

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am delighted to report that it has been an exceptionally wonderful and productive week at Higham Lane School. Student behaviour has been excellent, demonstrating a commitment to our high standards, and there has been some truly tremendous learning taking place across all key stages and subject areas. As I do every day, I have popped into lots of lessons this week, in particular in our fantastic Science department; I was thrilled to see evidence of excellent teaching practice, with challenging and thought-provoking tasks leading to deep understanding. Our students were fully engaged and being really challenged to reach for the very top grades, demonstrating aspiration and resilience in their learning.

Honouring Our Past: Remembrance Week

This week was anchored by profound acts of remembrance, and I felt immense honour and privilege representing Higham Lane School.

On Sunday, I attended the Remembrance Sunday parade and service in Nuneaton town centre. I was incredibly proud to be accompanied by our Head Students from the Junior Leadership Team, Layla and Jacqueline, and Will who is our co-head of Student Union from the Sixth Form.

Their respectful and mature representation of the school were exemplary. We must also extend a special congratulations to LJC Zaynah who played the Bell Lyre expertly in the Sea Cadet Marching Band as part of the formal parade.



On Tuesday 11th November at 11.00 am, we held our whole-school service on the playground, all 1,492 students and just short of 200 members of staff gathered to pay tribute. I had the privilege of addressing the entire school community, sharing reflections on sacrifice, and reciting the famous poem by John McCrae, 'In Flanders Fields'. Layla, Jacqueline and Will, as our student leaders, all spoke brilliantly and with great sincerity. It was a really touching service, including a live performance of the 'Last Post' on a bugle, that was impeccably observed and respected by the students. Their silent respect and maturity during this solemn event made it a very proud moment for me as Headteacher.









Further enriching our understanding, we had a very special visitor on Tuesday. Jim Goldstraw, ex-military and a much-respected former History teacher at HLS, came into school. Jim now delivers talks on the First and Second World Wars at the National Memorial Arboretum. He delivered a truly moving presentation, fully dressed in a World War One soldier's uniform, accompanied by an original (now safely decommissioned) WWI rifle and a real bugle that his own grandfather carried during the war. He delivered a powerful message on why we remember those who gave their today for our tomorrow, ensuring our future generations can continue to remember and work together to make this world a better and safer place.







Strategic Focus: Wellbeing, Belonging and Aspiration

Our focus remains firmly on ensuring a supportive and aspirational environment for all our students. On Monday, I had the privilege of attending the Attachment Research Community (ARC) conference in Birmingham. I heard from expert speakers discussing practical strategies for supporting students who have experienced trauma in their lives, and critically, how to ensure that all students have that fundamental feeling of belonging. This ties into research indicating that most children will have at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) in their lifetime. It reinforced how vital it is that young people feel as though they belong. My message is clear: we want the Higham Lane School community to be a place where everybody feels safe, respected and fully belongs.

Monday also brought an inspiring session with our latest ASPIRE Talk. Students were encouraged to explore their ambitions, discover new pathways through apprenticeships, and build confidence for their future steps. Through engaging discussion and a highly interactive session, former student Hannah Bullmore from Serco allowed participants to reflect deeply on their skills, values and aspirations which left them feeling motivated to proactively shape their own futures!

This week also saw the launch of Anti-Bullying Week. Thank you to all the students and staff who wore odd socks on Monday to raise awareness and visibly reiterate our stance that we will not tolerate bullying. Everyone is welcome at HLS; we want everyone to feel as though they belong, and we expect everybody to be kind as part of our core school vision: Work Hard, Be Kind, Take Responsibility.

We also celebrated Positive Noticing Day on Wednesday, which was a great success! It was wonderful to see so many students and staff complementing each other and sharing thoughtful, positive notes to genuinely brighten everyone's day. It was particularly lovely to see the students around the school site with their little red luggage tags, holding positive messages to tell them how amazing they are! We hope this spirit of positivity manages to continue at home too.



Amazing achievements, Fundraising and Sporting Success

We celebrated many fantastic achievements this week across the school:

I had the pleasure of meeting Gracie, Evie, Milan and Kasia in Year 7 who were the joint winners of the Romeo and Juliet 3D design competition. Their creations were truly amazing and showed exceptional creativity and

attention to detail.









Feel Good Friday brought fantastic sporting news: I spoke with Lola and Keira, who are not only superstars for our school netball team but have both then gone to be selected for County netball! Thank you to our amazing PE department for all of their hard work both in lessons and also with extracurricular that helps so many of our students to gain places at county level in a range of different sports. I then also met Toby in Year 11 who has been selected to play for the prestigious Leicester Tigers Rugby Academy. Outstanding commitment and congratulations to them all!





Mrs Clarke and I also had the privilege today of meeting 15 incredible students in my office, who were selected by their teachers in a range of different subjects for their outstanding classwork. Students received a tasty treat and received a praise card to be taken home to parents and carers. We were incredibly impressed with a standard of work!







Today has been a non-school uniform day to raise funds for Children in Need. We are delighted to have raised a significant amount of money for such a worthwhile cause. When the total amount has been confirmed, we will share this with parents and carers.

Finally, a special thank you to the students who are part of the 'Serving Others' team. The recent MacMillan cake sale they helped coordinate and run raised an incredible £400! Thank you to everyone who brought cakes in, purchased items, or helped out with running the stall.



Operational Notes:

Water Works: Thank you to parents and carers for allowing extra time for their journeys this week due to the water works taking place on Brookdale Road. We appreciate your efforts to ensure students arrived on time. We also gave students an extra grace period during this week before being marked as late to account for the fact that some of them had much more challenging journeys.

Detention Time Reduction: With the nights becoming darker, as you know, we made the decision to reduce the time of after-school detentions from 45 minutes to 30 minutes so they finish earlier at 3:45 pm rather than 4.00 pm to ensure that students can get home safely. Thank you to the parents and carers who have contacted the school to express their thanks for this move.

The New Ofsted Framework

This week, while attending an event with Headteachers from across the Midlands, a CEO from a different Multi-Academy Trust, who is also a lead Ofsted Inspector, addressed us about the new Ofsted framework which came into operation on Monday 10th November. The word he used to describe the new framework was "brutal." Following the tragic death of Headteacher Ruth Perry, it is fair to say that Headteachers and trade unions across the country had hoped the new framework would address the extreme pressures and stresses that schools are put under during an inspection. Unfortunately, it would appear that perhaps Ofsted may have not got this balance quite right.

I have also had the privilege of attending two Ofsted training sessions delivered by HMI Ofsted inspectors this half-term, and I will be training our staff and Governors in the new framework shortly so that Higham Lane School can be as prepared as we possibly can be. We are extremely proud to be the only Ofsted Outstanding school in Nuneaton and Bedworth and are proud that this was not a one-off but that we have maintained this across multiple inspections. In the new framework, the word 'Outstanding' has been replaced. Schools will now be judged across seven different areas and will receive one of the following five gradings for each: Urgent Improvement (small number of schools), Needs Attention, Expected Standard, Strong Standard, or Exceptional (small number of schools). Please note that there will be no overall one-word judgement. Safeguarding is judged separately as either Met or Not Met. Being the type of school that we are, where we always strive to be the very best that we can, we will, of course, be aiming for Exceptional, but it is clear from the new guidance that this will not be handed out very often, and schools would not be expected to achieve Exceptional in all 7 grading areas.

Safeguarding Reminder: Access to School Site

Safeguarding is and will always be our top priority. We had two occasions this week where parents, completely innocently, attempted to gain access to our school site without permission. On one occasion, the parent wanted to walk the student to an extracurricular activity before school, and on the other, the parent wanted to walk with their child (who is in the Sixth Form) to explain an absence. While both were entirely innocent actions, both involve trying to enter the school site without permission, which could force the school to initiate a lockdown if we do not know who the adult is and where they are. Fortunately, our safeguarding procedures are extremely robust: staff on duty saw the parents trying to gain access, they were both stopped by senior members of staff, spoken to, and correctly redirected back to reception. Can we please remind all parents and carers that you must not enter the school site without first speaking to main reception and signing in. Please also remember that parents, carers and visitors need to report to main Reception and not Students Services. Thank you for your continued support in helping us maintain the safety of all students and staff.



Sunny Nunny, or not as it may be...

The weather has not been particularly kind to us in Nuneaton this week, and the forecast for next week is also very changeable. Can we please ask parents and carers to ensure that your child is suitably dressed for the inclement weather? This means that all students must have a black waterproof Winter coat (as per our uniform policy), and we would also strongly encourage students to have gloves and a small umbrella available. Thank you for your support in this practical matter.

And finally, every November for the last 11 years, members of staff at Higham Lane School have been supporting Movember by growing moustaches, discussing men's health issues and raising money for this incredible charity. Movember was set up to raise awareness and funds for the following men's health issues: prostate cancer, testicular cancer, men's mental health and suicide prevention. It funds projects all over the world and has raised more than \$600 million since its inception. If you would like to support Movember and donate to the Mo Laners, please scan the QR code below or use this link: https://uk.movember.com/donate/details?teamld=2263234



Thank you for your support, The Mo Laners

Thank you once again for your omnipresent support of Higham Lane School and me as your Headteacher. We wish you and your family a lovely, restful weekend.

Yours faithfully

Michael Gannon Headteacher

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Dates for your diary

Year 11 Trial Exam Results: On Monday 17th November, our Year 11 students will be attending an assembly where they will receive their trial examination results. This will give them a very good indication of where they are at the moment academically, where their areas of strength are, and most importantly, where their areas are that they need to focus on now before their final examinations in the summer. It will also help our staff tailor their interventions so we can support our Y11 students to achieve yet another set of incredible results. We wish all of our Year 11 students the very best of luck as they embark on this final push.

Thursday 20th November: Year 11 photos (year group and sports teams). **Friday 21st November:** Year 11 individual photos Please ensure your child arrives at school in correct uniform.

Friday 28th November is a Staff Training Day, and therefore the school will be closed to all students.







40,235



37,354

