



Dear Parents / Carers,



I want to share with you some key updates that will have an impact on our learners and their families as we progress through the summer term. As always, I am grateful for the support given by our families as we work hard to improve our school.

Mobile Phone Policy



As many parents are already aware, in the summer of 2022 we implemented a trial to allow acceptable use of mobile phones in schools. From Autumn 2022 we adopted an "Acceptable Use" Policy allowing some activities on mobile phones to be undertaken during social times, in designated areas. I made no secret of the fact that during our 2023 Ofsted inspection that I experienced significant pushback for this policy from inspectors. Nonetheless our internal data showed a reduction in online bullying reports and that the education around online safety and acceptable use had been effective in school.



Over recent months' schools have been issued new guidance around the banning of mobile phones in school. The guidance cites mental health and the impact on learning as the key drivers for the guidance. The school will be supporting the national drive to allow young people to learn without the distraction of mobile phones. **This means that after the May half term break mobile phones must be turned off and out of sight before entering the school gates and must remain so until the bell rings at 3.10pm.** Learners may turn on their phones at the end of the school day before leaving the school site.



Over the coming weeks we will work with our young people to troubleshoot some of the issues that have been resolved by acceptable phone use in school. This will allow for a smooth transition into our new policy from the half term break onwards. The policy will not apply to Year 11 in their remaining time with us.



I would ask that parents support the school from now by not contacting their children during the school day on mobile devices and instead contact the school for urgent messages. **The policy in school has always been that our learners must never make or accept a phone call during the school day.** I would like to thank parents for their support as we move towards supporting the new national guidance.



Year 11 – Examination Season

Our fabulous Year 11 learners are now approaching examination season. I want to take a moment to recognise their incredible drive and determination over the recent months. They make us so proud - we know they can do it. Please can parents be mindful of examination timetables and support us in ensuring that everyone is here on time. In recent years a small number of families have been misadvised by medical professionals about what happens if exams are missed. There is a misconception that mock grades or estimated grades will be awarded instead. This is not the case. We will support in everyone in any way we can to attend all their exams.

Today they are proudly sporting their eagerly awaited leavers hoodies. I would like to thank all parents and carers for supporting us over the five years that your children have been with us. They will make you proud.





Key Stage 3 Examinations

Key Stage 3 exams will take place over the coming weeks, and our learners in Years 7-9 are already preparing for these. Parents can support revision at home by accessing the resources on our website in the "subjects" section. Whilst this section is under review and will not be fully updated until September, there is already a wealth of resources designed to support parents in revising with their children.



<https://www.westhoughton-high.org/subjects/>

School Day – September 2024 Onwards

The timings of the school day are detailed below. As outlined previously this is following the consultation with parents during academic year 2022-23. I do not anticipate any further tweaks to start and end times going forward;



On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday school will commence at 8.30am and run until 3.15pm.



Wednesdays will start at 8.30am and run until 2.15pm.

Parent Perception Questionnaires

Thank you to those who have already made time to give us feedback in our perception questionnaire. Hearing what you feel we need to do better really helps us focus our improvement strategy. It is also most welcome when parents tell us what we are getting right. The link for the survey is below.



<https://forms.office.com/e/jMkwn7BqDt>

Reading

As part of the changes to the school day we can introduce "form time reading" every day from September 2024. Each form group will read up to six novels each year, a strategy proven to boost literacy and increase vocabulary. Over the summer we will invest in thousands of new books to support the project. If you have a business connection that might be interested in sponsoring a class set of reading books (at the cost of just under £200) please message whsoffice@westhoughton-high.org for further details.

As always, I would like to thank our parents and carers for their continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. N S Coe
Headteacher