

Holmwood House School



School Development Plan Update No 1

The [School Development Plan](#), which was shared with parents in October, outlined the priorities for improvements to various aspects of our school. Your feedback pointed to the school as being inclusive and aspirational with exceptional opportunities for our happy learners. Our valued ethos and culture, in which we celebrate and encourage individual success through a broad and diverse curriculum, goes hand in hand with developing strong partnerships with you as parents.

We are keen to share with you the progress we are making at regular intervals and we hope you will find this helpful.

If you have any questions regarding this update, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes

Alexander Mitchell
Headmaster

The Very Best for Your Child

To enable us to build each child's academic profile through external benchmarking and internal monitoring to support their development, we have introduced Progress Tests in English (PTE) and Progress Tests in Maths (PTM). We can track the results against pupils' CAT (Cognitive Ability Tests) results, enabling us to gauge each child's performance against their potential as highlighted in these tests. Achieving excellent standards in literacy and numeracy, and ensuring no child underperforms, are priorities for the school this year.

In establishing a robust assessment framework that combines hard, independent assessment data (nationally benchmarked) with soft data delivered via teachers' professional judgement we aim to secure a holistic overview of every child that facilitates ongoing interventions at the point of need.

It is clear from the work we have done so far in Years 4 to 6 that these year groups' core skills in English and maths are at a level at least commensurate with their ability, as measured against national standards, with a third of the children performing well above this. A high proportion of the children in Years 7 and 8 are in the top 25% of the country in terms of their ability level and work done so far points to excellent value being added by the quality of teaching at Holmwood. Where pupils' performance is below their ability range according to national norms, strategies are adopted to target areas for further development.

To further support gaining a holistic overview of each child, we recently introduced a pupil survey to assess pupil attitudes towards themselves and school (known as [PASS](#)). The results will provide us with an added dimension to each child's learning profile by enabling us to use attitudinal information to determine how the children are progressing and what changes could affect further improvements to their learning outcomes. Building on the assessment and target-setting processes already in place, teachers will now use these additional tools to more accurately diagnose each child's strengths and areas for development.

This process will be further enhanced in the twice yearly Tutor/Tutee Mentoring sessions (normally in January and June) which will aim to ensure each child has ownership of their learning and the steps required to reach their full potential.

We firmly believe in the broad experience that Holmwood House children so enjoy and these developments sit comfortably within this. Once established, the net result of the greater use of assessment data will see little increase in testing time across the year but we will, more efficiently, bring about improved results for pupils whilst maintaining the breadth and range which are synonymous with a Holmwood House education.

We look forward to providing an update on our work in this important area at the end of Spring Term.

Growing Relationships

In order to ensure parents have the greatest visibility of their children's learning, we are in the process of developing our reporting structures alongside our new Management Information System, iSAMS. The style of written reports will be changing as we move forward. Linked to the developments mentioned above, we will be developing our teachers' expertise in interpreting and using assessment data through training. We will then be using some of this information with the pupils so they are involved in their own learning journeys. Once these practices have been established, parents will be able to gain more visibility of their children's potential and progress through subsequent reporting cycles. We will share more information in terms of timelines by the end of next term.

At parent consultation evenings, teachers will continue to feed back to parents in a face to face forum and will also, in due course, focus on similar themes that will appear in the written reports, namely the action plans put in place as a result of the enhanced assessment data analysis mentioned above.

Additionally, we have redesigned the weekly Newsletter and introduced a weekly Bulletin to help parents keep track of the busy school schedule and further enjoy the exciting range of activities and pupil

achievements. We encourage all parents to follow us on Facebook and Twitter where you are able to gain an even more dynamic view of the children's experiences.

Preparing Your Children for the Future

To ensure pupils' learning at each stage supports senior school routes at 11 and 13, we have further enhanced our provision.

Holmwood House has a long and proud record of sending children to a wide range of senior independent schools across the local area, Eastern region and nationally. We provide a 4-13 structure working ultimately towards an assessment framework at 13+ which includes the Holmwood House Certificate and Scholarship routes for the majority of pupils whose preparation for senior school entry is catered for within normal curriculum time.

A small number of children gain places at Colchester Royal Grammar School or the County High School for Girls via the highly selective 11+ assessment process which typically targets the top 4% of the national cohort. In addition, some parents may choose to move their child to a senior independent school at 11 for Year 7 entry.

Whilst Holmwood delivers a strong programme of teaching and learning that fulfils the requirements of senior independent school entry, in the ongoing spirit of supporting and working closely with all our families in their senior school choices, we are keen to provide additional support for those children sitting entrance exams.

Details of our provision can be found [here](#).