



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE



WELCOME PACK 2024-2025

Aspiration Respect Excellence





HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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April 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

We are delighted that you have chosen Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre for your sons and daughters, as increasing numbers of families are locally. We are very much looking forward to meeting you in the next few weeks and months.

We are very proud of all we do at Highdown School and our improving outcomes for our young people. It's based on simple principles – look after our children, teach well and support and nurture all the way. Our core values are Aspiration, Respect and Excellence. We try to all live up to this daily!

Our Welcome Evening on 1 July 2024 is when we will speak to you again about the next steps to prepare for transition to Highdown. It is an exciting, but sometimes a daunting time and we want to do all we can to make the process simple and happy.

Our teachers and support staff are all committed to making the next seven years happy and successful ones. We look forward to your sons and daughters starting this journey.

Yours sincerely

Ms Rachel Cave
Executive Headteacher



Mr Matt Grantham
Head of School





HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

PIXL

The Highdown Way...

Our core values

ASPIRATION

RESPECT

EXCELLENCE

As a student I will demonstrate the core values by following 'The Highdown Way' by:

- **being ready to learn every lesson, every day:**
 - I will be present and punctual
 - I will be properly equipped
 - I will wear the correct uniform
 - I will enter the room calmly and sensibly
 - I will follow the mobile phone policy
 - I will behave in a pro-social way at school and whilst travelling to and from the academy
- **being kind and respectful:**
 - I will be polite and courteous to others
 - I will be honest with staff
 - I will listen and follow all instructions given by staff
 - I will follow the Behaviour Policy
 - I will keep the academy estate clean and tidy
 - I will not bring illegal, dangerous or other forbidden items into school
 - I will not do anything to endanger a healthy, safe and secure environment, including online
- **working hard in every lesson:**
 - I will try my best in all I do, be **aspirational** and aim for **excellence** in my work
 - I will complete all home learning and will respond to feedback positively
 - I will be pro-active in lessons and enable others to work undisturbed



#weAREhighdown

THE HIGHDOWN WAY

ROUTINE FOR NEW STUDENTS— ON TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

To give our new students a smooth start at Highdown School, it is our usual practice that only Year 7 students and some Sixth Formers attend school on the first day.

WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2024

Your son/daughter should arrive at school, in correct school uniform and correct footwear at 8.30am ready for assembly at 8.40am. As all members of staff will be in meetings until this time, please do not send your child earlier. On arrival, students will be met at the main drive by our Year 8 Buddies and directed to the school hall. After assembly they will meet up with their mentor groups and go with their mentors to their mentor room where they will spend the rest of the morning. During the time spent with mentors, students will spend time on activities to get to know each other and will be given their timetables. Students will also be taken on a tour around the academy to show them where various rooms are. There will be a short break during the morning. Students will have lunch and then go to normal timetabled lessons. The school day will finish at 3.10pm.

THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU ON WEDNESDAY 04 SEPTEMBER 2024:

- A packed lunch (and a snack for morning break time)
- A pencil case with at least a pen, pencil, colouring pencils, eraser and a ruler
- Bus money, if needed

ROUTINE FOR YEAR 7 FROM WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2024

Students should arrive at school no later than 8.30am. They should go to their mentor rooms for an 8.40am start. Our Buddies will be waiting for them outside the main entrance to help those less sure of where to go. Students should bring a snack for break time and a packed lunch.

Students should arrive in full school uniform with the correct equipment for learning.

It is a good routine for students to check their timetable each evening and pack their school bag. Students should also have a good breakfast each morning and get to bed at a reasonable time each school night to ensure they are refreshed and ready to learn each day.

On the first school day students will spend mentor period and period 1 with their mentor in the morning and then attend lessons for the rest of the day. The school day finishes at 3.10pm.



EQUIPMENT LIST

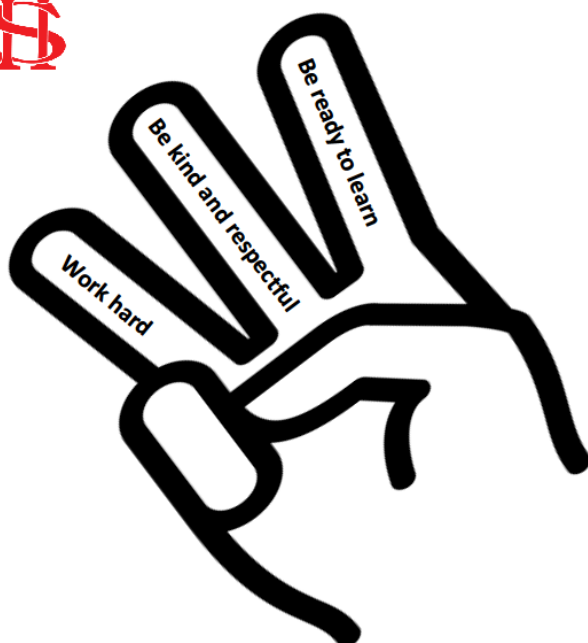
Students should come prepared to be ready to learn for every lesson. Most importantly this means arriving in the right state of mind for learning—being ready to work hard. It also means having the right equipment.

Every student must have:

- A laptop (there is a school scheme to help purchase these)
- Reading book
- Red pens
- Pencils
- Coloured pencils
- Eraser
- Highlighters (red/pink, yellow and green)
- Ruler
- Protractor
- Calculator with trigonometric functions
- Glue
- Scissors (safety scissors only)
- Pair of compasses
- Black/blue pens



Examples only



At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre, all staff and students aspire to achieve the very highest standards.

In each lesson, to consistently maintain these standards, there are 3 very straightforward and reasonable expectations all students should follow – 'The Highdown Way'.

#weAREhighdown

STANDARDS AND VALUES

Good effort, hard work and a positive attitude towards learning, others and our environment will be rewarded by praise points, certificates, letters, postcards and vouchers.

At Highdown School we feel strongly about every member of our community showing these important values.

We want our students to aim for excellence in every aspect of their academy life and beyond. We want our students to learn in an environment where they can be successful and happy.

Students must show respect for others, for the school and for all adults.

Students should be pro-active in their learning and thrive on learning new things, developing their understanding and honing new skills.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Taking part in extra curricular activities is an important part of being a student at Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre. The aim is to offer students the opportunity to be inspired by something that might stay with them for the rest of their lives. Extra curricular activities run at lunchtime or after school every day except Friday.

Activities include:

- Sports
- Arts
- Science
- Drama
- Music

Some clubs may run for half a term, while others will run for the whole academic year — details will be posted on the school website.

TRIPS AND VISITS

Visits out of school are an integral part of the learning process at Highdown, rather than a 'bolt on'.

Trips are non-hazardous and take part in the academy day. Parental consent for these out of school activities is given on the admission form and will not be sought each time. Should any information change regarding the student please can you contact the school immediately. Full details of visits that take place outside of the school day, including residential, will be distributed well in advance and parental consent will be sought. Some trips will inevitably incur costs. All visits are fully risk assessed and comply with health and safety guidance.



STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The student leadership team is not only a mechanism for students to have a say in the running of the academy, it is also a reflection of its culture - that all members of the community have a say in shaping the academy. All students have the opportunity to have their voices heard through the Leadership Team, which is elected by the student body. In addition, student groups will work on specific areas of school improvement. These change and develop over time.

MUSIC LESSONS



In addition to the music curriculum, students can select from a range of instrumental and vocal tuition. Music lessons are either one-to-one or in small groups and are provided by independent peripatetic music teachers. Payment for lessons is made via the academy and rates vary. If you would like your son/daughter to have music tuition, please contact the school. There are also opportunities for students to take part in a range of music clubs, for example choir, band from scratch, music technology, as well as the opportunity to take part in concerts and shows throughout the year.

SPORT FIXTURES

The admission form includes consent for students to take part in off-site, non-hazardous activities during the academy day. If a sports fixture is planned to take place within the normal academy day or after school then permission is taken from the consent received on the admission form. Parents will be notified of such events.

UNIFORM



At Highdown we have set a culture of high standards and this is reflected in our uniform. The Headteacher and Governors believe it is important that our students have a strong identity with their school and wear their uniform with pride, promoting good behaviour while at school and in the wider community. Uniform creates cohesion and promotes good relations between students — relationships being a central part of the ethos of the academy.

The uniform supplier, SWI Ltd, is part of a Fairtrade initiative, providing an online/direct to school or parent service to keep costs down. Highdown School reserves the right to ask for shoes or items of uniform to be changed if they do not conform to guidelines, with discretion reserved where a student has a reasonable excuse, such as a medical condition. Students in receipt of free school meals or with difficult financial circumstances may receive financial support with the uniform at the discretion of the Governing Body.

Blazers

Blazers are to be worn at all times during the school day, including to and from school. They may be removed in class with the permission of the teacher.

Coats

Students are encouraged to wear sensible weatherproof coats in inclement weather. Fur, camouflage or denim coats are not permitted. Coats should also not have logos or writing on. Hoodies, sweatshirts and jumpers are not to be worn as coats.

Jewellery and Make-up

Students can only wear single studs or sleepers (no more than one in each ear), a watch, a small signet ring and a small chain concealed under the shirt. All jewellery is to be removed before PE lessons. Any piercings that cannot be removed are forbidden. Do not allow your child to have a piercing in the holidays if there is insufficient healing time for the piercing to be removed at school. Make-up must be inconspicuous and nail varnish or false nails must not be worn.

Hairstyles

Hairstyles should be simple and not attention seeking. Shaved patterns and attention seeking colour added to hair are not permitted.

Hats/Caps

Hats and caps must not be worn inside school buildings.

Tights

Fashion tights are not permitted.

Shoes

Plain black shoes that can be polished. Boots, heels or canvas shoes are not permitted. Sports branded and trainer-style shoes are not permitted. Please see website for more details.

UNIFORM

UNIFORM	
COMPULSORY from official suppliers	Blazer – black with school logo
COMPULSORY from official suppliers OR purchased elsewhere	Black full length tailored trousers OR black knee length pleated skirt open necked white shirt or blouse Black/white/grey socks Plain black shoes that can be polished (boots/heels/sports branded /trainer type canvas shoes are not permitted)
OPTIONAL from official suppliers	V necked jumper with school logo OR black cardigan with school logo Plain black, formal, tailored shorts (Summer terms only)

PE KIT	
COMPULSORY from official suppliers	Red polo shirt with school logo Black shorts with school logo Red socks Multisport top with school logo (boys only)
OPTIONAL from official suppliers	Plain black tracksuit bottoms with school logo Sports hoodie with school logo
TO BE PURCHASED ELSEWHERE	Trainers – fairly strong, but not too heavy or bulky. Multi purpose/cross trainers would be appropriate
OTHER KIT WHEN REQUIRED – Please confirm with PE Department when/if these will be required	Swimming costume and towel Football boots Shin pads Mouth Guard (Rugby)



HOME LEARNING

Home learning is a vital activity. It provides experience of working independently, where students plan their own time and become self-reliant. It also equips them for examination preparation, further education and the world of work.

There are three main aspects of home learning:

- Consolidation of class work eg complete questions based on what was learnt in class
- Preparation for future learning (eg find out three facts about a topic before learning about it more fully in class)
- Extension of learning in lessons

Students will be set home learning tasks every day. Some tasks will be quite short, such as learning vocabulary, whilst some will be extended project work.

We encourage parents to be actively involved with home learning but it is not the parents' work. Parents should draw answers from their son/daughter by using open questioning.

If none of you know, you can learn together! This is the ideal situation for having learning conversations.

CLASS CHARTS

At Highdown we use an online system called **Class Charts** to collect and report praise/House points to celebrate a student's effort, achievement and contribution to the community. Students and their parents can keep track of these 'live' via the student/parent apps available for iOS and Android users. We also use this system to record consequences, where students have not met the Highdown Way, and to inform parents where a same-day after school detention has been given. More details about our Praise and Consequences system can be found in our Behaviour Policy via our website.

All home learning is set through Class Charts. Students and parents will be given their own login details to access their home learning calendars to keep track of what home learning has been set, when it is due in and whether it has been completed or not. This can be accessed by www.classcharts.co.uk or by clicking the link on our school website homepage. It is the students' responsibility to check this daily and to complete home learning activities on the night it has been set to help them manage their time.

All students will be given a copy of the home learning timetable so they know what to expect and when it will also be available on the school website. Students' timetables are accessible in Class Charts for both students and parents.



FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre formative assessment is an integral part of every lesson.

What does this look like in class?

- Verbal answers — the teacher identifies a student to ask rather than asking the class to raise their hands. The teacher will then use open questions such 'What makes you think that?', 'How did you get to that answer?' or 'So how does that compare to...?'
- Verbal feedback from the teacher
- Written answers
- Asking students to evaluate their own work and reflect on their learning
- Asking students to assess the work of fellow students

ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING—THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Successful assessment is central to the development and success of your child. At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre the most important characteristics of assessment are:

- What are a student's strengths? What have they done well? (WWW — What Went Well)
- What can the student do to improve? What would be even better? (EBI — Even Better If)
- Students being given the opportunity to make those improvements (MRI — My Response Is)

PIXL EDGE

PiXL Edge is a programme that has been designed to give our students the 'edge' by helping them to develop the skills needed for further education, the workplace and for life in general. On leaving school, young people will not only require excellent academic qualifications but also other attributes to help them achieve their aspirations. PiXL Edge helps students to develop the LORIC Skills:

Leadership
Organisation
Resilience
Initiative
Communication

Students develop these skills through completing a number of challenges and reflecting on how their LORIC skills have improved over time. As students get older the challenges get more difficult. There are four Edge qualifications: Apprentice (Years 7-8), Pioneer (Year 8) Graduate (Years 9-10) and Master (Years 11-13). If students complete them all they will certainly give themselves the Edge!



LEARNING CONVERSATIONS -

HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AT HOME

At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre we believe a child's parents/carers are a vital part of the learning process. We encourage parents/carers to have regular 'learning conversations' with their son or daughter. This is not a 'nag', where a parent chases up homework and so on. Rather it is a chance for your son or daughter to explain what they have learnt and experienced during the school day. It might be that they explain a concept to you or an idea they had during a lesson.

For instance, you might ask:

'So tell me about your favourite lesson/activity today... What was enjoyable about it?'

'What did you learn from it?'

'I've not heard of that, can you explain it to me?'

'That's interesting, tell me some more...'

'Tell me about something you found difficult'

At Highdown we pride ourselves in placing positive relationships between all at the heart of the academy. It is fundamental to the ethos of the academy that every child is known and valued. We understand that every child has individual needs and that those needs vary from day to day depending on what else is going on in their lives. With this in mind, we have a support structure to provide students with the care and nurture they need.

We strive to make Highdown a place where all young people feel welcome, included and safe. A place where students are treated equally and individually, share our high expectations and are supported to achieve success and follow their ambitions and aspirations. We are committed to enabling students regardless of their age, ethnicity, gender, ability and background.

Each student is a member of a mentor group. Typically the mentor will support students through the majority of life's ups and downs. Sometimes, however, the mentor or the student themselves might want to contact the inclusion team. The inclusion team consists of a range of expertise, including:

- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- The STAR Centre
- Learning Support Assistants
- School First Aiders
- Adult Mentors
- Youth Workers
- Safeguarding officers

Additional external professionals are brought into school, or are referred to, via the Common Assessment Framework, as appropriate.

At different times in their school life, students may need information and advice on a range of concerns. If your son/daughter would like to speak to someone in confidence these are some of the services we offer:

- Community School Nurse
- 1:1 or group mentoring
- Counselling by No5
- Sixth Form Mentors
- Learning Managers
- Daily break and lunch club — make new friends and socialise

How can students access support?

Students can access support through their mentor, Head of Achievement, or by completing a referral form, which are available from the STAR Centre, Student Reception or the school nurse. Students can email the STAR Centre with a worry or question: safeguarding@highdown.reading.sch.uk

STUDENT SAFEGUARDING

The students' safety and welfare is of paramount importance. The school's safeguarding policy can be found on the school website on the page 'About Highdown', 'Policies' If you have any concerns regarding the safety or welfare of any student, please contact the designated Safeguarding Officers using the email : dso@highdown.reading.sch.uk

SEND

Those students with additional needs and their parents will be invited to have regular meetings with the SEND co-ordinator, Jo Arnold. Individual education plans will be drawn up in discussion with the student, their parents/carers and their teachers and these are reviewed frequently. For more information regarding Special Education Needs and Disability, please see the SEND information report on the school website.

We offer a combination of:

- Small group support
- 1:1 support
- Mentoring
- Educational Psychologist support
- External educational activities where appropriate

Progress is regularly reviewed and the student is always invited to the meeting as their input is crucial to ensuring continued progress.

STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

We have a dedicated resource within school to support the needs of students with visual impairment. Members of the team work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure students make good progress and are prepared to continue into Higher Education or the world of work. Students receive a combination of in class support and specialist one to one teaching.

PUPIL PREMIUM

Pupil Premium is top-up funding received by schools, which aims to address the underlying inequalities between children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers. At Highdown, the funding is used to provide additional support in a wide variety of ways including:

- Support with education costs including uniform, Curriculum trips and enrichment activities
- Staff to support students in and out of lessons
- Tutoring sessions to help prepare for examinations.
- Support with paying for a laptop

STAR CENTRE

The STAR Centre is a creative environment where students are able to talk about, express and understand their feelings through emotional literacy. We offer support groups, 1:1 mentoring, after school clubs and various other community work. We also run Year 7 transition groups which are aimed at helping your son/daughter settle within their new school environment.

What are the main aims of the STAR Centre?

- To develop students' social and communication skills
- To raise students' self esteem and confidence
- To provide positive interactions for students
- To provide a safe environment for students
- To assist in developing positive and healthy relationships/attachments with peers and adults

What is Emotional Literacy?

Emotional literacy support focuses on developing self awareness, motivation, empathy, self regulation and social skills. Educational attainment will improve with greater self esteem.

HIGH ACHIEVERS

At Highdown we strive to ensure we provide an inclusive education for all students. As a result, high achievement is celebrated and students are encouraged to stretch themselves to the best of their ability. Amongst Highdown's core values is excellence. As a result Highdown ensures that students who excel in any area of life are recognised and encouraged to develop their full potential.

When students join Highdown, information is gathered from their primary schools. This information, as well as results from standardised testing, is used to identify high achievers within the first half term of year 7. Students may be high achievers in specific subjects. To cater for this, we also identify students by observing lessons and nominating within departments. We have high achieving students who demonstrate academic strengths alongside those who show aptitude in sports and the arts. All are invited to participate in extra activities.

Students who have been identified as high achievers study the same curriculum as the rest of Year 7, but will have opportunities to extend learning. They have the opportunity to take part in some of the activities shown in the table below to enrich and broaden their learning experience. We have a dedicated High Achiever's Coordinator to support these students.

Aspect	KS3
Curriculum	Curriculum areas plan schemes of learning which offer challenge to all and which are carefully scaffolded to cater for students with differing starting points, including a range of extension activities. When the opportunity arises High Achieving students will be invited to participate in visits and to attend specific on or off-site events, e.g. Master classes, maths challenge, Highdown Herald.
Extra-curricular	Music Languages Sport Science club Chess
Advice, information, and guidance	Careers Fair, High Achievers Co-ordinator

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE—Every day matters

At Highdown, attendance is a serious matter. We are all working together to ensure that students maximise their achievement and success and it is a well established fact that poor attendance can have a negative effect on academic progress. Good attendance also shows potential employers that your son/daughter is reliable.

90% attendance is equivalent to missing half a day of school and learning each week. Furthermore, it is equivalent to missing four weeks of learning and education over a year and is equivalent to missing half an entire school year of learning and education over five years of education.

Attendance has an impact on outcomes as the national data shows below:

% attendance	% likelihood of attaining 5 x 9-4 passes
95	77
94	74
93	60
92	53
91	44

All students should arrive at school by 8.30am ready for the mentor period and then their lessons. If your child is unable to attend school, it is vital that you report the absence via Classcharts, no later than 9.00am, leave a clear message and reason for absence. If your son/daughter is not well enough to attend school and the absence is for more than one day please provide a note on their return. For lengthy absences you may be asked to provide a medical note from your doctor.

Please ensure that your son/daughter leaves for school on time every day. Please endeavour not to take your son/daughter out of school in term time, e.g. for a dental or medical appointment, and notify the school as soon as possible if problems arise with your child's attendance. Holidays during in school term time will **not** be authorised and may result in a fixed penalty fine.

Examples of **authorised absences** include illness, where supported by a phone call and note, funeral or other family circumstances or religious observance with prior arrangement with your son/daughter's Head of Achievement.

Examples of **unauthorised absences** include family holidays/outings, refusal by child to attend school.

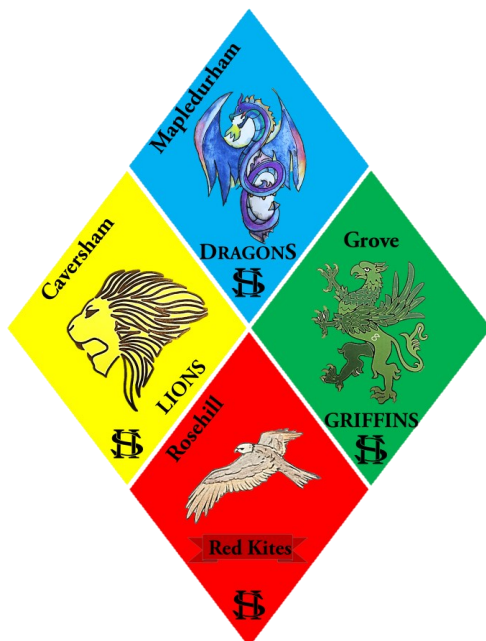
All lessons are registered electronically and unexplained absences will be followed-up. The attendance of all students is tracked by the Head of Achievement and our Attendance Officer. Good school attendance will be recognised and rewarded. Poor attendance will be investigated and will result in phone calls and letters home. Parents of students with consistently poor attendance may be asked to meet with their child's Head of Achievement. The Attendance Officer may take legal action if attendance fails to improve after school contact.

CALENDAR

We have a flexible curriculum that develops with the needs of individuals and so the school calendar is constantly being updated. The calendar is published on the school website. Please ensure that you refer to it on a regular basis.

HOUSE SYSTEM

At Highdown all students join one of our four Houses: Caversham, Grove, Mapledurham and Rosehill. During our House Weeks, students will join with members from their House to work together, take part in competitions and focus on one of our Highdown values. Each year one House will be crowned 'House Champions' and their flag can be seen flying at the front of the school. Our House System is also an important vehicle for collecting student voice and taking part in charitable fundraising. Our Houses are led by Heads of House and Student Leaders.



STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our student leaders act as ambassadors for their House and representatives for their peers. They work with student leaders from other houses, with the support of the Heads of House, to advocate for students, and encourage engagement with the activities of the House System, including competitive events, charitable fundraising, and communal celebration. All members of our community have a voice and our Student Leadership Team ensure the views, feelings and opinions of all students are represented at the highest levels.

We have opportunities for students to become House Chairs and Deputy Chairs in Year 12 and 10, as well as Prefects in Year 11, KS3 Ambassadors in Years 7-9 and Buddies in Year 8.



DINING ROOM (THE GALLERY)

Our dining room is operated by Accent Catering service. It is open for breakfast from 7.30am every day. Accent staff prepare an excellent variety of food every day, including vegetarian options. The food is cooked using fresh ingredients in our own kitchen. Where possible we source food locally.

We discuss menu choices with parents and students and ensure that all meals are tasty and healthy. Over half of all students have school dinners. Students do not need to bring money to school—parents transfer money into their son/daughter's account using 'ParentMail'.

Further information about Accent, including sample menus are available on our website at www.highdown.reading.sch.uk

CONTACTING THE ACADEMY

General enquiries: Phone 0118 9015800

To report a student absence: Use Classcharts

School email: office@highdown.reading.sch.uk

School News App: This provides you with updated information and notifies you when something important has been shared. This app is free. Go to your App store or Google Play Store/ search 'School News', download this onto your device. Once the app is open, enter our postcode: RG4 8LR to find Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre. Remember to turn on our app notifications to receive the latest news.



VISITING THE ACADEMY

We welcome all parents to Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre and there are many opportunities throughout the year to visit for formal events such as shows and concerts. All visitors must report to reception, where you will be welcomed and given a visitor badge. For meetings with members of staff, please call to arrange a mutually convenient time.

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM THE ACADEMY

The ethos and values demonstrated during the academy day by our students are expected to be followed on the way to and from school, whether walking, cycling or using public transport.

Students cycling to the academy must wear a cycle helmet and obey the highway code at all times. As parents we request you ensure your son/daughter's bike is roadworthy and they have the necessary safety equipment, including a good quality lock. All bikes must be locked in our secure cages or cycle rack located outside PE. Scooters or electric scooters are not permitted on site.

Students who are driven to the academy must be dropped off safely, away from marked yellow zig-zags. It is illegal to stop on these, even for a short period. Students with mobility difficulties or visual impairments may be dropped off in the school car park. The roads around the academy are narrow and congested and we urge parents to arrange to pick their son/daughter up away from the immediate vicinity of the academy. Please be courteous when parking near our neighbours' homes.



TERM DATES

Professional Learning Day Monday 2 September 2024 — **School closed to students**
 Tuesday 3 September 2024 — First day of term (Years 7 & 12)
 Wednesday 4 September 2024 — First day of term (Years 8, 9, 10, 11 & 13)

Professional Learning Day Friday 4 October 2024 — **School closed to students**
 Friday 25 October 2024 — Last day of term

Monday 4 November 2024 — First day of term
 Friday 20 December 2024 — Last day of term

Professional Learning Day Monday 6 January 2025 — **School closed to students**
 Tuesday 7 January 2025 — First Day of Term
 Friday 14 February 2025 — Last day of term

Monday 24 February 2025 — First day of term
 Friday 4 April 2025 — Last day of term

Professional Learning Day Tuesday 22 April 2025 — **School closed to students**
 Wednesday 23 April 2025 — First day of term
 Monday 5 May 2025 — Bank Holiday—**school closed**
 Friday 23 May 2025 — Last day of term

Monday 2 June 2025 — First day of term
 Professional Learning Day Friday 27 June 2025 — **School closed to students**
 Tuesday 22 July 2025 — Last day of term



Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre
Guidelines for the acceptable/responsible use
of the Internet and Email

These guidelines are designed to keep all users safe and to help the school be fair to everyone.

The school records all Internet sites visited by students and can check all incoming and outgoing messages.

The Internet

- Students must access the system with their own unique login and password.
- Passwords **must** be kept secret and must conform to the school's password policy.
- Students will be held responsible for sites visited via their login and password.
- Students must not access other people's files.
- Students may only use the Internet for school work and homework tasks.
- Students must not access inappropriate Internet sites, this includes any game sites.
- If students inadvertently access unsuitable sites, they should inform their teacher or the IT Department
- Students must not browse or attempt to bypass the school ICT security systems.
- Students should use Onedrive for sharing files and not use USB/Flashdrives.

Email Accounts

- All email is traceable to the school. Students sending emails are acting as ambassadors for the school and must act accordingly.
- Students should only email people they know or their teacher has approved.
- Messages sent should be polite and responsible.
- Student email accounts are for plain text messages only.
- Students must not use their email accounts to subscribe to mailing lists.
- Students must not pass on personal details (name, address, phone number etc) via email to people they do not know.
- Students should report to a teacher any unpleasant material or messages sent to them. Such reports would be confidential and help protect all students.

If students are found not be following these guidelines their access to the Internet and Email will be revoked.

Biometric and Parentmail Systems

The Department of Education website has the Protection of freedoms Act 2012 for use with the protection of biometric information of children in schools. **The legislation states that we must have written permission from the parent to allow your child to use the biometric facility on the cashless catering system and print management system currently being used in the school (the permission opt in/out tick box can be found on the Admissions Form).**

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre does not accept payment in cash in The Gallery (unless it is loaded into the cash loader-see below). Instead we ask all parents to use the Parentmail PMX system to credit an online account with funds for meal times. Using our online payment system avoids students needing to carry cash to school. Students access their account and pay for items at the till or top up their account using a biometric recognition system (students press their finger against a digital reader) which directly debits or credits their account. The biometric recognition system works by creating an algorithm based on a scan of a fingerprint which reads between fifty and one hundred and thirty points on the finger. **This information is stored as a number and subsequently is not a fingerprint in any way and is of use only in the systems listed above, the data cannot be reconverted into a fingerprint or misused in any way.** Biometric registration will take place on the first day of school.

If however you do not wish your son/daughter to use the biometric system, Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre will respect that wish. We are able to issue your son/daughter with a card to access their account which they will need to keep in a safe place, the first card is free but we will charge £5 for a replacement. There is an opt-out box on the Student Admission Form which you will need to tick. Parentmail PMX is used by many schools as an information service and we use it to send emails as well as using it to top up lunch accounts for students.

We will need to enrol your child before we can send out the email invitation to Parentmail PMX so they will need a packed lunch for the first few days. If your child is eligible for Free School meals then a meal will be provided for them.

Once you have received the parent invitation to Parentmail PMX you will be able to log onto <https://pmx.parentmail.co.uk> set up a password and follow the instructions for making payments. Payments on Parentmail may take a number of hours to process so we advise doing this the night before. If you experience any problems in making payments, please contact the Finance Office on 0118 901 5800.





Privacy Notice – The full notice is available on our website www.highdown.reading.sch.uk

This Privacy Notice is provided to you by the Academy which is the data controller for your data. We may need to share your personal data we hold with them so that they can carry out their responsibilities to the School.

How we use sensitive personal data

- We may process sensitive personal data including, as appropriate:
 - information about your physical or mental health or condition in order to monitor sick leave and take decisions on your fitness for work;
 - your racial or ethnic origin or religious or similar information in order to monitor compliance with equal opportunities legislation;
 - in order to comply with legal requirements and obligations to third parties.
- These types of data are described in the GDPR as “Special categories of data” and require higher levels of protection. We need to have further justification for collecting, storing and using this type of personal data.
- We may process special categories of personal data in certain circumstances.

The School will comply with data protection law. This says that the personal data we hold about you must be:

- Used lawfully, fairly and in a transparent way.
- Collected only for valid purposes that we have clearly explained to you and not used in any way that is incompatible with those purposes.
- Relevant to the purposes we have told you about and limited only to those purposes.
- Accurate and kept up to date.
- Kept only as long as necessary for the purposes we have told you about.
- Kept and destroyed securely including ensuring that appropriate technical and security measures are in place to protect your personal data to protect personal data from loss, misuse, unauthorised access and disclosure.

Your rights and your personal data

You have the following rights with respect to your personal data:

- 1) The right to access personal data we hold on you
- 2) The right to correct and update the personal data we hold on you
- 3) The right to have your personal data erased
- 4) The right to object to processing of your personal data or to restrict it to certain purposes only
- 5) The right to withdraw your consent to the processing at any time for any processing of data to which consent was obtained

You can withdraw your consent easily by telephone, email, or by post.

A parent/carers can ask that no information apart from their child's name, address and date of birth be passed to Reading Borough Council by informing Mrs K Vince-Porteous (Senior Administrator). This right is transferred to the child once he/she reaches the age 16. For more information about services for young people, please go to our local authority website (www.reading.gov.uk). Information may also be passed to Adviza (Connexions) careers advice, to support our Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service.



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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Tel: 0118 901 5800 Fax: 0118 901 5801
E-mail: office@highdown.reading.sch.uk
www.highdown.reading.sch.uk

Dear New Parents and Carers

Re: SCHOOL FUND

As you will know, schools and academies have very limited funding to provide the same education for our students. In this context, Highdown School has improved outcomes despite reduced resources.

Highdown School is a successful school both in terms of pass rates in public examinations and in progress through the school (value-added). We also provide a very rich and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

All of this comes at a cost and the school budget is carefully managed and overseen by Governors to provide staffing, equipment and the necessary support to allow the school to be successful.

However, this allows very little flexibility to finance the 'extras' that we would like to provide. For example there is great enthusiasm amongst the staff for increasing the provision of ICT equipment in classrooms. Some of this can be funded from the budget but progress is slower than we would like.

The School Fund helps to provide the extras. This year money raised has paid or will be paying for the following:

- A new path connecting the school to the gate to the woods, especially beneficial in bad weather.
- Computing tablets for use in the classroom
- More seating outside for students
- A mixing desk for school productions
- A new canopy outside the Gallery Restaurant to enhance our outside space
- New microphones for the school hall and for performances

We do not ask parents to raise money through fairs and such activities but instead we would ask parents to make a contribution to the Highdown School Fund each year.

We would like to ask each family with a student at the school to consider making a contribution of £50, or more if possible. This would make a huge difference by enabling us to finance the provision of equipment and resources which may not be otherwise available through normal educational funding. This is of course, anonymous and voluntary.

The School Fund is spent only on the approval of the Governors and is not used for staffing or to fund resources that should be provided by the normal school budget. We also involve the student leadership body in how we spend the monies raised.

Payments should be made through our 'Parentmail' system. *Please note that the request for payment automatically appears on Parentmail for all students from Years 7 to 13. If you already have more than one child in the school please make the payment for the youngest only.* If you are able to indicate that you agree to the Gift Aid Declaration, the school will not only receive your contribution but will also be able to claim back the tax paid on the donation.

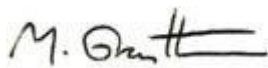
If you would like to contribute more than £50 please pay by cheque, along with a signed copy of the Gift Aid Declaration form attached. Cheques are to be made payable to, 'Highdown school.' The website also has a standing order form which many families have generously used to support the School fund.

We will feedback how the School Fund is spent through the school's website. I would like to thank you in anticipation for your generosity. If you have questions about the contents of this letter please write to either of us care of the school.

Yours sincerely



Ms R E Cave
Headteacher



Mr Matt Grantham
Head of School



Mr A Rajantie
Chair of Governors





Frequently Asked Questions

When will we be able to sign up for clubs and extra curricular activities?

All of the clubs for the term will be shown on the Class Charts once the term has started, we encourage students to sign up for as many as they want.

Will my child be in a Mentor Group with their friends?

We try to put students with at least one person they know from their primary school. Information is collated from the primary school as to which groups work well together. We also remind new students that the transition to secondary school is a great opportunity to make new friendship groups.

Where do I get a locker from?

The lockers are available from the start of term and cost a one-off payment of £10, your Mentor will arrange this in the first few days

When can I start using the cashless catering system?

If you have ticked on the application form giving permission for your child to have their biometric reading taken, students will be taken to the IT Department on their first day to have this done. Once this has been processed, parents/carers will receive a registration email with instructions to activate the account.

Can we try sample uniform on at the school?

We do not keep any uniform at Highdown as this is dealt with by SWI online. They have a sizing guide to help you when ordering.

Who do I contact with specific queries about my child once they have started Year 7?

You will be given the email addresses of your child's Mentor and their Head of Achievement, please email, if possible, as staff are usually teaching from 8.40am and 3.10pm and they will get back to you as soon as they can.

Can my child bring a mobile phone to school?

Students may bring mobile phones to school with the permission of their parents and at their own risk. However, these must be switched off and in bags at all times, including during break and lunchtime, unless permission is given for them to be used for a specific purpose in class. Any phone seen or heard during the school day will be confiscated for the remainder of the day.

Useful Information

Please complete the Highdown Admission Form as soon as possible and return it to Highdown so it can be processed. We need the permissions from the parent/carer so the student's account can be set up. We also need to make sure all the contact information is correct, if we do not receive the form before July then it will significantly delay the process.

All communication regarding the students is via email. Please ensure we have your correct email address at all times. If you do not have internet access at home we can arrange for postal contact.

If your child is ill and unable to attend school you must report the absence using Class Charts by 9.00 on the day of absence.

If your student is late into school they must sign in at Student Reception, if leaving school site with the correct permissions, they must also sign out at Student Reception.

If students feel unwell at school they must ask to see the school nurse in the first instance. We cannot let students go home until they have been assessed even if their parent has arrived.

We do not allow students to leave school site unless they have written permission from their parents. If this is not possible then the students need to see their Head of Achievement to arrange special permission.

If your child is eligible for Free School Meals, or has been eligible within the last 6 years, please contact the Finance office for a uniform voucher/code. 0118 9015 809 email finance@highdown.reading.sch.uk This will allow you to purchase the compulsory uniform directly with SWI. Your order can only be processed by phone 01928 752610, choose option 1 and quote the voucher code once you reach the payment option.

Is your child a Young Carer?

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre is working hard to best support our young carers, or our 'heroes at home'. Working in tandem with the Children's Society, we are in the process of accreditation for the work we are doing to better support students who might be young carers. Please mark on the admission form if your child is a Young carer.

If you wish to discuss a concern about your child, you can contact their Mentor or Head of Achievement by email. Please email the School Office on office@highdown.reading.sch.uk stating who you would like it passed to. The staff member will strive to reply either by email or phone as soon as they can.

We ask your permission to take Biometric Data from your child. We do not store this data but it allows them to use the cashless catering and printing at the school. All details of this are on page 18. If this box is not ticked we cannot allow the student to purchase food from the canteen using the biometric system.