

Headteacher: Patrick Cozier BSc (Hons), MA, NPQH

28th April 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that this letter finds you well and that you are having a wonderful weekend with your families. This letter contains some important updates from over the last fortnight, so as ever, I hope that you find the contents useful.

Israel/Gaza Situation

It has been a while since I wrote to you about the School's response to the conflict taking place in Gaza and Israel. Things do not seem to be any closer to resolution, and indeed appear to be getting more complex. Loss of life and the sustained human suffering in the region is something that we all continue to feel devastated by.

As you will be aware, I have spoken about our commitment as a school to do what we can to support our children, staff and families through this period and also to help our students navigate through the complexities of what is happening.

With that in mind I am happy to confirm that next week years 7, 8 and 9 will begin a short series of lessons in History, Geography and RE about Israel/Palestine that will run over the next two weeks. The idea behind this is that our students get some understanding of the background to the current situation in Gaza which of course has huge significance for the whole of the world at the moment.

Even more importantly, we know that within our school community at HWS we have students and their families (and staff) who have connections to Israel/Palestine. We therefore want to make sure that all our students have an understanding of why these issues are so sensitive and why there are very different points of view. These are complex and controversial issues and we are not expecting that we will all agree with each other, but we do expect that we try to understand and respect each other's positions. In other words, we want our students to gain empathy and to show Consideration and Courtesy to each other at all times.

I want to send my huge appreciation to my heads of History, Geography, RE and Life Skills for putting together the series of lessons. They have worked hard on this and we know the risk that we are taking in tacking an issue that most people seem keen to swerve for fear of getting it wrong. I really hope that the students get something valuable out of these lessons.

Also, for year 10 we are playing two days' worth of activity later in the summer term. We have booked in some workshops with Solutions Not Sides, who are an organisation who have been teaching skills of empathy, active listening, communication, critical thinking and conflict resolution through exploration of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since 2010. Their programme is based on three key values: non-violence, equality for all, and the rejection of hatred.

I will be meeting again with the staff/student working group who have been behind this work shortly to think about what other things we can do as a school.

A New Therapeutic Space at HWS - Cubbie

Since the Spring term, we have been trialling the use of a Cubbie in the Learning Support Department. This is a fantastic resource which can be used as a reset space for students for a variety of reasons, whether they are anxious, overwhelmed or over stimulated.

The Cubbie is a unit which provides audio and visual feedback and contains a bean bag and a swing. We have been trialling the use of the Cubbie with a small number of students over the last term. The Cubbie has accumulated 500 separate uses and 86% of students report feeling happier and have noted improvements to their wellbeing and as such as we will be trialling the Cubbie with a wider variety of students this term.

We are endeavouring to adopt a 'needs led' approach to the use of the Cubbie and eventually want it to be something which students in need can access. We are factoring in our timetable, curriculum and supervision requirements into our ongoing monitoring of Cubbie usage. We want to explicitly thank former parent Tanya Weisweiller for supporting the school in sourcing the Cubbie at no cost. We are excited to embed this as part of our universal provision!

Update on Toilets

We are still awaiting confirmation from Haringey regarding the funding arrangements for the redevelopment of our toilets in the Admin building. However, the new temporary additional toilet blocks were installed over half term and will be ready to use in a short while. There are a few details to be finalised around supply of power, etc.

Whilst we are still uncertain as to the amount of funding we will get for the refurbishment process that we want to implement, the delivery of the temporary structures is a good and positive sign of Haringey Council's commitment to the works to be undertaken at HWS. I will update you when I know more.

My AFK Charity Visit

MyAFK is the charity that the HWS House charity committee has chosen to support for the 2023/2024 academic school year. It is a London based disability and neurodiversity charity that helps young people access mobility equipment and routes to paid employment.

We were very lucky to have two special guests from the Charity visit HWS on the 23rd of March. They met with and spoke to the House Reps about what the charity does and how they operate.

Our guests also came up with the brilliant idea of a T-Shirt design activity. The students were given a theme and some ideas. They drew some beautiful designs. The designs were then collected and taken back to the MyAFK HQ to be digitally transferred. The designs are now currently on sale on their website, the proceeds of which will contribute towards supporting the Charity. You can access the website on this link... <https://afk-charity.teemill.com/>

We would be delighted if you were able to purchase one of items!

Modern Foreign Languages Department – Twitter/X Account

I have been asked by Ms Lacroix (Head of MFL) to point you in the direction of their Twitter/X account @HWS_MFL. As well as regular notices, they have been using it with trips to communicate with parents. Their next trip is to Spain on the 7th May, so parents and carers can follow the account and keep tuned in for exciting news. The department are also intending to share interesting articles about languages.

Uniform from September 2024 – A further explanation

You will be aware that in my letter sent on the 14th April I confirmed the uniform changes for September as below.

Changes from September 2024:

- **Blazers will no longer form a part of the school uniform**
- **Students will be allowed to wear plain black trainers (as well as plain black shoes)**
- **We will retain the same skirts, but the flap that currently exists will be stitched to the rest of the skirt so that they are more secure in windy weather**
- **The school jumper will be compulsory – but we will have the logo stitched onto them**

What Stays the Same:

- **We will keep year group ties and lanyards**
- **We will keep white shirts**
- **Black trousers will be the same**

I have had some feedback on this with some people expressing disappointment that the final decision taken was not a total reflection on the outcome of the students' survey. This is true, but there are very specific reasons for this that I have explained below.

The first thing to say is that we have given the students the two things that the student body as a whole felt the most united about – the removal of the blazer from the uniform and the requirement to wear formal shoes. Those two things were by far and away the most unpopular aspects of our current uniform according to the survey.

The views expressed on the school jumper and the school skirt were almost 50-50. The survey did have a narrow majority in favour of polo shirts over the current style shirts that we have, and about two thirds of students preferred not to have a tie. So, the question is why did we keep those things?

The key reason was money – both in terms of costs to the school and also costs to families. In relation to the school's costs, the contract that we have with the school uniform supplier makes the school responsible for any financial loss incurred by the company for unsold uniform items. They have many of our current uniform items in stock. We were able to negotiate a significantly reduced solution in terms of the blazers that they hold and now cannot sell on. However, it would have been prohibitively expensive to have extended this to all items, i.e. skirts, jumpers and ties.

Our solution for the skirts was to keep the skirts (as the students for the most part are happy with the design) but to stitch down the flap to make them more secure. We decided that we could keep the jumpers given that are not hugely unpopular. However, given that our jumpers are V-necked, it would have made a move to a polo-shirt odd in terms of look and appearance, so we kept the current shirts too. We kept the ties for year identification. They are more reliable than lanyards, and our plan for year group colour identification initially was based on having a coloured stripe on the collars of the polo shirts – which we are no longer getting.

In terms of the cost to parents, the polo shirt with the coloured stripe on the collar would have been significantly more expensive than the white shirts that parents can currently buy from wherever they choose to purchase them. Through the uniform supplier, coupled with the need to buy a few (to cut down on washing, etc.) this would have increased the amount of money that parents would have been paying out, even with the loss of the blazer.

So, in the end, weighing these things up, we chose to keep ties, white shirts and the jumper (but with the new logos stitched on). We will communicate later in the term about what happens with the existing school jumpers that your child may currently have. It was never the case that we ignored the students having asked for their views. This was about given them as much as we could reasonably give, but also being cautious about financial considerations.

I explained this to students in the whole school assembly on Friday. I hope that this clears up any confusion for parents too.

Satchel One and Homework

I would like to remind parents and carers about the importance of students checking Satchel One every single day to ensure that they know exactly what homework they have as well as to check any notices from staff/departments about assessments/events etc. We have implemented Satchel One as a key communication tool for students and parents, but it is only useful if everyone engages with it and is aware of all the information that we share.

Year 11 Information – Exam Preparation and Dress Up Day Celebration

If you are a parent or carer of a year 11 student you should have received a letter last week from Ms Ward and Ms Burniston giving you details about the exam preparation timetable that starts on the 8th May in time for the start of the first written exams on 9th May. This is mandatory so we do expect to have all students in school and attending their allocated sessions. In previous years we have seen a remarkable increase in GP, dentist and every other type of appointment for year 11s, but we will not be authorising these without evidence.

The letter also contained information about the Dress Up Day celebration on 3rd May. This will be a really fun day and we can't wait to see the remarkable and creative costumes the students wear! However, please do make sure that your child does not wear anything controversial or potentially offensive.

Speaking of exams, well done to all of those students who were involved this week in completing their Language oral exams and/or completing the Art practical exams. I have seen how hard the students and staff worked to prepare for these, and I am very confident that their performances will reflect their incredible effort.

MADfest

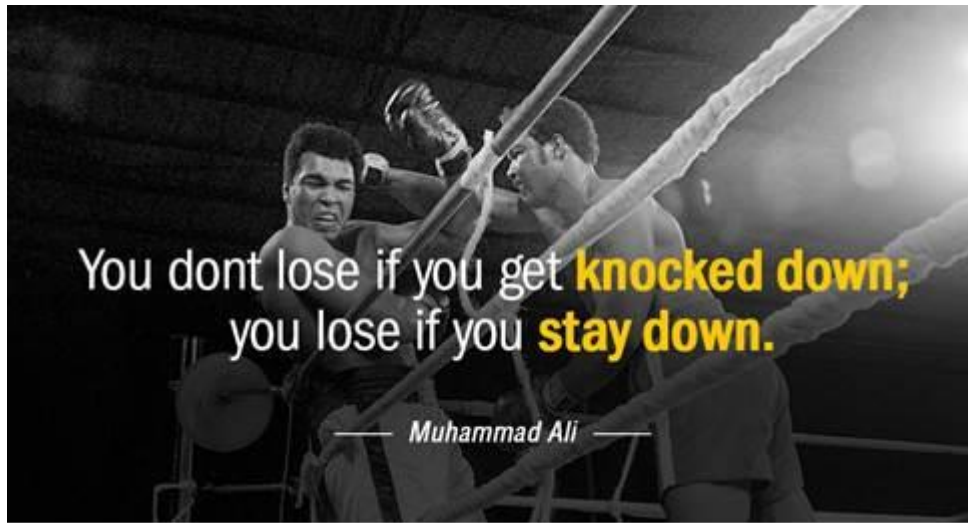
It's the summer term, which means MADfest is just around the corner! The event will be taking place on the evening of Friday 5th July. Please come and support our wonderful students! If you need any information please contact the PSA.

A few dates for your diary...

- Thursday 2nd May 2024 – **Global Majority Parents' Forum (5pm to 6pm) an online event**
- Monday 6th May 2024 – **Bank Holiday – School Closed**
- Mon 27th May to Fri 31st May **Half Term – School Closed**

... And Finally

As ever, I will end with a quote.



Resilience is such a key component to success and happiness. We try to develop this approach at HWS. No matter the obstacles, difficulties, pitfalls and setbacks... we keep going because it is worth it!

I will write to you again soon. Thank you for your continued support!

Regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cozier".

Patrick Cozier
Headteacher