

Year 8 Excellence Evening 2022-23

Slide 1

Good evening, and welcome to our Year 8 Excellence Evening. My name is Miss Pearce, and I am currently Head of Achievement for Year 8. The aim of this meeting is to provide information and guidance about the year ahead, what the challenges and opportunities may present and how we will work with you to support your child achieve excellence.

The presentation will also focus on how to build on the successes from Year 7 and how to develop and refine learning habits to ensure great progress continues to be made by deepening subject knowledge, understanding and skills

Slide 2,3

I would like to start by saying how proud I am of the year group and how each and every student has raised to the challenges that starting a new school can bring, especially when previous years have been unpredictable. I would also like to say a huge thank you to the parents and carers that have shown such fantastic support, in ensuring our students continue to build on LORIC skills, demonstrating their Highdown vales.

With our excellent pastoral team, mentor sessions, and curriculum I am certain our students will aspire to achieve successful outcomes. As you can see from the slide behind me, there are a range of staff who the students may wish to seek support from. For parents the main point of contact is, however, your child's mentor.

We also have the safeguarding team at Highdown who pupils can speak to if they have a concern about their safety or the safety of others.

Slide 4 and 5

I am sure that many of you in this room, including myself and Mr Reid, will be pleased with the move to having a no phones policy at Highdown. With the introduction of bring your own devices this will help pupils to ensure that they are committed to their learning when they are in lessons. If you have an urgent message for your child, please do notify the office who will endeavour to get the message to your child as soon as possible.

We also have a zero tolerance on any behaviour that is abusive. If pupils do experience any form of abuse verbal or physical, it is important that they report this to us. This includes any form of discrimination.

Slide 6

Last year was truly excellent for the cohort. The majority of students were meeting or exceeding in most subjects and R2L were mostly outstanding or good. Excellence is not about being the very best, it is about doing your very best -and this reflected in the tutor comments at the end of the academic year. I hope that this year is just as successful and we as a year group continue to strive within a rich, broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum.

Slide 7

A student's journey starts very young. Last year students will have, found ways to be kind, embraced the Highdown Values, started PiXL Edge, got involved in house activities, demonstrated an outstanding readiness to learn, learnt good independent study habits, developed core skills and knowledge, may have applied, and been successful, at applying to be a buddy and hopefully had time over the summer to reflect on their personal strengths and to consider new targets for the new academic year.

Slide 8

This year there are many fantastic opportunities to ensure our students continue to find ways to be kind, represent your house, future careers, growth mindset, achieve PiXL Edge apprentice or apprentice bonus for those that have already done it.

The theme for Year 8 is "The Discovery Year." The year that students build upon prior knowledge for their GCSEs/careers and discover what subjects they enjoy, what makes them happy and really start to think about their future. Vital year - what career or area of work would they like to explore? What qualifications do they need to get there? All these decisions will be explored and discovered as we progress through Year 8. All jobs are inspirational, but could they aspire to enter the job a little bit higher? Go to the best college/university, not just settling. Get on the best apprenticeship out there,

not just any that will take them. You can achieve everything in life without GCSEs, it might just be harder to get there. GCSEs don't necessarily mean success, but they help! It's important to have a growth mindset, to ensure all doors and pathways remain open.

Slide 9

Throughout the curriculum students will have a wide range of opportunities to discover where their strengths and shortcomings lie, to develop a strong identity of who they are and what they aim to achieve. This year pupils will also be able to choose which of the three technologies they would like to continue with, they will be able to choose from; Design Technology which will focus on working with resistant materials, Textiles, Food and Computing. Through Mentor time, and lessons students will have integrated challenges and tasks to complete that will work hand in hand to the additional areas of the curriculum such as Pixl Edge, PSHCE, careers and interhouse. I hope that over the next few weeks students reflect on what they'd like to feel challenged by and really thrive to achieve with the help from the pastoral team and their subject teachers.

Slide 10

A growth mindset is about understanding that work is going to be challenging, and that is ok, but giving up is not. I think our students have already demonstrated particularly well they are capable of this, but it's important we continue to build on the foundations we put in place last year. Intelligence comes from working hard, it doesn't just happen - believe that as students and as parents and the next four years will be fantastic. Our students have had to work through some extraordinary times and circumstances but it's important that we recognise just how far they have come as independent learners of the year 2020 and implement these core values into the new academic year.

Slide 11-13

The role of the mentor is a really important part within the student's daily routine. They are the first member of staff to see our students in the morning. This term as a pastoral team we are going to be working hard on building our relationships and aim for students to rediscover their self-confidence and passion to do well. Mentor time is run with a number of weekly activities. Monday mornings will be reading, students will be required to actively listen to

either an audiobook or their mentor reading to them, they will also be discussing tier 2 words and working on their breadth of vocabulary knowledge and understanding. They will have two days of personal development; one based on LORIC skills, this term we are focusing on organisation, and one based on developing skills for learning. Assemblies will be delivered largely in person but may, on occasion be delivered virtually, and there will also be an opportunity for pupils to develop their knowledge of current affairs and the world around them. We want to make the communication between yourselves and the pastoral team as seamless as possible, so please, if you have any questions do email the mentors who will be able to answer and support where necessary.

Slide 14

There have been several changes to the routines of how we will be running. One thing I would like to bring your attention to is Class Charts. This will be the sole provider for behaviour, home learning, student passports, and their wellbeing information.

The wellbeing tab can be used by both parents and students. It is a way to inform us and track how the student is feeling so that we can provide the necessary support. Over time it can also generate data so that we as a pastoral team can identify trends and patterns in wellbeing and behaviour. Each time a parent or student adds a wellbeing score, the information will be sent to a number of relevant staff including the mentor, the Head of achievement and members of the star centre team.

Please can I encourage you to use this feature as it will help build a seamless communication between yourselves and us as we move forward.

Slide 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

Last year, we introduced Highdown Excellence Plans, with the aim of supporting students to become more reflective on their behaviour and attitudes towards their learning.

The thinking behind the Highdown Excellence plans is underpinned by the behaviour strategy and ensuring that positive behaviours are promoted for our students.

The students will complete a form, like that behind me, electronically and this should be reflected upon periodically. (CHANGE SLIDE) The targets should be also in line with the VESPA mindset. (CHANGE SLIDE) Which will lead to a continual improvement mindset and therefore (CHANGE SLIDE).

Slide 21 – Highdown Way

Good evening, everyone. I am John Reid, Deputy Headteacher, and I have direct responsibility for year 8 and 9. I will therefore be working closely with Miss Pearce and the year 8 team this year.

Miss Pearce has spoken about continual improvement and the personal qualities for learning that we help our young people develop, so that they can be successful. However, for a school to be successful it is essential that we all work together. Students, parents/carers and staff pulling in the same direction. In school this drive for working together leads to what we all know as ‘the school rules’. However, school rules are designed to create an environment where everyone can be successful in their learning and happy and confident in school. At Highdown, we call this ‘The Highdown Way’. The Highdown Way does not ask much of students in class, it is three simple and achievable aims for all. Work hard. Be kind and respectful. Be ready to learn. By following these simple rules, students all play their part in creating calm and effective learning environments in the classroom.

Slide 22 – Core Values – ARE

The Highdown Way is then built upon with our Core Values. In school students will often here this referred to as We ARE Highdown. With ARE – A.R.E – standing for Aspiration, Respect and Excellence. With our core values at the heart of everything we do we aim to help our students not only achieve

academic excellence for them, but also help them develop into well rounded, kind individuals with a drive to succeed.

These values are the key part of our rewards and consequences systems with all House points and consequence points assigned for either Aspiration, Respect or Excellence.

Slide 23 – The Highdown Way

One thing we all love about school, is the Homework. And we have reached the point in the evening where I am going to set you some homework. This slide elaborates on the Highdown Way and looks at what this means for us, as the school, the student and the parent or carer. This presentation will be placed in the school website in the parents' information section, and I would like you to spend some time looking at this slide with your child. Have a chat with them about Aspiration, Respect and Excellence. What does it mean for them in school? What does it mean for our relationships. Ultimately, why will these values benefit them individually and them as part of the wider school community.

Slide 24

This is a slide that will be familiar to all as this slide or something very similar has been shown at almost every parent event since year 5 or 6. We are proud of our uniform at Highdown, and we want all our students to wear it with pride. Uniform helps to create a level playing field for all students. It removes the pressure that young people sometimes feel of having to wear certain clothes and can therefore concentrate on learning. Wearing the uniform correctly establishes the high expectations and culture we hold as a school.

There is a point at the bottom of this slide about PE lessons. The PE department follow nationally set guidelines to ensure health and safety of students. Part of this is the removal of jewellery for PE lessons. With that in mind please do not allow your child to get a new ear piercing when there is not sufficient time for healing. PE teachers will expect jewellery, including in newly pierced ears, to be removed for lessons.

Slide 25

For our students we aim for them to achieve 100% attendance and maintain a cumulative attendance rate of at least 95%. Attendance falling below 95% has been shown to result in an average reduction of one grade at A Level per student and this increases to two grades when attendance falls below 90%. The bar chart on this slide shows the impact on GCSE performance. The bars show the average number of grade 4s and above for students that achieve different levels of attendance. On the left we have students with a 98% or above attendance figure achieve on average 8 GCSEs at grade 4 or above. On the right the bar shows that students with an attendance of 90% achieve on average 4 GCSEs at grade 4 and above. With reformed GCSEs grade 4 is termed a standard pass, it is seen as similar to the old grade C at GCSE. High levels of attendance and excellent punctuality are both characteristics of students who meet and indeed exceed their target grades, achieve success and progress to higher education and/or employment. Further information on Attendance can be found on the link provided.

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From 19th September we would like all reporting of absence to go through classcharts. If you have not downloaded the app, please do so. This will help you keep up to date with your child home learning activities, view announcement and from the 19th September, inform the school of absence. It

is a very simple process. Click report absence, then report new absence. The date will appear and there is free text box to write a brief reason for the absence. Please remember that sensitive information should not be shared here. For more sensitive information please contact your child's form mentor, Head of Achievement or, if necessary, a member of the school safeguarding team.

Slide 27

We have already spoken about our school Values and the importance of good behaviour. Whereas good behaviour supports effective teaching and promotes an ethos of respect. Poor behaviour disrupts learning and wastes time and resources. But of course, poor behaviour also impacts outcomes for individual students as this graph shows. It will not be a surprise to hear, I'm sure, that students with more House points, on average, achieve better grades and therefore give themselves more opportunities after year 11. Good behaviour, good attendance and constantly trying your best over your years at Highdown will have a positive impact on your outcomes. I challenge all students to get as many House points as they can this year.

Slide 28

Perhaps appropriately, but I hope not because we have bored you to sleep, the penultimate slide is about sleep! Personally, I have a son who has just entered year 9. I therefore have experience both, in school, and at home of the impact of having a good night's sleep for young people. The simple point here on the screen says that Research shows that students with good and regular sleep patterns achieve better grades in school. Although, I do understand that this is sometimes easier said than done. But please do persevere with a good

bedtime routine. Young people should be off devices for an hour before going to bed. It helps them to relax and switch off, and then sleep. I see how pumped up my own son can be when he comes off the Xbox after playing with friends. He has a great time but cannot immediately fall asleep. Please also take phones away overnight. The temptation to keep messaging friends on social media or watching endless TikTok's is too much for many and will impact the quality of sleep. Like me, I am sure you will have your battles about this at home. But stick with it, in the long run it will be worth it.

Slide 29 – Key dates

You will be pleased to know that this is the last slide. There is nothing on this slide that is not on the school calendar, but we have simply taken key dates that are coming up for year 8.

I would like to finish by thanking you for coming this evening. Miss Pearce and I look forward to working with you all this year. This is the end of the evening but as you leave, we will be in the foyer in case any of you have any questions that you would like to ask.

Thank you, good night.