

HOLYWELL SCHOOL

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
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ST ALBANS



*A Church of England School
providing a Values Based Education*

Update Letter - 3rd October 2023

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I hope that this update letter finds you all well. I'm stuck at home at the moment with a dose of Covid and finding myself with a little window of time to reflect on the start of the year!

Our value of the month for October is '**Thankfulness**' and I am ever thankful for the hard work and support of students and staff at Holywell – as Ofsted commented, we are “a school with values rooted in [our] Christian ethos” where “[students] are welcoming and friendly. They take on responsibilities that make their environment and community richer and more rewarding.”



Staff and students have worked hard since September. Year 5 have settled in well and they are getting accustomed to all of our routines and practices. For the first week, they met in the playground and were guided to their lessons and classrooms by their teachers. They have now

become confident in knowing where the different classrooms are and make their own way to lessons. They have tackled their lessons with enthusiasm and interest and I'm sure they are going to be great assets to Holywell School.



Year 6 have made a good start to their SATs year and were the first year group to have an off-site experience, going to the wonderful Wrest Park. Wrest Park is the focus of their first English unit of work on narrative writing. Students research

and write a story based in World War 1 with the first section concluding with their soldier being wounded and transported to Wrest Park; Wrest Park was used as a field hospital during the First World War and the second part of the students' narratives, starts with the soldier waking up in the beautiful surroundings of the mansion. The visit enabled students to do some situational research for their writing.



Headteacher: Mr MG Simpson MA, NPQH

Deputy Headteacher: Mr S Van Der Merwe – Deputy Headteacher: Miss A Stewart – Deputy Headteacher: Miss A Craddock

Designated Safeguarding Leads: Miss A Stewart & Mrs J Johnson

Senior Leaders: Mr M Eames & Mrs J French – SENDCo: Miss A Stepney

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Students even had the opportunity to try on some actual uniforms and they were all amazed at how heavy the jackets were. They explored the grounds and imagined how their soldier would feel in this stark contrast to the horror and filth of the trenches.



Students also had three Art challenges while they were at Wrest Park – sketching, painting and being inspired by the site-specific, land art created by the artist Andy Goldsworthy.

... and the reason for the appearance of the number



50 is that, this year, Holywell is 50 years



old! The school was built in stages and opened on 1st September, 1973 as a Church of England Middle School in the Diocese of St Albans.

We are planning a day of 50th anniversary celebrations and activities on Friday, 20th October

for students. This will include:

- a) Our annual sponsored walk around Marston Thrift
- b) A year-group celebration with Cake and Squash
- c) A whole-school Art project leading to a special 50th anniversary Art installation
- d) A special assembly to commemorate Holywell over the years

If parents / grandparents have any photographs or reminiscences of Holywell – especially during those first few years, please email your pictures and experiences to Miss Stewart via the school email (school@holywellschool.co.uk). We are hoping to have more of a community event later in the year.

Communication and Tutor Evening: Wednesday, 11th October (4.00pm – 7.00pm)

As part of our overall communication opportunities with families, we have the first in a series of formal opportunities to find out how students are doing in school. Next Wednesday, we have an opportunity for families to meet with students' form tutors for a 5-minute, pastoral check-in. This will be held face-to-face in school and you will be invited to make appointments to meet with your child's form tutor. Later in the year, there will be a subject-based consultation evening where parents/carers will have the opportunity to talk with subject teachers about how students are progressing. There will also be a summative report with written details of what students have achieved and areas on which they could usefully work. The dates and times of these will be published in advance. It is likely that the subject consultations will be done remotely via our SchoolCloud video appointment system – this seems to be the most convenient and time-efficient way of organising these meetings for both families and staff.

We always welcome communication from families and we encourage you to contact us if there is ever anything which will be helpful in supporting students in school. As we are a large school, we have a system of communication and a number of adults to help with inquiries. The main point of contact will be the form tutor. Form tutors love to hear about student successes and also anything that may be of significance to the wellbeing of the student. After that, the Head of Year will be the next 'port of call' for inquiries. For anything related to safeguarding, please contact one of our safeguarding leads – Miss Stewart or Mrs Johnson. Senior Leaders, Deputy Headteachers and myself as Headteacher will get involved with more serious incidents which are referred to us by Heads of Year. If you need to come into school to speak to a member of staff, please make an appointment. All staff have teaching commitments and we are not able to guarantee someone will be available if you just arrive in school. To avoid disappointment, please arrange a time to meet ahead of your visit.

In all matters of communication, we insist on open, respectful and polite communications. We appreciate that sometimes, situations are challenging and emotional, however, shouting at members of staff, rude, aggressive behaviour or threatening language is not acceptable. We all have the welfare and best interests of all of our students at the heart of everything we do and we appreciate communication which is kind, direct and focussed on peaceful problem-solving. We will try to help with anything of which we are made aware, within the resources and scope we have. Please see the Parental Behaviour Policy for further details (<https://holywellschool.co.uk/policies/>).



OpenView
Education
TRAINING THROUGH THEATRE

APPS AND THEIR AGE RATINGS

13+		16+	
Facebook	Snapchat	WhatsApp	
Instagram	Twitter		
TikTok	Kik	Sarahah	MeetMe
YouNow	Yubo	YOLO	LiveMe
House Party	Monkey		

One area in which families can really help is with regard to social media and out-of-school communication via apps such as WhatsApp, SnapChat, TikTok, Instagram, etc. Most Holywell students should not have access to these apps as, according to the terms of service for the various apps, users must be 13 – NB. for WhatsApp, users should be at least 16. In spite of the work we have done with students in school, there have been many instances of inappropriate conversations with disrespectful and unkind comments. This has led to distress and upset. We would respectfully request that parents and carers monitor the use of phones and apps

outside of school. It is very difficult for us to intervene in matters outside of school and we recommend reporting any abuse via the app-provider or via the UK Safer Internet Centre (<https://saferinternet.org.uk/>).



Our sporting teams have had a great start to the term and, even when they did not win their fixtures, they all have shown the great Holywell spirit of generosity, fair play and sporting character.

Our Year 8 students are in the process of applying for various roles of responsibility – including our most coveted Sports Captain and House Captain positions. We have had lots of well-thought out and committed applications. Results and outcomes will be shared soon!

We have some opportunities for you as parents/carers too! There are some Parent/Carer drop-ins – the first one being next Thursday with a workshop on ‘Parenting Therapeutically’. This is a great way for parents to network and share experiences – please contact Mrs Johnson if you are interested.

**HOLYWELL SCHOOL
PARENT/CARER DROP IN**

Parent/Carer Coffee Mornings! 9.20am start.	Autumn Term Dates for the diary: Tuesday 10th October Tuesday 14th November Tuesday 19th December
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**TUESDAY 10TH OCTOBER
9.20AM - 10.40AM**

Autumn Term:
FEATURING SPECIAL GUEST: For a brief workshop Session (9.45am)
Parenting Therapeutically
 with Chloe Lovell: Fully Qualified Play Therapist

www.clearrivertherapy.com

To book your place contact Mrs Johnson
jjohnson@holywellschool.co.uk

The PTFA and Mr Simpson invite you to the

HOLYWELL PTFA

Annual general meeting

Monday
9th October 2023
7pm onwards
In the Holywell school library

Your support and time would be greatly appreciated.

Without the support of parents, guardians, family and friends we would not be able to put on the events and raise the funds that we need.

We have a friendly team and would like to welcome more members and helpers.

Our AGM is open to all.
 Feel free to join us and get more information.

If you can't attend, but would like to be involved, please get in touch via ptfa@holywellschool.co.uk

The PTFA have their AGM next Monday (9th October at 7.00pm in the school library). Everyone is welcome – especially if you are interested in getting involved.

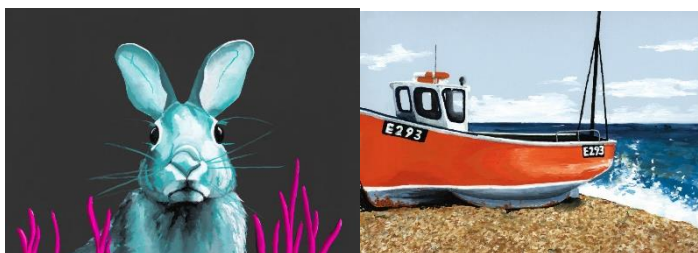
We also have a vacancy for Parent Governor – watch out for full details coming soon.



... and finally,

In our recent assemblies, we have all been inspired by the real-life story of Henry Fraser – Henry is a British artist and motivational speaker. He was 17 years old when he became paralysed from the shoulders down after dislocating his neck in 2009 in a swimming accident while on holiday. He has conquered unimaginable difficulty to embrace the life in his new way of living. His book ‘The Little Big Things’ includes a section on ‘Being Grateful’ in which he recognises that the little things we take for granted mean so much – the taste of water when you’ve been fed by tubes for weeks, breathing without the aid of a ventilator, the hugs of family and friends, the kind words of strangers and the sun on your face. Henry says that “Being thankful and grateful is not about comparing what we have to others. It’s about opening our eyes and looking at all the little things that we might take for granted; practising thankfulness is one of the most enhancing things we can do.” This will be our challenge and our particular focus in October.

Be Grateful



Everyday is a good day



Best wishes
 Mike Simpson
 Headteacher