton Park. Well done to all those girls that have played.

Miss Clark, PE Teacher

Dates for your diary

21 April	FIRST DAY OF TERM 5
23-27 April	A2 photography examinations
27-28 April	GCSE art and graphic communication examinations
29 April-5 May	A2 art examinations
30 April	Junior mathematics challenge (Years 7 and 8)
30 April-1 May	GCSE photography examinations
5 May	HPV 2 session for Year 8 female students
5 May	Year 11 examinations begin (external written)
11 May	Years 12 & 13 examinations begin (external written)
11-12 May	Year 10 speaking examinations [Chinese]
25-29 May	HALF TERM
1 June	FIRST DAY OF TERM 6 and Year 8 examinations

Report student illness to the Attendance Officer on 0118 9015823 before 9.30 a.m.

Are you a student feeling anxious? Find support at worried@highdown.reading.sch.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF



This month ten Year 8 girls attended the inspirational bugs and bangles event at Reading University, where they learned about wearable technology, how to build robots and computer science.



To get ideas flowing for forthcoming GCSE Art and Design exams, Year 11 students took inspiration from a trip to The Natural History Museum and The Tate Modern.



Sixth Formers thinking of a career in the NHS were treated to a comprehensive tour of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, visiting pathology and pharmacy as well as A&E, outpatients and some wards.

Berkshire Maestros run music lessons for guitar (classical, bass or electric), piano, keyboard, woodwind, strings, brass and percussion.

www.berkshiremaestros.org.uk

School Reception: 0118 9015800 | office@highdown.reading.sch.uk | www.highdown.reading.sch.uk

HighdownSchool

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