

# SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

## ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Prittlewell Chase, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 0RG  
(01702) 606200 enquiries@shsb.org.uk www.shsb.org.uk

Headteacher: Robin M Bevan MA MEd PhD FRSA



July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Parent

It has been an extraordinary year for everyone. As we approach the end of term, we have every reason to celebrate the superb way in which our school community – pupils, families, staff – have helped to maintain a positive spirit, productive learning and worthwhile activities.

### Social Media

Do take a look on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for recent highlights including: individual successes with music and art; the school's newly awarded 'Enhanced Healthy School' and 'Leading Emotional Health and Wellbeing School'; and video material to share with friends who want to know more about the school (during a period when Open Evenings have not been possible).

### Term Dates

The **last day of term** is Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July: pupils will be leaving, in a staggered release, from 11.30 am, following their morning lesson.

The new school year begins, for pupils, on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**. The Department for Education has advised secondary schools that every pupil will need to have been Covid-tested before returning to the classroom; and that this may take place on-site in the days before the start of term; or, possibly, with a phased return to school. We are working with Public Health (Southend) to establish how this testing might best be facilitated: it is our fervent hope that all pupils will be able to start, together, on the first day. Parents can expect to receive a letter, in due course, from the school to confirm these details.

### Timetable

Throughout the last year, in an approach designed to minimise pupil interactions and limit Covid transmission, the school adopted a 'two-period day' timetable. We did not expect it to remain in place for the whole year, but it did achieve the desired effect: disruption has been very much reduced compared with other schools and remote learning based on the two-lesson model proved to be more effective and sustainable.



The extended length of lessons has had advantages, especially in practical subjects; but the long afternoon, the two hour PE lessons, and the reduced daily variety in the curriculum have been very obvious 'downsides' compared to our former 5-period day. Following consultation with pupils, and learning from the experiences of the staff, September will see the school pilot a revised timetable model based on two extended lessons in the morning and a one-hour lesson in the afternoon. We very much hope this will prove to be the best blend of our former approach and the Covid timetable. This may only be a small modification, but it is well worth finding any gains that can be extracted from our pandemic experiences.

## **Staffing**

The school is fully staffed for September. We have made a number of new appointments to adjust for the varying demand for different subjects at A-level and our need to have specialist teachers; but we have also recruited to replace the staff who are leaving at the end of this term. It is a real tribute to the dedication of my colleagues, and the sense of community within the school, that the only departures at the end of the year are for retirement.

However, earlier in the term we said 'goodbye' to two colleagues moving to other employment and it is right to repeat the thanks that we expressed, at that time, to **Mrs Lane** (HR Manager) and **Mrs White** (Learning Support Assistant). They both deserve more words of appreciation than this letter could convey.

We also express sincere thanks to **Mr Cornall**. Although he is not leaving the school and remains on the teaching staff, he has chosen to step aside from his pastoral role as Director of Key Stage 4. He has overseen, with compassion and skill, the well-being and provision of academic support for pupils in Years 10 and 11 for a very considerable number of years. He is to be succeeded in this role by **Mr Baines**.

Across very many years, Mr Cornall has been supported in his role with the able and expert administrative assistance of **Mrs Andrews**. She is the first of our small group of staff members entering retirement from this Summer, having served the school since 1993. Mrs Andrews has always modelled the calm and polite characteristics that she would expect of others: thorough and professional in all her dealings with pupils, staff and parents. She has often been a first point of contact for families, sometimes receiving or conveying challenging or difficult news: we know her approach has been very highly valued by those she has worked with and for.

The next of our retirees is **Mr Peek**. He joined the staff of the school relatively recently, following a career in the police force, and has been instrumental in developing and delivering aspects of our careers programme: many pupils, for example, will remember fondly their involvement in the Year 10 'interview exercise' which was so heavily dependent on Mr Peek's ability to persuade local employers to give up their time free of charge to form the selection panels. On a daily basis, however, Mr Peek has been responsible for organising and deploying 'cover' for absent staff: although the school has one of the lowest rates of staff sickness absence anywhere in the country, there are the inevitable occasions when a colleague is unable to attend the workplace, and – with impeccable attention to detail – Mr Peek would ensure the pupils would still have a teacher or supervisor deployed to guide them through the lesson.

**Dr Middlemast** is also leaving the school at the end of this week. Our most highly qualified and academic physicist, Dr Middlemast has served in the classrooms and laboratories of this school since 1999. His expert knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject has been a source of real inspiration for many of our students as they look towards university; and his wry humour a characteristic feature of his informed delivery of subject knowledge. Learning physics with understanding can be hard; teaching physics with understanding is even harder - Dr Middlemast excelled!

**Mr Wood** retires from his role as Head of Mathematics having completed three phases of his life dedicated to the school. He was a pupil here, some years ago; returned as a teacher in 1983 taking on valuable pastoral roles, including as Head of Year 7; then after securing promotion elsewhere, he returned in 2009 to lead our team of Mathematics teachers. Mr Wood has contributed to the outstanding outcomes of the department: not only with the most-able frequently securing Oxbridge admission, but overseeing the popularity of the subject to such an extent that two-thirds of the Sixth Form complete A-level Maths. Students across very many years have benefited from his expert tuition, and through his nurturing approach, from the developed expertise of his classroom colleagues. Mr Wood has always modelled a blend of academic dedication and authentic empathy that are the hallmarks of an exceptional education professional.

We also say goodbye to **Mrs Peek** as she retires from her current role leading the Science department. She, too, has served the school for many years – leaving, at one point, only to return again! Her work as a Physics teacher has inspired a vast number of students; her role as an Advanced Skills Teacher promoted excellence in the teaching of others; as our Head of Sixth Form she brought her expectations to bear in raising to new heights the culture of dedicated A-level study; and, most recently, she has guided the provision in the largest faculty within the school. For every pupil whose fondest school memory is one of her lessons; there's another who would cite their overseas trips with her: whether to Space Camp, the CERN particle physics lab, or eclipse 'chasing'!

Thank you to every one of them and also, of course, to all those continuing on the staff into the new academic year.

## **Holiday**

And so, at the end of the term, may I wish every pupil and family the very best wishes for the holiday period. Let us hope we all have the opportunity to enjoy the Summer weather, to be outdoors, to maintain or regain good physical health, to be creative and adventurous, to read, to seek out new opportunities or learning, and to value and appreciate those around us.

Kind regards,



Robin M. Bevan  
Headteacher