



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

We would like to thank all parents who contributed to our survey in the summer. We have given much consideration to the feedback and outline some responses and changes we have brought in this academic year.

We were thrilled with the positives and will continue to deliver in these areas.

The overwhelming majority of respondents said that their children are happy and feel safe at Highdown. You said that we are usually very good at responding to you and taking action where we need to. You said that the support to help young people feel welcomed into Highdown was excellent – and this was at different year groups and not just year 7 transition.

Most respondents were very appreciative of the hard work, overall pastoral care and individualised support for young people; it was also recognised that schools have been doing more to support over the years and especially during and since the covid pandemic. Many parents commented favourably on individual teachers, departments, the SEND team and exam support. You appreciated the range of extra-curricular activities and sports – including discos and Duke of Edinburgh awards. Performing arts was mentioned by many as a particular pinnacle of excellence. Your responses about how careers education was motivating to young people were positive and recognised the increase in our provision in this area.

Thank you to all parents and carers for engaging with our surveys. We are determined to continually review and refine our practice.

Some themes which were raised	Our responses and actions
Toilets are not sufficiently clean and there are only unisex toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will have more frequent cleaning and checking of our facilities. We continually review our cleaning staffing levels and prioritise recruitment in this area• We will work with our students to make sure that they do not eat in the toilet facilities. This causes significant mess which impacts on staff ability to keep clean.• There are separate male and female facilities as well as shared ones which students may choose to use• We have increased staff on duty near toilet facilities to monitor their correct use during break and lunchtimes

Uniform – this is not smart enough and not enforced, we want to keep a skirt option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform policy has been updated and shared with all stakeholders. • A skirt option is being maintained. Only skirts of a certain type may be worn to improve smartness. Students will be asked to correct uniform or parents bring in appropriate uniform • Phasing out trainer-style footwear to smarten uniform and support families' finances • We will keep up messaging and communications around this to ask for families support that correct uniform is worn when students leave the home
Phones – reduction in screen time would benefit young people and reduce distractions in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phones must be switched off and in school bags. • Phones will be confiscated if used on site
SEND information is hard to find	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will signpost to the relevant sections of our website more frequently through our newsletters and communications. • We will put more links to relevant documents in our newsletters and signpost resources on line • Following an external review of SEND provision, we have drawn up an action plan and are working hard to put into place recommendations
Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vast majority of students report being happy and safe at school on the survey and that... • ...When bullying occurs there is swift and effective action taken. • In some cases, resolving situations which are complex, can take time
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our feedback policy reflects current educational research and thinking about verbal or whole class feedback rather than written feedback for all pieces of work • We will review feedback this academic year

Teaching revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have learning conferences for different year groups about preparation for exams and study habits. Older students lead sections of these so young people can learn from first hand experiences. Learning Conferences are scheduled twice this year for Yr11 • Students have been taught how to use Cornell Notes, Flash Cards, Dual Coding and Graphic Organisers such as Fishbone diagrams as part of their revision strategy. When setting out their revision timetable students are encouraged to use the idea of 25-minute sprints to help them stay focused • This year we will be bringing in parent and family support sessions for revision • The Study Skills section on our website was updated and expanded last year https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/study-skills • We also have a 'help your child revise' page under the parents area which was also updated and expanded last year: https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/revision • GCSEPod is free for all Yr10/11 students • Recall and review is a key aspect to the Highdown Approach - and a themed foci for Teach Meet Oct-Dec for PPEs. • Will also use social media more this year to show parents / carers strategies we use to develop learning / revision in school. • Students were taught different strategies and given some time to practice them during the mentor period programme in year 10. This will carry on during year 11. A summary of the ideas and activities were shared with parents before the PPEs last year.
Communications could be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to review with our communications policy and practice • We are committed to improving our partnership with parents through gaining feedback this year • Information to parents about detentions hasn't always been sufficiently clear, we are

	working to improve this.
Class charts announcements quickly get cluttered when they are pinned, which is unhelpful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinning announcements will no longer happen except for urgent information to help avoid the timeline becoming overwhelmed
Curriculum Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our website contains curriculum maps which details topics being taught each term. We will be making direct links to curriculum information via our subject reports this year to support families.
Highdown is too large	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst Highdown is a large school, we are able to divide up our grounds into smaller spaces for different year groups. This leads to a 'tight knit' feel in year groups. • Additionally, spaces such as The Hive and other lunch clubs allow students to get together in smaller groups. With the return to one lunchtime, more clubs can be made available • Younger students have priority access to The Gallery at lunchtimes and split break times, helps with numbers using this facility. • Classes are still about 27 students, as they would be in smaller or even larger schools • Larger size allows for economies of scale. Allowing more of the grant funding received to be targeted to teaching
Reporting and subject evenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The online booking system provides equal access for all to book their appointments and is more efficient than students making bookings on paper with their teachers. • We will put links to curriculum areas onto the reports so families can see what learning has been covered during the reported period • We will keep our online consultations as this allows a private conversation, meetings in the school hall were no longer and could be overheard • A parent can request a conversation with a teacher during the year as part of our

	communication policy
Could behaviour be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commissioned an external behaviour expert to look at our behaviour systems. They were clear that behaviour is very good but gave us some additional advice. • From this we have introduced The Bridge provision – this is an on-site provision to help support dysregulated students back into education after short or longer term placements. • Removal of mobile phones has removed some of the anti-social behaviours associated with phone use.

Autumn Term 2023