

# 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



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Dear Parents,

At the start of the new academic year, I am writing with a number of items of school news that I hope are of interest. We will continue to use our social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to provide you with updates on significant events in the life of the school: please take your time to view these posts.

First, it is right to **congratulate all those students who received the results of public examinations** during the Summer holiday. Our results attracted a lot of local media interest, but it will not be until later in the term that we will discover whether – *once again* – we have the best A-level progress data of any local school!

- ✓ In the first year with all GCSEs now numerically graded, pupils secured over 1000 GCSEs at level 7 or above – the equivalent of the former A and A\* grades – more than ever before. Strong performances secured 273 of the demanding grade 9s – almost a fifth of all the results obtained.
- ✓ Twenty-three of our most consistent GCSE performers gained 10 or more A\* equivalent grades: 8 & 9. There were three remarkable individual achievements: grade 9s, the highest possible level, in every subject!
- ✓ At A-level (A2) it has been another very impressive year, with our largest ever entry for A-level. Almost 600 A-levels completed with more A\*-B grades than the school has ever secured. Almost half of all A2 results at A or A\* - 254 A/A\* grades in total!
- ✓ Seventy-four A\* grades have been awarded to our Year 13 students – one out of every seven of the grades obtained. Forty three students have achieved 3 or more grade As at A-level and five students with three or more A\*!

**We start the term fully staffed**, welcoming new appointees in a variety of roles. All new colleagues are warmly welcomed. Parents will have a particular interest in noting the newcomers in our teaching team: Mrs Ghir (Science), Mr Gowens (Business Studies), Miss Juan-Ramirez (Spanish), Mr Palmer (PE), Ms Shrimplin (Science), and Mrs Williams (English).

During the Summer holiday, we were delighted to receive confirmation of two significant awards granted to the school. Parents may well be familiar with the **NACE Challenge Award**: an internationally recognised quality mark awarded to schools that make outstanding provision for the most-able learners. Southend High School for Boys is the first school, anywhere in the world, to have secured this award for four consecutive periods.



Indeed, we have been invited to take a lead regionally, and nationally, in training and guiding other schools in this aspect of their curriculum design and delivery. It is a well-deserved accolade for the whole school community. A matter of a few days later, we were also notified that we are one of the first secondary schools in the country to secure the **Equalities Award**. This followed our submission of an extended portfolio evidencing the work we do to recognise and celebrate difference, whilst ensuring equality of opportunity, aspiration and treatment for all members of the school community irrespective of whatever characteristics may differentiate us, one from another.

These two awards superbly capture the twin threads of our school ethos: aspiration and values. It matters what we each set out to achieve, what we actually accomplish and, more importantly, how we conduct ourselves and what motivates our efforts.

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Finally, you will all know that schools across the country have faced very significant funding challenges in recent years. This school, along with many other similar institutions has seen its per-pupil funding reduced *in real terms* by 20% since 2012. The impact has been the equivalent of a £1m annual budget reduction. The school has managed to sustain outstanding provision and opportunities, by increasing pupil numbers – from 950 to 1300 – across the last five years, without any increase in staff. This has of course offset those budget challenges, but has led to increased class sizes and greater workload for all involved. **Schools and colleges have been desperate for a long-term funding settlement to recover this deficit and give an assurance of sufficient resources into the future.**

We are examining last Friday's announcement, by the Chancellor, of considerable additional funding for education: *the devil is in the detail*, and we are quite clear that a 'sticking-plaster' approach is ultimately inadequate. It looks as though, Southend High School for Boys will benefit – as will other schools in similar circumstances – from an uplift of about 4% over two years. This is welcome, but less than the rate at which our costs are rising. We would want to welcome the overdue recognition that school funding is a priority; we are grateful for the extra investment, but frustrated that the headlines mask a somewhat less rosy picture.

*When something isn't right, we encourage our pupils to speak out. It is only right, as the leader of the school community that I also reflect this principle in making appropriate and reasonable public demands of our politicians: school funding is not an optional aspect of public expenditure; it is the most fundamental of investments in the future of our society and economy.*

With the knowledge of extensive parental support, I will continue to speak out – as appropriate – on behalf of our community and the need to see all schools resourced sufficiently.

Robin M. Bevan  
Headteacher