



Huxlow Academy

Ambition • Respect • Pride

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6th February 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

At this time of year we take time to review our School Improvement Plan and consider what has been achieved, and what our next actions will be. As I reflect on the last two years, I feel it is important to recognise the level of action and change that our staff and students have been a part of and to appreciate how far we have come. I thought it might be interesting for you to similarly look back on what has been achieved.

Behaviour and attendance - We have worked hard on our school culture and the values and attributes that underpin The Huxlow Way. This has become the central plank underpinning the actions we take. We have expanded our student support team, recruiting greater capacity in our family support workers, behaviour mentors and recently appointed a new attendance officer who will work with parents and students to support students into school and ultimately the lessons that will enable learning and success. Changes have also been made in how we communicate and track behaviour and attendance through Go4Schools. The SEND team continues to expand and the Hub, and the staff in it, are key to supporting students struggling day to day. The relocation of our Heads of Year, behaviour and attendance teams to one area has also improved the communication and actions taken to support students.

Personal development - A key area of improvement that we have been focussing on has been to develop our student's character, as well as their academic performance. We continue to pursue the Character schools kitemark with action on many fronts. These include the broadening of student leadership opportunities. The student leaders have become a hugely important part of the whole school leadership programme and it was very impressive to see their passion and confidence at the recent Year 9 Options evening. We have totally revamped the PSHE curriculum and its delivery, including adjusting the timetable. Linking into assemblies, our weekly Huxlow News, and focussing on aspects identified through student voice and community issues it has clear links to our values and the Huxlow Way. Student feedback on this development has been overwhelmingly positive.

We have also rolled out a whole new rewards system to recognise attendance and positive behaviours through the awarding of House Points linked to our values. House competitions are now a regular weekly feature of the school and the commitment of many students to earning points towards the House Cup presented at the end of the year is clear. Other developments to reward students for displaying The Huxlow Way include the presenting of values tokens to students during lunch and breaks, the new Prom Passports in Year 11 and our honours awards and roll of honour boards in the hall.



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To complement these actions we have enhanced our careers programme through a focus on ensuring that students develop knowledge throughout their time to understand the importance of skills and the different pathways that they have on offer to them. A developed Careers programme and opportunities to experience employers, higher education providers and talks from apprenticeships and apprentices has been built into the programme at all levels.

Curriculum and learning - The staff have worked hard on developing the Huxlow approach to teaching and learning based on the latest research on effective practice, The PREMADE lessons structure, including common starter activities and the sharing of the intention of each phase of the lesson with students is having a positive impact on how students engage and learn. This year we are also supporting Year 9 to take their option choices following the decision to return to a two year Key Stage 4 programme in line with the vast majority of other schools. This change has also enabled our staff to review the full subject curriculums taught at both Key stage 3 and 4. They have rewritten their curriculums to ensure they are fully meeting the national curriculum requirements, and also offering opportunities to introduce new aspects to courses that fit our local context and better prepare students for life in modern Britain.

Closer monitoring of progress and improved data systems are allowing staff to respond and fine tune their actions where gaps are identified, the expectations of students are now clear and this has been apparent in Year 11 exam preparations. Raising standards of teaching, and our students' ability to access and succeed across the school, continues to be a key area to embed to ensure success. The support being provided by our SEND and Pupil Premium teams have been key in helping students arrive in lessons ready to learn and be successful.

School Site - We have been working hard to improve the school's building and infrastructure. Behind the scenes our IT team is about to embark on a full infrastructure upgrade to improve reliability and quality of the network. This will then allow us to further develop the use of technology to enhance learning in lessons.

Many physical improvements have been completed, such as reroofing schemes, the arrival of the canopy and food kiosk in the Quad, resurfacing work to provide safer and wider areas for students to use at social times and in PE lessons, the introduction of Aspens as our catering provider has also been a positive development that is now widening the range of hot meals available. I am excited that this week we are holding meetings with architects, Trust advisers, County colleagues and politicians to set out the plans and to gain support for further improvements that we are pursuing These include a desire for a 4G football pitch and extra changing rooms, and the refurbishment of key areas of the school such as Food Technology and our Science labs. Please be reassured that we are pushing hard to gain the funding and support we require to achieve these upgrades as soon as possible. It is no more than our students and staff deserve.



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Ambition • Respect • Pride

Leadership and staffing- Over the last two years we have completely restructured and widened the school's leadership roles and capacity. New roles, with clear remits and a more focussed drive have allowed many of the developments outlined above to be achieved at speed. The middle leadership of the school is the engine room of the school and I would like to thank all of our Heads of Year and Heads of Departments for the hard work they have put in to drive these changes and ensuring an ever improving quality of support and curriculum experience for our students. This key work will continue and evolve as new opportunities and challenges arise. Many staff have been open to taking on new leadership opportunities to support this work, such as our SYCOL school improvement programme leads, and supporting and coaching colleagues to develop teaching practices. The move into the Tove Learning Trust has particularly enhanced the support and advice available to our leaders, and many developments specific to subjects and other areas of the school have been introduced as a result.

Alongside all of these changes we have been navigating the move of the 6th form to a two school model. We are excited that this tighter and more focussed model will bring many benefits to how we collaborate with our partners at Rushden Academy and the experience our students receive.

I am sure you can recognise that it has been a very busy couple of years for our Academy. I really appreciate that times of change can be unsettling and bring challenges to us all. This is only deepened by the national teacher recruitment and retention crisis that is impacting schools across the country. I am proud that some of our staff have moved to new opportunities and promotions on the back of the work they have been doing at Huxlow and we continue to take every action possible to recruit quality staff to work with your children,

Our staff and students, with your valued support, have embraced these recent wide-ranging changes and continue to be passionately committed to taking Huxlow Academy forward through the next phase of our improvement programmes. It is such a privilege to lead such a committed group of staff and to work with them every day. Seeing their care, hard work and tenacity is humbling. Receiving your positive feedback that can be shared with them is always welcome as working in education is definitely not a career choice for someone looking for an easy life! Whilst we may not always get it right, I am absolutely clear that it is not for the lack of effort, care and passion. Your support and kindness is essential in ensuring that our staff retain the energy required to educate and support your children every day.

As ever, I thank you wholeheartedly for the support that you give us.

I will ask Linda Brooks the Chair of the Academy Improvement Board to share with you her view of our progress in my next letter.



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In other recent news: External speakers visited us last week and we believe they play an invaluable role in educating our young people on issues outside of our school walls. Basketball Northants along with Anna Letts visited to deliver workshops to our Year 9 students. They combined the concept of sport with a workshop on knife crime to educate our young people on the dangers of this growing societal concern. Whilst students participated in an educational workshop on knife crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour, others took part in a more active session with professional basketball player Andre Arissol, where the focus was on taking up sport and making better life choices, rather than becoming involved in criminal and negative behaviour.

I am pleased to say that the Year 11 rose to the challenge of ensuring they improved their uniform last week. They looked very smart and proud in their full uniform and have returned to the correct uniform and PE kit again when it is allowed. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all students and parents that girls should not be wearing tube skirts as these are not a part of our uniform policy.

Finally, I am very proud to let you know that both of our girls' Futsal teams have been triumphant in the recent District tournaments. Miss Donald and the teams were beaming as they returned with the silverware for both Year 7 and 8, and the Year 9 and 10 competitions and they now progress to the Winter School Games where they will compete against the best schools from across the County. Bravo, Team Huxlow!

Kind regards

Mr P Letch
Headteacher