

28th January 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

This is my first letter of the year, so I would like to start by expressing my hope that you are well and that you have had a good and positive start to 2024. It has been a positive start to the term at HWS and the students have settled back into learning extremely quickly. We are proud of just how well they are all doing both in lessons and around school.

Year 11 Pre-Public Exams (formerly referred to as Mock Exams)

During the first two weeks back, our year 11 students have been taking their pre-public exams. It has been incredible to watch them approach the exams with such focus and maturity. Their level of effort has been great and their conduct impeccable. The number of students who have been arriving extra early in the mornings to sit in the canteen, have breakfast and study has been inspiring to see. It is indicative of their positive attitude.

The students will get their results on the afternoon of Thursday 8th February in a special assembly. We are confident that the overwhelming majority will be pleased with how well they have done, but as ever, the job is not complete! We still have much to do to be fully prepared for the summer exams ahead.

Year 13 Pre-Public Exams

Our year 13s are now halfway through their pre-public exams (and a few public exams too for some of them). They are equally well prepared and are putting in maximum effort. I am sure you will join me in wishing them all the best for the coming week!

Late to Lessons – A New Approach

In any large secondary school, one of the biggest responsibilities placed on students is being in the right place at the right time. Swift and safe movement from one part of the school building to another is a critical element of a successful day of learning

Whilst most of our students do this well, we have a not insignificant number that don't. We are keen to change this. Being on time lessons not only maximises your own learning opportunities, but in addition it safeguards everyone else's as lessons can get off to a quick and uninterrupted start. Because of this we have changed our approach to how we address the issue of lateness to lessons.

From Monday 15th January, we changed the sanction for lateness from a 10-minute detention to a 1-hour reflection detention. This detention is given irrespective of the number of minutes a student maybe late. The message to our students is that late is late, and they must prioritise moving quickly to be on 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

Already we have seen a significant improvement! I would very much appreciate it if you could discuss this with your child if they do end up getting a detention for lateness, to reinforce our high expectations.

Year 9 Options Evening

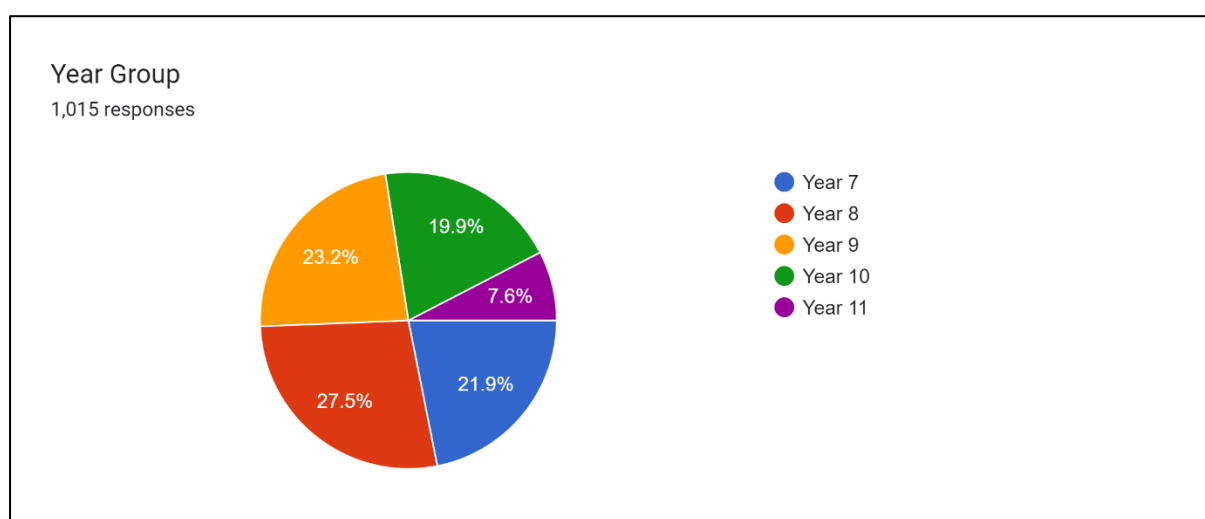
On Tuesday 9th January we held the Year 9 Options Evening event. It was well attended by students and parents and there were many positive and informative conversations taking place that evening. I have been really impressed with how mature our year 9 students have been in considering what are always difficult choices. Over the last few days we have been following up the evening by interviewing students to check where they are at in terms of making their choices. A remarkable number of them seem completely sorted which is a great reflection on them, as well as the support that you have given them at home. Thank you for your support as ever!

SEND Parents' Forum

We held our fourth SEND Parents' Forum on Tuesday 16th January. It was the first one organised by our SENDCo Mr Cain-Reed since his arrival in September. The format of the evening was different, with parents being given the opportunity to attend small group sessions specialising in particular aspects of SEND. Each group was hosted by different members of the Learning Support Department (who did a fantastic job of which I am very proud). Mr Cain-Reed was also able to talk to parents on the evening about the many improvements that we have made and the impressive progress that we are seeing in SEND provision at HWS. Of course, we are not complacent, and we know there is still much to achieve – by Mr Cain-Reed and his department are very much aware of that and were able to share our plans for further improvement at the event. Thank you to all those parents who attended. I hope that you had a positive and informative time.

Student Uniform Survey Outcomes

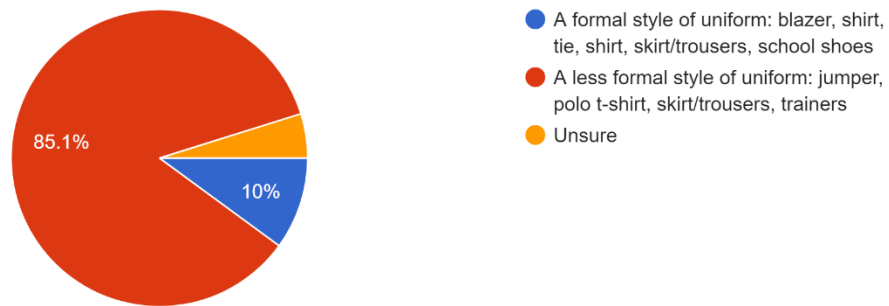
As you will be aware from previous correspondence, we are currently consulting on the possibility of changing the school uniform. As part of the process we completed a survey of our students. The survey had over a thousand responses which constitutes the vast majority of the students in the school who currently wear a uniform. The large number of responses received can be taken as being indicative of the views of all students across the school. The results are summarised in the tables below.



Understandably our year 11 students who will not be wearing uniform next year were less inclined to respond to the survey than the other year groups. We did not request the views of our post 16 students.

What style of uniform do you think we should have at Highgate Wood School?

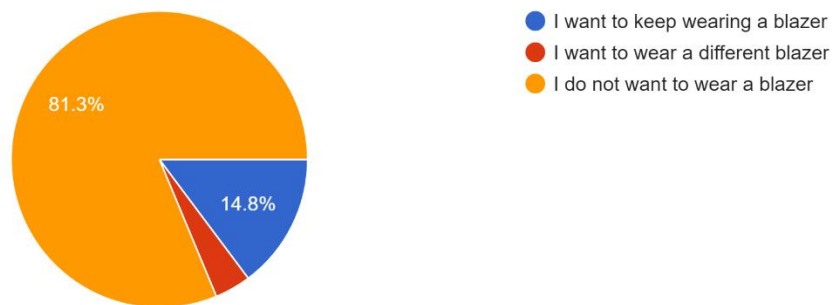
1,015 responses



The overwhelming response from the students is that they would prefer a less formal uniform than what we currently have. Just over 85% would like to change the style.

What do you think of our school blazer?

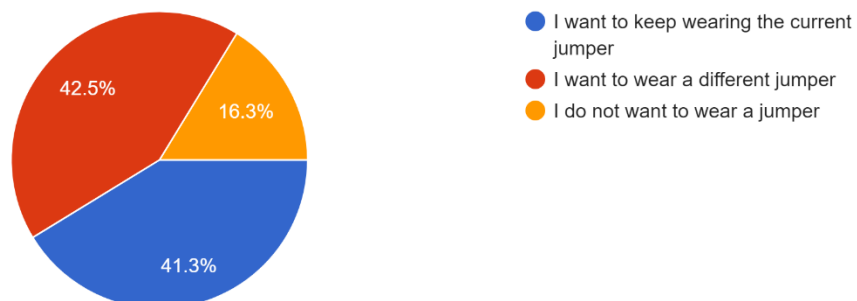
1,015 responses



Unsurprisingly, the wearing of a blazer is not very popular! 81% of those surveyed would like to get rid of the blazer – very emphatic!

What do you think of our school jumper?

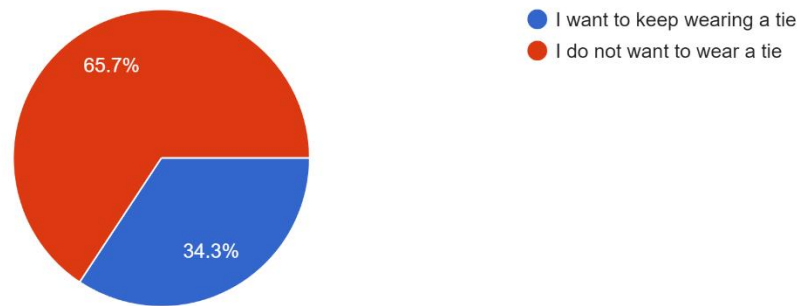
1,015 responses



The response to our school jumper was a very interesting one. By a very small margin, students are suggesting a change of jumper (42.5%), but only by 1 percent over those who would prefer to keep what we have (41.3%). A smaller number of students (16.3%) would rather not wear a jumper at all.

What do you think of the tie?

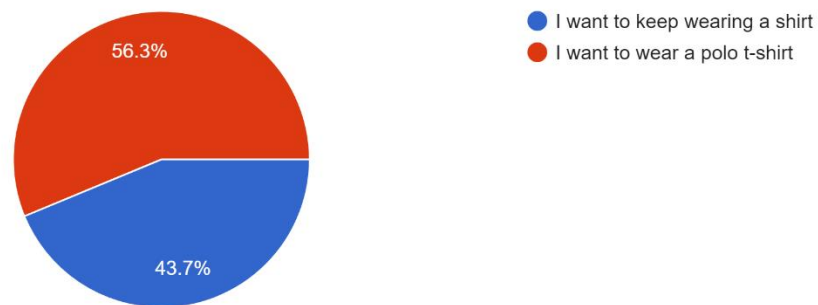
1,015 responses



Our ties are not as unpopular as the blazer, but nevertheless, two thirds of those surveyed (65.7%) have indicated that they do not want to wear a tie.

What do you think of the shirt?

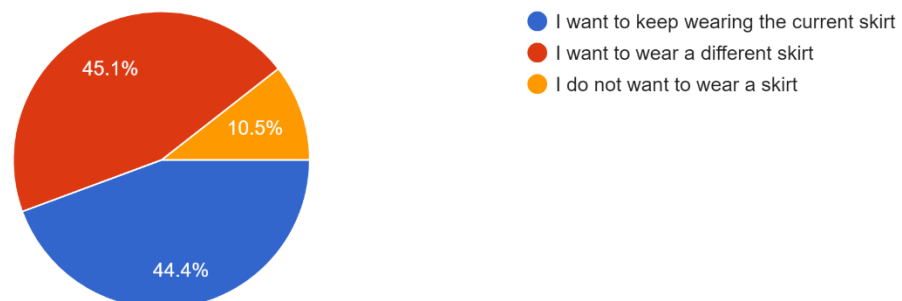
1,015 responses



The outcome on the question of the school shirt is reasonably even, but a small majority (56.3%) would prefer to wear a polo shirt rather than the current style.

If you are a female-identifying student, what do you think of the skirt?

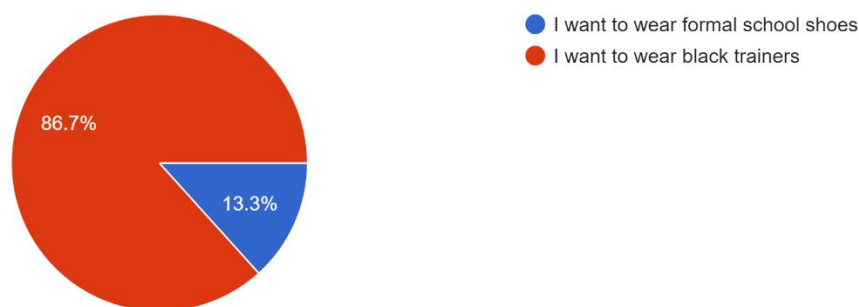
541 responses



Of the students who responded to this question, it is really close (less than one percent) between those who want a new skirt (45.1%) and those who would rather keep the current skirt (44.4%). A smaller number of female-identifying students do not want a skirt (10.5%).

What do you think of school shoes?

1,015 responses



Another clear response from our students. 86.7% would rather wear black trainers to school rather than black shoes.

You will see from those results that in most cases our students have expressed some clear views as a collective, with a few areas that require more exploration. Our intention is to give the students the uniform that they want, whilst having regard to the parameters that we identified at the start of the process.

- A uniform that is affordable to families
- A uniform which is gender neutral
- A uniform in which girls feel more secure and safe
- A uniform which is more flexible to the changing climate – suitable for both extreme cold and extreme hot temperatures

Our aim is to decide on the changes we will make quickly and to implement these in this coming September, however, there are some hurdles to overcome with suppliers before we can confirm this. We also need to consider things such as whether a changed uniform will be compulsory for all students (e.g. year 10s moving into year 11 in September), considering the potential for financial pressures on families. I will keep you updated throughout the process.

Israel/Gaza Conflict

The situation in Israel/Gaza continues to develop. Our stance as a school remains the same – namely that we are against all forms of violence and loss of life. Our approach at HWS is to create as much understanding, empathy and harmony within our school community as we can. Every time I do an assembly on a Friday I reiterate this message to our students. I speak about kindness and I draw attention to the increase in Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic behaviours and attitudes. Disappointingly, we have had some instances of this in school and we have taken the strongest stance possible to ensure anyone responsible understands just how unacceptable it is.

The group of staff and students that have come together to lead some educational work on this issue have met a couple of times since I last wrote to you and we have agreed the approach that we are going to take to address this very difficult and complex issue. We will focus on a range of activities after the February half term break which will include the following:

- Asking the Heads of Department from PSHE, History, Religion, Ethics and Philosophy (REP) and Geography to teach a lesson for Key Stage 3.
 - **History** – teaching a basic historical framework of the region from Roman times to present with an emphasis on there being more than one narrative
 - **Geography** – teaching the socio-economic framework of the region with an emphasis on development, natural resources, refugees and displaced people

- **Religion, Ethics and Philosophy (REP)** – teaching the cultural framework with an emphasis of the commonalities of the three Abrahamic religions with their shared values and sacred sites
- **PHSE** – promoting the values of pluralism, respect, tolerance and empathy in a school and community context.
- Hold a cultural event sharing and celebrating difference – maybe involving food, music, etc. with money raised going to appropriate and reputable charities
- Using an external agency (probably Solutions not Sides) to come in and do a drop-down day to facilitate deeper understanding and empathy and to consider potential solutions
- Provide a space where students can offer a private collection of thoughts – although we have decided that this should happen after the above activities

I have again reached out to Rabbi Sandra Kviat and Bibi Khan from Wightman Road Mosque to support us in putting together the detail of what we are trying to achieve during this period.

I am very conscious of the risk that we are taking as a school given the complexities and the sensitivities of this situation. However, I feel that we need to be brave about this. I am very aware that our students are currently getting a large amount of information from a wide variety of sources, some less balanced and reliable than others. I feel it is incumbent on us as educators to attempt to do something that encourages our students to be more aware, discerning and to develop their own views in a safe environment. As ever, I will keep you updated.

Toilets

We continue to make progress on the issues with our toilets, although admittedly not at the pace that I would ideally want. We have been in regular contact with Haringey who are working with us on finding some good long-term solutions to our issues. As a result of those conversations, we can confirm the following:

- We will have some modular toilets delivered and installed at the school in the next few weeks – we are hoping this will happen over the half term break. These additional toilets will serve the dual purpose of temporarily increasing our capacity across the school and ensuring alternative toilets that are available to students once the work begins on the proposed re-design of the Admin Building Toilets later in the year
- A final decision by Haringey with regards to the funding of the permanent changes to the toilets in the Admin Building will be made in March. If confirmed (and we are quietly optimistic about this) the plan is for these works to happen over the summer holiday – but again, there are some hurdles to overcome before I can confirm this

Earlier this week, this information was shared with a group of parents (who are leading on the discussion and feedback we are engaged in receiving) in a meeting with myself, Laurence Penn (Co-Chair of Governors) and my site staff.

In the meantime, we have continued to maintain higher levels of staff presence and vigilance around the toilets during the school day. We have also maintained a more regular cleaning regime. Lastly, we are working on ways of more successfully identifying any students who take the opportunity to vape in the toilets by installing some vape detectors and increasing our CCTV coverage across certain areas of the school. I will keep you updated.

Notice from the PSA

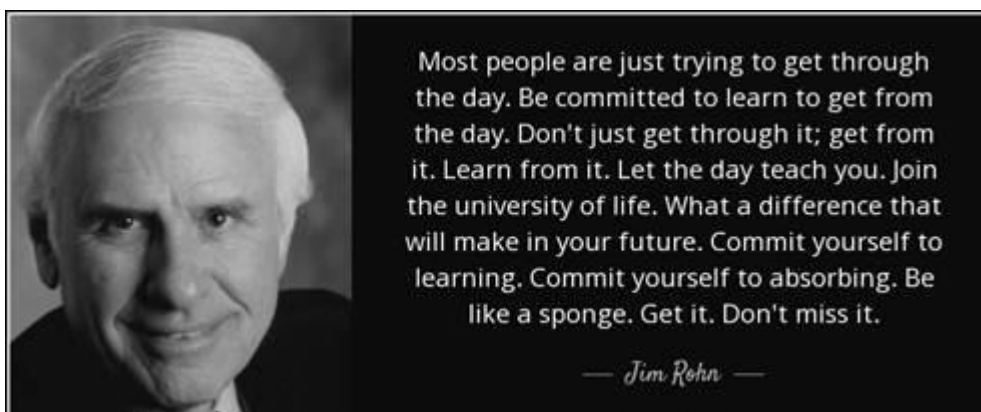
The PSA is looking for a new treasurer to take over by the end of this academic year. No qualifications needed - just a head for numbers, organisational skills, and readiness to be part of a wonderful team. There will be plenty of time for the current treasurer to induct you and ensure you are familiar with processes and systems over the coming months. Please message or email hwoodpsa@gmail.com if you are interested or want to find out more about the role.

A few dates for your diary...

- Tuesday 6th February 2024 – **Year 10 Parent/Carers Evening**
- Monday 12th February to Friday 16th February 2024 – **HALF TERM BREAK**
- Monday 19th February to Tuesday 20th February 2024 – **Year 8 HPV Vaccinations**
- Wednesday 21st February 2024 – **INSET DAY – School Closed to All Students**
- Tuesday 27th February 2024 – **Year 13 Parent/Carers Evening (3.30pm to 7pm)**
- Tuesday 12th March 2024 – **Year 12 Parent/Carers Evening (3.30pm to 7pm)**
- Tuesday 19th March 2024 – **Global Majority Parents' Forum (5pm to 7pm)**
- Tuesday 26th March 2024 – **Year 8 Parent/Carers Evening (3.30pm to 7pm)**
- Thursday 28th March 2024 – **Last Day of the Spring Term**

... And Finally

Thank you again for reading this all the way to the end! I know that long letters are not always much fun, but I do try to include as much information that I assume will be useful. As ever, I will end with a quote.



I love Jim Rohn and his teachings on personal development and success. I watch his You Tube videos regularly and gain a lot from them. The quote above is one that I find particularly inspiring. The notion of approaching each day as an opportunity to learn, grow and develop rather than a period of time to endure and get through is a significant mindset shift that breeds optimism and positivity. In our desire to persevere, even when things get tough, approaching the day with this mindset will keep us going! I ask all my students and staff to embrace this mindset and to seize every single day!

I will write to you again during the upcoming half term break.

Thank you for your continued support!

Regards



Patrick Cozier
Headteacher