

# The Heddingham School Newsletter

*February 2026*

**Ready, Respect, Safe**



**Dear Parent/Guardian**

## **Message from Headteacher**

As we approach the end of another half-term, I wanted to update you with some of the many positives that we have enjoyed over the past few weeks.

We have accelerated our subject reviews during this term, an important part of the ongoing monitoring within the school to ensure that standards remain high. Part of this process is cycles of lesson visits, monitoring students' work and importantly, conversations with students about their learning experiences. Some of these reviews are externally supported by educational partners so to ensure that our processes are quality assured. They have been an important mechanism for us to reflect on what is working well and what needs to evolve to maximise students learning and experience in the classroom.

Alongside this, we have focused on key aspects of teaching practice as part of our cycle of staff training, including strategies to actively engage children in their learning, oracy in the classroom and sharing the very best practice in the school.

At times, there have been some challenges to overcome including issues on local roads affecting travel to and from school and endless days of substantial rainfall (stretching our indoor areas to accommodate students and further compounding travel issues with local flooding). However, I have been impressed with the way in which our students have overcome these challenges with the building remaining calm and the students showing respect for one another.

Paul Finch  
Headteacher

## **House Badges**

We are very proud of our House system in the school, offering a "community within a community" sense of belonging and a structure to channel recognition and success (including house points and attendance). We have distributed house badges to all students to reinforce this identity, designed to be attached to the lapel of students' school blazers. We have politely asked all students to ensure that they wear their badge so we are all clear on which house they belong to.

If badges are lost, replacements can be purchased via our Finance Office.

## **Braintree Apprenticeship Fair**

Our Year 10 students were extended the opportunity to visit Braintree District Apprenticeship Fair this half-term. They had the opportunity to have a look around the campus and gain an understanding of the dynamics of an apprenticeship and how this educational pathway is structured and potential opportunities it offers. Our students were exceptionally behaved and engaged in questioning with maturity and purpose.

## **School Building Projects**

November saw the start of two substantial building improvement projects within the school that have been centrally funded by the Department for Education. One project is to replace all our heating distribution systems and the other to replace all school electrical and fire safety wiring. Thankfully, with help of our contractors, this work has managed to occur with minimal disruption to learning.

## **Applications to Heddingham Sixth Form**

The popularity of our Sixth Form continues to grow. After welcoming a record sized Year 12 this September, applications have exceeded 170 this year. This includes our largest number of external applicants who we look forward to welcoming to our school. The team who interviewed students, including myself, have been highly impressed with applicants' ambition, dedication towards their education and commitment towards securing the necessary GCSE grades to access courses. Offer letters are in the process of being returned to those who have had successful interviews.

## **Assemblies**

There have been a range of assemblies this half term which have set the tone for some of the work covered in Personal Development time in the morning. Some things that have been promoted in assembly include the importance of curiosity in the classroom and a focus on our "Heddingham Characteristic" of the half term, which is Perseverance.

## Uniform

Thank you to all parents who have supported with the improvements that we have made to our uniform to ensure that our school community looks smart and take pride in their school identity. The change in expectations around shoes has been positive with the vast majority of students now in footwear that fits within our school policies. Consequently, our students look smarter and we will continue to enforce this Policy next half-term. Our new school planners, carried by every child, have helped to ensure that students consistently wear their uniform as expected, with staff signing planners when infringements are spotted. I encourage parents to look at their child's planner as it contains a record of these infringements as well as a movement record (times when they have requested to leave the classroom).

## University Offers

Congratulations to so many of our Year 13 students who have now successfully received offers from Universities. Our UCAS application process has been successful and I have been deeply impressed with those students who I have met to conduct practice interviews prior to University visits. We have also had a successful application to Cambridge University this year, an incredible achievement for the individual involved.

## Year 9 Options

We start to accelerate towards the guided choice process next half-term with information events for parents and students on the 26 February. This is a key time for students to refine their curriculum and the first time that they get a degree of choice in shaping their education in a way that supports their own ambitions and preferences.

## Year 11 Parents' Evening

Thank you to all parents who attended the second of our Year 11 parents evening of the academic year. It was important to engage in face to face conversations following recent Mock Exams and consider a shared approach moving forwards. We have scheduled a second Mock Examination window for practice examinations in Maths, English and Science (w/b 9 March). Students have been encouraged to work diligently towards these examinations. We attach huge importance to students being motivated to engage in independent revision (through our internal revision programme that operates at lunchtimes and after school, as well as a structured and regular routine at home). We had a Parents' information Evening this week to help parents gain an insight into effective revision and how to support their children at home with this vital ingredient of examination success. Again, thank you to those parents who attended.

## Attendance

We continue to try and press upon our students the importance of regular and sustained attendance at school. Our internal analysis of progress and attainment data reflects key links between high levels of attendance and high levels of progress and attainment. We have recently sent out a comprehensive report of your child's attendance to try and ensure that all families have a clear picture of their child's attendance and attendance patterns.

Similarly, it is essential that students arrive to school on time. Students must be on site for an 8.30 start, or they risk losing out on key information contained within our personal development curriculum (delivered each day between 8.30 and 9.00am) as well as being part of key assemblies that operate each week. Our gates close at 8.30 and students who arrive after this time must report to reception and sign in with a member of senior staff. We do text parents to inform them that their child has arrived late to school. If you require help with either your child's general attendance or their punctuality, please contact your child's year leader who will explore possible support strategies.

## Jack Petchey Awards Evening

I had the pleasure of attending the recent Jack Petchey Awards Evening, celebrating those students who had been nominated for recognition for going above and beyond, having a positive impact on the school or wider community. It was a joy to see the significant number of students from Hedingham School at the event, along with their families. Congratulations to all those recognised and a big thank you to the families of the students for attending such a great evening.

## Good to Great

Our Year 7 Good to Great cohort have been involved in a French project looking at French cuisine or ordering food in restaurants. They are now doing a thankyou project to recognise the efforts of their teachers. Our Year 8 cohort are working on writing their own historical fiction as part of a national competition set by the History Association. The Year 9 group have been focusing on the Dora Love Prize, an annual prize for secondary school children that requires students to develop projects which link what they have learnt about the Holocaust with the world they live in today, and to take action to put an end to identity-based prejudice, discrimination, marginalisation and violence.

## Year 8 Enterprise Day

The whole of Year 8 enjoyed a day off from their usual timetable after collapsing their lessons to build in the opportunity for a “day with a difference”. Mr Batch organised a day in which students were set a career related challenge that they had to undertake in teams. It involved the application of key skills, including developing ideas, working and communicating as a team and presenting a proposal to their peers. Students were brilliant throughout and developed some superb work. I had the pleasure of presenting prizes at the end of the event and was impressed by how immersed students were with the challenge.

## Off to the Snow!

On Friday afternoon, 80 students and a team of staff take the long bus journey to Zell Am See in Austria for this year's Ski Trip.

I am sure that they will have an amazing time and wish them all the best with this exciting adventure.

I apologise for the length of this newsletter, there has been so much to be proud of this half- term. I shall endeavour to return information more frequently so to cut down the length of future newsletters!

I wish you all an enjoyable and restful half-term.

Paul Finch, Headteacher

