

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Prittlewell Chase, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 0RG
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Headteacher: Robin M Bevan MA MEd PhD FRSA



20 September 2023

Dear Parents

In this second 'Headteacher letter' of the term, I would like to present you with a number of key messages for the weeks ahead. Please read carefully as almost all sections will apply to every pupil.

Visitors and parents often remark about the 'feel' of the school, when they are visiting Southend High School for Boys. It is difficult to capture in words exactly what they mean, but some aspects of this – we hope – are relatively apparent. The school is characterised, each day, by a quiet and purposeful atmosphere during lessons; appropriately punctuated by more energetic moments of activity and discovery. Pupils relate easily and cheerfully with each other, and are comfortable in approaching teachers and other staff. A relentless determination to achieve in all aspects of the school curriculum is inspired by a recognition that effort and practice are at the root of success.

Of course, it isn't always the case that every moment of every day displays all these positive attributes. It matters that we recognise this, and all act to address those concerns that may arise.

Parents are encouraged to contact the school directly if there is an issue at home that requires our attention (in the first instance, please use: enquiries@shsb.org.uk). If we don't know, we can't help. If there is an aspect of school that could be improved, we encourage the pupils to talk to a trusted member of staff – this can often secure the swiftest response, can prevent the amplification of a simple matter, and helps develop in the pupil those important skills which underpin the mature and considered resolution of problems. Pupils can speak to their Form Tutor or their Year Leader. If you become aware of such an issue, please encourage your son to follow this route, but then contact the school if for some reason the situation remains unresolved.

Pupils are encouraged to report, at the very first instance, any encounter in school that causes them to feel uncomfortable. Such episodes are very rare, but we know that this is partly because of our willingness to acknowledge and act on the information we are given. It also helps if our pupils work together to eliminate those aspects of 'banter' that can become accepted, but are in fact, denigrating an activity or another pupil.

Friday 22 September – lunchtime closure

As previously advised, on **Friday 22 September**, school will close to pupils at **1:00pm**. (Pupils will miss just one hour, period 3, of normal teaching.) The early closure is organised to allow us to prepare to accommodate the five hundred candidates for the 11+ tests the following morning. ***There will be no canteen lunch provision for pupils and no facility for pupils to remain on site during the afternoon.***



Attendance

At the end of the summer break, and at the outset of the new school year, may we remind parents of **the importance of full attendance at school**. There is a close connection between regular attendance and success in the classroom; and, although non-attendance due to ill-health is unavoidable, it does matter that any other absences are minimised. In particular **holidays in term-time are undesirable**. Not only do they interrupt the sequence of learning, but they send a potentially damaging signal to pupils: during term-time school study must be seen to have a clear priority over leisure pursuits.

If your child is absent from school, they must report it on the first day (and every other subsequent day) by using option 1 when calling the school and leaving a message after the beep. Alternatively, you can e-mail attendance@shsb.org.uk.

If your child is unwell during the school day, they must report to the Main Office. Should you receive a message direct from your child to say they are unwell, please call the Main Office so that they can be located and we can determine if they need to go home.

Uniform

At the start of term, it is encouraging to see all our pupils presenting themselves 'professionally' with high standards in their uniform. Pupils have access to the second-hand uniform shop which can prove to be a very cost-efficient way of replacing items of school clothing during the year, as well as being a helpful place to donate good condition garments that are no longer in use. The shop is open to pupils Monday lunchtimes and parents can place their order by e-mailing enquiries@shsb.org.uk.

As a simple reminder, for **pupils in Years 7-11 there is an absolute prohibition on the wearing of any jewellery including earrings**, which will need to be removed – at school – if worn in error.

Parental consent – photographs

We ask all parents to give their **general consent** at the start of their child's school career in respect of the child's involvement in **sporting or other regular representative activities**. Schools these days have to be much more careful about exposing children to risk. You may have read in the press that some headteachers have therefore banned the taking of photographs of pupil activities at school or the recording of school concerts on account of the risk of such images falling into the wrong hands. Whilst we are circumspect about what and where we publish, it is not our intention to go to these lengths. **I shall assume parental consent for the school to take photographs of their children as individuals or in groups (eg teams, music groups) for legitimate school or publicity purposes**; if any parent wishes to withhold such consent, I should be grateful for such a request to be put in writing to me by Friday, 29 September.

School assemblies - collective worship (& the right to withdraw)

The school provides a mixture of school, year, House and form assemblies, incorporating ethical reflection, world issues and occasional religious themes alongside essential information-giving. Parents do have the right to withdraw their child from 'collective worship' if they wish; for instance, would any parent wishing to withdraw their child from the Christian element of an assembly, please contact Mrs Worth, Deputy Headteacher by Friday, 29 September.

Sex & relationships education

Again, parents have the right to remove their child from sex education if they wish; would any parent considering exercising this right please write to me by Friday, 29 September.

Valuables

Our standard advice is that pupils do not bring valuables into school, as we cannot accept responsibility for them. If a pupil *must* do so, then our advice is that the valuables should be kept in a *locker* during the day. We understand that parents may wish their child to have a mobile for contact in case of emergency – we would advise using an inexpensive model for bringing into school. Please be aware that insurance companies may refuse to pay out in cases of loss because the school may be deemed as a ‘public area’ which invalidates some policies. Lockers are available to purchase on Wisepay for Years 7-11. Sixth form students can enquire about lockers with the Sixth Form Centre.

Nut Allergies

We have an increasing number of pupils in the school who have notified us of potential allergies. We have been asked to notify parents and would encourage you to avoid sending in products which contain nuts, including peanuts and or seeds, in their ingredients.

Use of mobile phones in school

As previously indicated, we do allow pupils to bring mobile phones into school. However, we have a strict policy on where and when pupils can use their phone. Phones are not permitted in the school building or the external eating areas between 8:30am and 3:30pm. They can only be used in lessons if a teacher specifically allows it.

Phones, TV and computer games

Parents are reminded of the immense benefits of modern technology for learning, for entertainment, for communication and for social interaction. These benefits bring with them potential pitfalls as well, and we address issues of e-safety routinely in school. We recommend the advice to be found on the internet at <https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers> for anyone wishing to learn more about teenagers and the safe use of new technologies in the home.

You are also urged to understand that, if you have provided your child with a mobile phone, you are legally responsible for the use and content of that phone. From time to time, our young people need help in making good decisions about what they view, share or download. It doesn’t help when our youngest pupils have access to communication apps that are not ‘open’ to their parents to view. *If your son isn’t comfortable letting you see all that he does on his phone, are you comfortable with him using it in your name?*

There is also very good evidence supporting parents who limit the time their children spend watching TV and gaming. A recent [meta-analysis](#) (including 58 studies from 23 countries) examining the relationship between overall screen time, specific screen-based activities, and academic performance found that *although* overall screen time is not related to children’s and teens’ academic achievement, the *type* of screen time is.

The research team in Spain found that **TV and video game time greater than two hours a day was associated with poorer academic achievement**, while internet and mobile phone time was not. In addition, the negative effects on academic performance were larger for teens than for children: with effect sizes as great as the equivalent of two GCSE grades.

Vehicles on site

Parents are reminded that bringing their vehicles onto the school site can represent a significant health and safety risk to pupils. It is also true that the site simply cannot accommodate any more vehicles than those already using it. Parents are also advised that their insurance may be invalid when driving on the school site. **Please arrange to park, drop off and collect your son/daughter at a safe distance from the school where it is legal to park. If you are visiting the site/reception during the school day, please always use the visitors' car park.**

Journeys to school

In the second week of term, we saw pupils setting a new record with almost 200 bikes in the school sheds. The case for pupils cycling to and from school is compelling, and in the last ten years **well over ½ million SHSB pupil journeys have been undertaken by bike**. Every bike on the road is one fewer motorised vehicle journey congesting the route. Our programme of lessons and activities makes this message clear, and seeks to dispel a range of myths. Cycling is safe, is healthy, is cheap, is a lifetime habit, is swift and cyclists make better drivers (BBC Radio 4 – facts & figures).

Indeed, cycling is never a waste of time – *medical evidence demonstrates that, on average, every hour spent cycling increases life expectancy by an hour!* It has been good to see the number of Year 7 boys already making the choice to cycle, and we hope more will do so in the weeks ahead (while the weather and evening light make it easier). The key is to plan and practise a route that is cycle-safe ... this may well be different from the bus or car route, and will, almost certainly, be quicker!

For a very small number of pupils, on some days, travel by car is the only practical option. Travel by car to school on a daily basis is clearly less healthy and responsible than other options: limiting the important development of independence in travel. *We were shocked, a few years ago, when – on the one occasion that the school had to close early – there were pupils, living within 2 miles of the school, who were unable to make their own way home!*



We would like to thank all those parent drivers who have been parking safely on the roads around the school. **However, parents are reminded that all these efforts, and the school's commitment to safe journeys for all pupils, are undermined if the road markings are not properly observed. It is illegal, and hazardous to park, wait, drop-off or pick-up in the 'School Keep Clear' zone – both on Prittlewell Chase, and Holeythick Lane.**

Finally – although we often hear superb examples of our pupils acting commendably (giving up seats, helping others in need, showing courtesy) on their journeys to and from school, occasionally we discover that some of our pupils don't reflect the same behaviour on the way home, as they do on the school site. **Please talk with your child about behaviour on the bus or train, if they travel by public transport, and ensure they understand that the same standards of behaviour apply whenever they are representing the school.** Pupils, and parents, have sometimes been surprised that our jurisdiction covers pupils' journey times and we will take appropriate action, including removing season tickets or even excluding from school, if that were ever to be necessary.

Yours sincerely

Robin M Bevan
Headteacher