



Woodrush High School

An Academy for Students Aged 11-18

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03 January 2023

Headteacher's New Years' Letter to Parents

Dear Parents / Carers,

Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you, your families and loved ones, a very happy new year and I am writing to provide a number of notices and updates ahead of our new term which starts for students tomorrow.

2022 was a year that saw our first full academic 'return to norm' and was a real test of stamina for students but I am so proud of how Woodrush students displayed true grit, resilience and maintained an eagerness to learn and challenge. Autumn saw many exciting developments at Woodrush, such as within Sixth Form, and culminated in some fantastic celebratory events which showcased the many talents and achievements students have within our school. Can I congratulate every student and the former-students who returned to receive their special recognition awards at December's Awards Evening.

Governance & Leadership

I am delighted to announce that the Governing Body appointed, Professor Stuart Brand – formerly Director of Learning Experience across Birmingham City University, to fulfil the position of Chair of Governors towards the end of last term. And Mrs Holtom-Brown has been promoted to Deputy Headteacher to return us to the same leadership structure we had prior to my appointment as Head last year. I would like to congratulate both Professor Brand and Mrs Holtom-Brown and I very much look forward to them working with all our stakeholders in their respective roles.

Towards the end of the term, our Chair and Vice Chair worked to forge a renewed vision for the governing body:

Woodrush High School is a welcoming and inclusive community committed to providing an aspirational environment for learning and growth. Our curriculum challenges, inspires and empowers all to thrive and exceptional teaching and support provides the foundation for all to achieve.

This vision will provide an important constant reference point for our Governing Body to challenge and support the decisions and direction of the school.

I'd like to thank both our former parent governors, Steve Crosthwaite and David Stanley, for their service on the Governing Body over the past couple of years. Their unwavering support and insights have made significantly positive contributions to the school and they have represented the voice and interests of parents and carers proactively and diligently and been a true source of support and encouragement for myself and leaders.

As you may have seen in our notification letter to all parents and carers on Friday 9th December, with their resignations, we now have two vacant positions available for parent governors. If you are interested in fulfilling one of these positions or would like to nominate someone, please ensure you return the corresponding form to cstables@woodrush.org or you can hand your form to reception by Friday 6th January 2023.

Headteacher: Mr J Barber BA (Hons), QTS, PGCE, NPQH
Deputy Headteacher: Mr D Monk, BSc (Hons), QTS, PGCE
Deputy Headteacher: Mrs M Holtom-Brown, BA (Hons), QTP

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Volunteer Scheme

It has been fantastic to see that the Volunteers Scheme we launched last year now has parents involved in our literacy and numeracy support, careers preparation programme, coding club and cartoon club. If you would be interested in contributing to Woodrush in some way, please fill in this form [here](#).

Youth Centre

As many of you will be aware, our ever-popular Youth Centre has grown significantly over the past year and our Youth and Community Team continue to enrich the lives and social development of our younger students each week. Students are always welcome to attend our Youth Club – if your child would like to start attending, they are welcome to from Monday 10th January on the following evenings:

- Mondays: Year 9, 10 and 11+
- Tuesdays: Year 8
- Wednesdays: Year 7

Supporting our community & reminder about Free School Meals

Thank you to all students and families for their kind donations for our Food Bank. This has really made a difference to families in our community. And we managed to raise a fantastic total of £1078.71 for Children In Need, £546.61 for Save the Children thanks to our Christmas Jumper Day and a total of £521.06 for Macmillan Cancer Research last term. Thank you for your kind generosity.

All this, at a time of continued financial hardship that many families and members of our community are facing which is making home and working life especially challenging for many people. With this in mind, we want every student to receive their entitlements to free school meals and additional educational funds where possible. If your circumstances have changed, or to check whether your child could be eligible for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium funding, please contact the school and speak to Mrs Beddoes on 01564 823777 or email her directly on sbeddoes@woodrush.org. Everything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence and you will be provided with a short form to complete so we can check if you are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. You can apply at any time, and we will contact you with more information once your application has been accepted. For all students, our bagel breakfast club will continue to serve daily free bagels and jams for all students each morning before 08.30am line-up.

Parent View Survey

Each year, we conduct an annual survey to capture parental views on a number of important aspects of school life. I would be grateful if you could take some time to complete this Parent View survey by following [this link](#). This survey includes questions relating to feeling happy, feeling safe, bullying and communication. Many thanks in advance for taking some time in responding to this important survey.

We will be continuing to host our general online Parent Forums on the following dates via Teams (4.15-5.00pm):

- Tuesday 17th January 2023
- Tuesday 14th March 2023
- Tuesday 2nd May 2023
- Tuesday 20th June 2023

All parents and carers are welcome and links will be sent out to all parents ahead of the Forums for you to join.



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Can I thank all parents and carers who have taken time to join our half-termly Parent Forums. Decisions have been made in consultation with parents relating to the publication of food menus, punctuality to school, the launch of our endeavours scheme and decisions around Year 7 transition.

We are also seeking to re-form our Personal Development Parent Forums which have a focus on our Personal Development curriculum (Health Education, Relationships and Sex and Drug Education). This forum will meet face-to-face during the Spring. Former members will be contacted to re-join but we would be open to any new members joining this important consultative forum. If you would like to join email parentforum@woodrush.org.

Thank you to parents of Year 7 who completed the settling in survey last term. All responses were reviewed by the senior leadership and Mrs Desmond and both individual and more year-wide actions were taken from the feedback which will help to contribute to Year 7s ongoing progression transition for future year groups.

The settling in responses revealed the following:

Your child's experience in relation to:	Average rating from 88 responses (where 5 = 'Very much so'; 1 = 'Not at all')
Enjoyment of school:	4.5
Feeling Safe & Supported:	4.7
Feeling Prepared for learning:	4.5

Daily Expectations

As we start a new term, can I take this opportunity to echo our daily expectations for all students which help to ensure your child[ren] get the best school day and we can deliver the best educational experience each day:

- Punctuality to school matters

I would like to share how pleased we have been with the vast majority of students who are routinely punctual to school and enabling an efficient start to the school day. We record and follow-up lateness unless parents can communicate exceptional circumstances for that day. Please continue to support our punctuality drive and ensure your child is through our school gates for 08.30am (08.50am on Wednesdays) which ensure they are lined up for tutors at 08.35am (08.55am on Wednesdays).

- Smart, Appropriate & Prepared

Uniform also continues to be a real strength of Woodrush and I would like to praise our students for looking so smart when in school. Standards could easily slip if we become complacent, so, please ensure you support your child in bringing appropriate school uniform. With coats for the cold and wet weather so they can remain comfortable for learning throughout the latter half of this winter season. Likewise, please ensure you support you child with stationery items each day so they are equipped to learn.

Farewell and Welcomes

This term, we bid a fond farewell to Mr Taylor (Head of Year 10 and PE Teacher) and Miss Davies (Maths Teacher) and we will welcome two new members of staff: Mr Holtom and Mrs Dawson who will be their replacements as PE and Maths teachers. I am delighted to confirm that Miss Onacko, formerly our Assistant Head of Year 10, has been appointed to Head of Year 10 from January.



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Final message

After being in post for nearing one year now, I can say that despite the significant financial strains that are facing schools, services and business alike, it has been a pleasure to serve Woodrush over the past 12 months.

Thank you for your continued support of the efforts and functions of the school. Woodrush is proudly rooted in the community we serve and we thrive when we can deliver education in partnerships with stakeholders – especially parents, so thank you!

As I alluded to at the start of this end of term letter, following a particularly busy Autumn term, Spring term brings refreshed energies and a familiarity for students and staff to settle back into learning swiftly, meeting our high expectations to deliver the best education possible for each child.

I am very much looking forward to this term and what it will bring and can I, again, wish your children and yourselves a very happy new year!

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Barber

Headteacher