

HIGHDOWN SCHOOL and Sixth Form Centre PROSPECTUS



*Where
success is
desirable,
demanded
and
achieved*





WELCOME

Choosing a secondary school for your child is a significant decision and one that is led by the belief that your child deserves the very best. You are looking for more than just academic excellence: you want a school where every child is nurtured to find their passion and where they are known and celebrated as individuals, so they can leave both inspired and confident in embracing their future.

At Highdown we understand this. Highdown is a place where tradition meets innovation, from the 16th century tythe barn to the state-of-the-art computing facilities, and this rich heritage coupled with our dynamic teachers means that Highdown is a place where pupils achieve more than they thought possible.

It goes without saying that we enjoy the very best in academic standards, with passionate specialist teachers in every department from Mandarin to Further Maths to Textiles. But our co-curricular

offer is where the school comes alive; from our leadership pathways to our international trips, there is something for every child to excel in and to develop their resources, skills and resilience so they can feel confident on the next stage of their journey.

We want our students to be emotionally and mentally healthy, which is why we have such a strong emphasis on community. Our house system fosters a sense of belonging, joy and a dose of competition; and our pastoral support, including the award-winning STAR centre, means our students can grow in resilience, confidence, generosity and kindness.

I hope the following pages will give you a glimpse into the life of a Highdowner. If you do want to know more, come and visit. You are always welcome.

Laura Mathews
Headteacher

TRANSITION



Moving to secondary school can be an exciting yet daunting experience. To make sure it is a success we focus on helping students:

- Settle and embrace life at Highdown School.
- Engage in co-curricular and leadership opportunities.
- Rehearse new routines, enabling them to take responsibility for themselves.
- Develop their character through personal education plans.

Before they join us, our Head of Achievement for Year 7 and the SENDCo visit students in their primary schools so we can get to know them. We work closely with primary schools to ensure that your child's new teachers have all the information they need about your child as an individual before they meet them.

In addition:

- Your child will attend at least one induction day in the July before they join, to experience life at Highdown and alleviate any transition concerns.
- Your child will be invited to a series of language taster sessions (Mandarin, French and Spanish) to allow them to make an informed choice about the language they wish to study at Key Stage 3.
- Your child will be invited to join our Rising Year 7 choir.

- You will be invited to attend our Year 7 welcome evening – an informative evening for you to meet with our Headteacher, Head of Achievement for Year 7 and your child's new mentor to discuss the transition process, curriculum and pastoral care, as well as the opportunity to ask as many questions as you like.
- We run Year 7 transition groups in the STAR centre throughout the first term for any children who might want additional support settling into their new school environment.
- You will meet with your child's teachers in December to discuss how they are settling in and the content of their first report home in November.

And that is just the beginning of a seven-year partnership between yourselves, your child and the school.



HIGHDOWN LIFE

THE SCHOOL DAY

Time	Activity
8.00 - 8.40am	Breakfast Club and co-curricular activities
8.40 - 9.05am	Mentor Time/Assemblies/ Reading/Study Sprints
9.05 - 10.05am	Period 1
10.05 - 11.05am	Period 2
11.05 - 11.25am	Break
11.25am - 12.25pm	Period 3
12.25 - 1.25pm	Period 4
1.25 - 2.10pm	Lunch
2.10 - 3.10pm	Period 5
3.10 - 4.10pm	After school co-curricular activities/sports fixtures/ Period 6*

*Period 6 is used by some students, for example those involved in the Mandarin Excellence Programme, or those taking optional Further Maths at GCSE.

ATTENDANCE

Excellent attendance is a core part of raising students' attainment at Highdown, increasing student progress and helping them to fulfill their potential. We keep track of attendance and punctuality and encourage 100% in both.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Wearing the correct uniform is an important part of being a student at Highdown and is mandatory for all students in Years 7-11. It gives our students a sense of belonging and teaches them to dress professionally and take pride in the Highdown badge. A full list of school uniform requirements can be found on our website. We also offer a second-hand uniform service through our PTA.

SCHOOL MEALS

We aim to provide our students with healthy and tasty food that sustains them throughout their working day. Our school canteen ('The Gallery') is open before school for free breakfast and after school for an end of day treat. During break and lunchtime there are four different food outlets open, all of which cater for a wide range of different tastes as well as accommodating special dietary requirements. We use a cashless system which requires money to be loaded via ParentPay and links to your child's fingerprint at the till. Your child can, of course, also bring a packed lunch and can eat with their friends in the covered seating areas or on their designated school field (weather permitting).

HOMEWORK

All homework is set online and accessible to both parents and students via the Class Charts app. Homework supports students to recall core knowledge or practise applying it to essays or practical work. We use a variety of online platforms to support learning, all of which can be accessed on student devices.

BRING YOUR OWN DEVICES

We want all students to have access to their own device to support learning within school and at home. Students are expected to bring a Windows-based laptop device with them as part of their daily school equipment. This does not replace 'traditional' methods of learning and teaching but we believe helps to enrich, enhance and extend our curriculum.

MOBILE PHONES

The use of mobile phones and linked devices such as headphones or smart watches is not permitted in school (outside of Sixth Form study areas) and will result in confiscation if a device is seen or heard during the school day.



"Thank you for arranging the transition/welcome evening last week. Our child very much enjoyed being part of the Rising 7s choir. It was a lovely initiative."

Year 6 Parent

POWERFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Our rigorous and knowledge rich curriculum promises breadth of subjects and depth within them. Each curriculum area is logically sequenced allowing space for mastery of core concepts and effective transitions into GCSE and Sixth Form. Expert teachers use research to inform cutting-edge teaching and learning, delivering personalised content that is both engaging and stretching.

KEY STAGE 3 (YEARS 7-9)

Years 7 and 8:

Students engage in a broad curriculum including subjects such as: English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, Art, Computer Science, STEAM, Music, Drama, Religious Studies, Physical Education, and CCC (Character, Culture and Citizenship). Students also study their chosen language and a carousel of the technology subjects including: Design Technology, Food Technology and Textiles. All subjects are taught in mixed ability groups, apart from Mathematics, which is taught in sets based on primary school assessment and Highdown School's baseline assessments, which are regularly reviewed.

Year 9:

Students continue with a similar curriculum structure, maintaining breadth while beginning to focus on areas of interest. This year serves as a foundation for Key Stage 4 supporting students to make informed choices about the subjects they wish to specialise in during Years 10 and 11.



KEY STAGE 4 (YEARS 10-11)

Students follow one of three learning pathways tailored to their needs and prior attainment. These pathways determine the number and combination of GCSE or equivalent qualifications pursued. All students study a core curriculum comprising English, Mathematics and Science, alongside selected option subjects. Depending on ability, dedication and motivation, students can study up to 12 subjects at GCSE/Level 2.

Revision and Examination:

During mentor time students are taught a range of revision strategies, these are also taught to parents at our Key Stage 4 Excellence Evenings in the Autumn Term, empowering you to support your child at this critical time. Regular assessments, including mock examinations (PPEs), are conducted to ensure that students can confidently recall and apply their knowledge. Highdown School collaborates with various examining bodies including AQA, OCR, Pearson, Edexcel and Eduqas/WJEC.

Next Steps:

Comprehensive careers and pastoral programmes provide extensive advice and guidance, supporting students to make well-informed decisions about their future, whether pursuing apprenticeships, or joining our excellent Sixth Form, which the vast majority of our students do.

SIXTH FORM

Sixth Form students at Highdown have all the advantages of being students in a large and thriving school and also of being a separate entity within that community. Highdown Sixth Form has an excellent reputation for being a dynamic, caring and forward-thinking community. Whether you are already a Highdowner in Year 11 or a student from another local or international school, you will be assured of personal attention to ensure we match the best curriculum offer to your skills and ambitions, and students typically make exceptional progress during these two critical years.

Our Sixth Form offers a wide-ranging curriculum, including A Levels and technical qualifications. Facilities include dedicated study spaces, silent study rooms and a social area with a dedicated (and popular) café.

Our enrichment programme allows students to engage in activities as diverse as cooking (budget bites), drama, debating, sport and the Extended Project Qualification. Accordingly, our students graduate with excellent examination results, a portfolio of co-curricular achievements and the confidence to forge their own path.

As well as our degree apprenticeship students and those going into other apprenticeships or work placements, last year 73% of students went to their first choice university, with over 44% of university places at Russell Group institutions. Destinations included Cambridge University to read Natural Sciences, Newcastle to read Astrophysics and Bath Spa to read creative writing, among many others





"We just wanted to thank all of you who have taught or supported our three children over their time at Highdown. All three of them have enjoyed the extra-curricular activities on offer and have benefited from the excellent teaching and support provided. We have been very happy with the progress they all made. We will miss the school, it has been a big part of our lives for the last 8 years."

Departing Highdown Parent

NURTURING POTENTIAL

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Our results exceed the national average at GCSE across the vast majority of curriculum areas, including English, Maths and Science, and in 2025 an impressive 26% of all grades were awarded at grade 9-7. In addition, we are incredibly proud of our A Level and Level 3 results which consistently put students in the top quarter of all schools for progress. Furthermore 82% of our Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) students achieved A* or A demonstrating the hard work, tenacity and preparedness for university instilled in our students, all of whom have chosen this as an optional fourth A Level.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS

At Highdown we know that achievement is not simply about having the right grades but the right character traits to succeed. This is why Highdown places such emphasis on joining in and participation in our student leadership pathways or co-curricular opportunities.



PURSUING PASSIONS

Our fantastic facilities mean we are able to offer an unparalleled co-curricular programme, with hundreds of day trips, foreign exchanges or expeditions offered each year, all giving our students the chance to experience life beyond the classroom, challenge themselves and even compete at an international level.

Our talented artists, whose work is displayed across the school site, experience an array of opportunities to develop their skills and creativity, from specialist workshops to trips to inspire their creativity. Our custom-built photography space enables students to shoot images in a professional manner and manipulate images with contemporary software.

Our keen sportsmen and women benefit from fantastic sporting facilities including extensive playing fields, a floodlit astroturf, tennis and netball courts, fully equipped weights and cardio gym space, indoor heated swimming pool and a host of other facilities. Current Highdowners and Highdown alumni have represented their countries in international rugby, climbing, kayaking and both men's and women's football.



There is plenty for budding actors to hone their skills in annual school productions, the House Performing Arts Showcase and co-curricular clubs. This year Highdown was nominated for four awards at the National School Theatre Awards following our production of 'Our House' the musical.

We are exceptionally proud of our Music department, whose results this year had A Level Music Technology in the top 1% of the country for student progress. There are a wide range of ensembles including orchestras, choirs and funk and soul bands which provide opportunities for both beginners and experts alike. We also put on many recitals through the academic year.

Enrichment trips feature highly in our school calendar, with language trips abroad, including two annual trips to China, theatre trips in Drama and English, Historical tours in Europe and field trips in Geography. Past opportunities have included trips to Norway, Malaysia, France and Iceland.



In addition, Highdown has a flourishing outdoor pursuits programme, including our annual Year 8 trip to Rhos y Gwaliau, where students have the opportunity to take part in caving, climbing and other exciting activities. We also are a highly successful registered provider of the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award Programme with students completing their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.

There really is something for everyone!

NEXT STEPS

A Highdown education is the product of many factors that combine to help our ultimate goal: that our students are prepared for the life they are going to lead. Highdown instils the qualities required to be successful in life, both from a personal and professional point of view.

Following the Government's Gatsby Benchmarks, our Careers programme aims to inspire students to think about what the future looks like for them beyond school. These include:

- Five dedicated Careers week each year.
- Personalised CareerPilot accounts for every student.
- Visits to and from Universities across the UK including Oxford and Cambridge.
- Programme of 'UCAS Readiness' at Sixth Form.
- Work-related learning events involving students both on and off site.
- Annual Apprenticeship and Careers Fairs.
- Industry-specific webinars.
- Support for apprenticeship applications from Level 2 to sponsored degree pathways.
- Every student guaranteed a one-to-one careers interview.
- Specialist careers advisor input at key transition points: Year 9 options, Year 11, Year 13.



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Every student at Highdown is recognised as an individual. Our commitment to recognising and nurturing their distinct talents, abilities and aspirations is underpinned by a strong pastoral framework: support from their mentors, Heads of Achievement and the Senior Leadership Team.

In the classroom we have a robust process of monitoring student understanding, providing regular and meaningful feedback on progress to students and their parents. This is supported by a range of intervention programmes to ensure all our students, whatever their ability or learning need, are able to achieve success. All lessons are carefully adapted to meet the needs of each and every student.

There is a strong sense of community here at Highdown and it is the students themselves who create our warm and supportive atmosphere that is so crucial to effective learning. This is all strengthened by Highdown's core values of aspiration, respect and excellence: we ARE Highdown.



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

At Highdown we utilise a whole range of evidence informed support to remove barriers to learning and celebrate every success with our students. As a truly inclusive school we recognise that support must be tailored to individual students' needs – whether they have a medical condition, learning difficulties or just a need to work through some issues, there is always someone on hand to help.


THE STAR CENTRE

Our award-winning STAR centre is a safe environment for students to express and understand their feelings through emotional literacy. We run drop-in support at break and lunchtimes, one to one and group work sessions and offer support through the No5 Counselling Service.



VISUAL IMPAIRMENT RESOURCE

We are proud of our Visual Impairment Resource which prioritises supporting students in a mainstream setting through specialist equipment, learning support assistants and knowledgeable teachers to ensure that students thrive both academically and socially.



"I am so grateful to the teachers that give up their time to give students these experiences. My daughter went on the Malaysia trip and the US trip in year 10, and they have been unforgettable, transformative experiences, where she has had the chance to immerse herself in the culture and learn so much through the action packed itineraries offered."

Year 12 Parent

COMMUNICATION

At Highdown we know the transformational power of effective partnerships between students, parents and staff. Collaboration and communication is a core part of this, so we endeavour to keep you fully informed through a number of communication channels:

PHONE/EMAIL We are always pleased to see you to discuss your child's progress. We try to respond as quickly as possible but the majority of staff will be teaching during the school day, so please bear with us. Your child's mentor, subject teacher and Head of Achievement are the people who will have the greatest knowledge of your child. We aim to respond to all enquiries within 48 hours. All staff e-mail addresses follow the same formula:

FirstInitialSurname1@glfschools.org
(eg. JBloggs1@glfschools.org)

MOBILE APPS Highdown uses the Class Charts App for you to keep an eye on your child's homework, praise or consequence points. You can also use this to report a child's absence. The school sends most reminder messages through Class Charts.

PARENT EVENINGS You will be invited to at least two evenings a year to meet teachers, discuss your child's progress and how best you can support your child to succeed.

REPORTS Issued at least twice a year (more often in Years 7, 8, 10 and 12) to ensure you are kept up-to-date with how well your child is settling in and progressing through the curriculum. Each report is followed by a window where students reflect on their learning in mentor time.

WEBSITE There is a wealth of information on our website from term dates to policies to job opportunities.

SOCIAL MEDIA Keep up to date with our activities via our Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn accounts.

BULLETINS We publish regular newsletters containing information on recent activities and achievements.

PARENT/TEACHER ASSOCIATION We have a brilliant PTA which supports the school (both socially and financially) through fundraising activities - you may have attended our first fireworks event last year!

Whether you support the PTA as a committee member, a helper, or simply just turn out to the events, you are helping to provide our school with valuable resources to give to all students.



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GLF Schools is a Multi-Academy Trust of 43 schools serving over 17,000 people aged 2 to 19. The Trust comprises 8 secondary schools and 35 primary settings across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and the London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Croydon. Each school serves the needs of their own communities, but they are united by the desire to deliver excellent educational outcomes.

