

15th October 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you well. As we approach the last week of this half term, I thought it would be a good time to write to you to update you on the term so far as well as communicate on some key issues. Apologies in advance for the length of this letter, but there is quite a lot to cover... it's been a very busy time!

Israel/Palestine Conflict

Over the last week we have all been aware of the continuing upsetting events in Israel and Palestine and the impact that it is having on people in the region and all over the world, including members of our own school community. Our thoughts are with those families and staff directly or indirectly affected by the terrible events in Israel and Gaza. I have waited until the weekend to communicate with you all as I wanted some time to think about it (as the situation politically is very complex as are the associated sensitivities), and to consult with staff, governors and other external stakeholders (as explained later in the letter).

Our school community is a diverse and inclusive one, comprising individuals with various backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives. We value and embrace the diversity that exists among our students, their families and our staff, and we firmly believe in creating an environment where everyone feels respected, valued and safe.

In school, when terrible events like this happen in the world, we focus on re-emphasising our values of kindness, inclusion and the 4Cs within our own community. The Highgate Wood Way seeks to promote harmony amongst everyone. We have asked our staff to be particularly vigilant right now for any unkindness that may be brought into conversations or behaviours in school and online. With this in mind we have shared the following messages with our students:

HWS FAMILY in and out of school

We are aware of the recent and ongoing situation in the Israel/Palestine region

- We are against all violence and loss of life and hope that one day peace can emerge
- We are aware that this situation will be having an impact on some members of our school community and we urge sympathy, care and understanding at this time

CONSIDERATION • COOPERATION • COURTESY • CONTRIBUTION



Highgate Wood School supports individual actions to address the issues of Climate Change and promotes the United Nations top 10 recommendations



5-Minute showers



Drive less



Lights off



Local produce



Refill and reuse



Meat-free meals



Zero waste fashion



Bring your own bag



Recycle



Unplug

HWS FAMILY in and out of school

- We also know that sometimes these situations can give rise to hate feelings and increase incidence of discrimination. This is unacceptable to our school and is contrary to The Highgate Wood Way
- If anyone is feeling sad, upset or feels that anyone is showing discriminatory behaviour towards them they should tell a member of staff so that it can be dealt with seriously
- -Never have the 4Cs been more important - these are the values of HWS and we expect all students to show them at all times so that everyone can come to HWS and feel happy, confident, respected and valued

in a world where
you can be
anything.....

Be Kind

In addition to the above, I will be sending a memo to all students on Monday morning as a further reminder of our support and expectations. I will remind them of the above messages, but also reiterate that if they are feeling upset, overwhelmed or just want an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe space, we have our pastoral teams, mentors and counsellors ready and able to support.

I have also spent this last week reaching out to those that I believe can help us through what is clearly a very challenging time. I have been in touch with Rabbi Sandra Kviat this week and I am meeting with her on 19th October. I also intend to reach out to Bibi Khan from Wightman Road Mosque in the coming days. We are committed to getting this as right as we can for our school community.

I have included separately a communication sent to schools from the Haringey Educational Psychological Service supporting parents, carers and families on how best to have these conversations at home. In the meantime, like many of you, I will be praying for those most directly affected in the region and hoping for some signs of peace and resolution as quickly as possible.

World Mental Health Day

Tuesday 10th October was World Mental Health Day. We aligned it to Consideration, one of our 4Cs. We shared a presentation with the students outlining how important mental health is to our well-being and encouraging our students to prioritise it and to feel comfortable to talk about it. We stressed the importance of being kind to others (and yourself). We also ran a theme across the day in each lesson that covered the following:

- **Period 1** – Signposting how to support with your mental health.
- **Period 2** – An act of consideration – say something nice!
- **Period 3** – A mindful minute - mindful breathing

- **Period 4** – It's okay to feel it! Quotes of encouragement
- **Period 5** – A mindful minute – mindful thinking

Lastly (and in keeping with the messaging related to the Israel-Palestine Conflict), we reminded the students about the support available to them from their form tutors, staff members, heads of year and our Maya Angelou Centre.

Learning Support Department Homework and Games Clubs – A Message from Mr Cain-Reed

My new Assistant Headteacher and SENDCo Mr Daniel Cain-Reed has asked me to inform parents that the Learning Support Department run homework club on a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday after school in the Learning Support Department from 2:55pm until 3:55pm. The clubs are open to all students across the school and our Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are available to support students with organising themselves, making revision plans, planning ahead of deadlines as well as with subject specific queries.

If your child struggles in a particular subject, or frequently finds it difficult to organise their workload, please do encourage them to attend so that they can access the necessary support. Where attendance is high, we have capacity to work with students in different spaces across the school in quieter areas to support concentration.

The Learning Support Department also run a games club at breaktime and lunchtime daily which is accessible to all students. Students are welcome in the Learning Support Department to get to know other students and make friends, play games with one another, use the computers to catch up on any homework, or to access a quieter space in school away from the main playgrounds.

Traffic in the Area

You may be aware that we have temporary traffic lights in operation on Park Road at the junction with Wolseley Road. This is creating major problems with traffic in the area. If your child uses public transport to come to school, please do encourage them to leave earlier than usual to avoid the congestion problems in the morning. It is still our expectation that students arrive to school on time.

Toilets

We are very aware that there is an issue at HWS with regards to our toilet provision. This was raised with some concern at the recent PSA meeting and I have had some communications from parents with respect to this. I know that some parents are saying that their children avoid going to the toilet during the day because of the presence of older students or because they are uncomfortable with the conditions. We are deeply sorry for this. There are three main issues we are contending with.

1. **We do not have sufficient toilets for the size of the school and the number of students and staff that we have in attendance.** This is an issue that we are taking up with Haringey Council. As a maintained school, the buildings belong to Haringey and they have a responsibility to ensure we are compliant with regulations such as these. They are engaged with us in trying to resolve this, but progress is slow and solutions at this stage are not clear. We would encourage parents to write to the council to express their concerns as this would certainly help us to get the funding from the Council to improve the capacity across the school.
2. **The State of the Student Toilets is not good enough.** Although we have spent considerable amounts of money over the years on refurbishment, repairing and maintaining our student toilets, we know that this has proven to be insufficient. We are constantly seeking better ways to make the toilet areas more open (to enable natural supervision) and to staff the supervision more effectively, which is a challenge in such a large school.
3. **Vapes in Schools is a National problem.** We are affected by this too at HWS. There are a considerable number of young people across the country who are getting easy access to vapes and this is problematic as they are unhealthy and addictive. The toilets are an obvious place for students to try to and hide away to use a vape. We do not accept vapes in school for any reason and any student found to have a vape on their person or to be using it in school will face a suspension.

In respect of the above, we are in conversation with the PSA with regards to possible funding of solutions to this problem (in addition to what we are trying to get from Haringey). We have also set up a working group of staff

and governors to look at a longer strategic solution to the problem so that we can resolve this once and for all for the future.

In the meantime, we have asked staff on duty to be more vigilant around the toilets, and we are asking our cleaners to do more routine checks on the cleanliness and hygiene of the spaces.

Uniform

Another issue that was raised at the recent PSA meeting was uniform. Concerns were expressed by some parents about the way that HWS is enforcing the uniform policy – so I thought it would be good to address this in this letter.

I will start by stating what might feel like the obvious. We are a uniform school and we expect our students to wear the uniform fully and properly (apart from those students who are exempt – please see below). We have sanctions in place for students who do not do so, as do all schools who have a uniform. I understand that there are some people who do not agree with those sanctions, but the reality is that these sanctions work. The very small number of children impacted is a testament to that. I will share some stats to back this up.

After the first 16 days of school this term we had the following data:

- 15 students who had been placed out of circulation for not arriving at school in correct uniform without a note explaining why, e.g. no blazer, incorrect footwear. (which is just under 1 per day out of 1200 uniform wearing students)
- 80 students who had received detentions related to not wearing the uniform correctly, e.g. untucked shirts, ties worn too short. (on average 5 students per day out of 1200 uniform wearing students)

In my view, this is a clear indication of the very small number of students who are not quite getting this right each day. The overwhelming majority do and this is testament to the fact that wearing uniform properly is an achievable expectation. I want to offer my congratulations to almost every student for the way that they have responded positively to our push to get the uniform right. The difference is incredible and our students are walking around the school looking extra smart, which in my view is a positive thing and reflective of one aspect of The Highgate Wood Way.

As alluded to above, we do have a small number of children who are exempt from various aspects of our uniform policy as linked to a special need or a medical condition. We are always happy to make allowances to accommodate situations like this and those children will have notes from their pastoral team or the Learning Support Department. There is also a list of these students for staff so that they are not challenged in lessons or around the school.

Incidentally, and unconnected to the above, we are having internal discussions at the moment about the type of uniform that we have. These started last year. As long as I am headteacher, HWS will always be a uniform school, but as I have indicated to staff and students involved in the early discussions, I am open-minded as to what style of uniform we have. I will update parents when there is something more to say on this issue. In the meantime, I ask for your continued support with reminding your child to meet those expectations that are currently in place.

Parent Governor Vacancies (x2)

We have two vacancies for parent governors at the moment. We will be sending more information about this to families shortly in relation to how to put yourself forward if you are interested in becoming a governor. If you would like to have an informal chat about what it means to be a governor, then don't hesitate to contact Ms Olakisan my PA on eol@hws.haringey.sch.uk. She will put you in touch with either myself or one of the governors. We will be running the election process straight after half term.

Open Evening Last Thursday – Thank You to Our Amazing Students

Last Thursday we had the Year 6/7 Open Evening event which was yet again well attended. The feedback on the evening was extremely positive, with a big part of that being about the contribution of the students who participated. In total we had approaching 500 students who volunteered to take part and represent their

school. The pride that our students demonstrate in HWS is both heart-warming and impressive. I would like to recognise and thank them all, and yourselves as parents/carers for allowing them to take part and contribute.

For Year 7 Parents

Halloween Disco on Thursday 19th October

The Year 7 Halloween Disco is taking place on Thursday 19th October from 5:00pm – 7:00pm at the school with a Halloween dress code! If you would like your child to attend, please complete the following consent form: <https://forms.gle/wiXYd8K8UyMC27KZ6>.

Year 7 Parents/Carers' Survey

We are asking our Year 7 parents/carers to complete a very short survey about their child's transition experience. The survey link can be found here: <https://forms.gle/1X23eBGrKbA9taHa6>

PSA Announcement

The PSA are very excited to announce that their annual fundraising auction will be starting on 1 November. If you have any items, vouchers or services that you are able to donate, please message: hwoodpsa@gmail.com.

... And Finally

Thank you for reading this all the way to the end! I know that this has been a very long letter, but as I said at the start, there was quite a bit of information to share with you.

I will write to you again just after half term (unless something more urgent happens in the meantime). So, I will end by thanking you again for your support and wishing you and your family well for the last week of this half term and for the break ahead.

Regards



Patrick Cozier
Headteacher