



Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s),

### **Re: Reflections and Updates for Parents, Carers and Families**

This has been a very positive start to the academic year. On the whole Year 7 and Year 12 have settled in well. Years 11 and 13 are beginning to work hard as they prepare for their final examination. Years 8, 9 and 10 have begun to embark on their specifications and schemes of work for the year as well as considering extra-curricular provision. There are so many clubs and events for students to participate in, we urge you to encourage your child to find out more and join in if they are not involved already. We want our students to develop great confidence, personal resilience and compassion for themselves and each other.

This half term, we have celebrated a range of trips and events in School. In September and October, we warmly opened our doors to prospective parents and families and welcomed them to two successful Open Evenings. A huge thank you to our students; over 100 students volunteered to assist on both these evenings. We celebrated our Prize Giving Evening highlighting the achievements from last summer's GCSE and A Level examination results. We have continued to support this year's Year 11 who participated in a motivational workshop with an external speaker (namely, Action Jackson). Our caterers Olive Dining have also enabled us to enjoy more international cuisine to celebrate Black History Month. The Physical Education Department hosted 12 Primary Schools who were able to use our sporting facilities. There have been a range of trips and visits amongst the year groups and we look forward to next half term..

### **Upcoming Festivals**

Next week, is a break from timetabled lessons in School and we will enjoy our half term break. As we draw closer to the break, this winter, some of our families have already celebrated Navratri which is the nine-day dance festival in Hinduism.

We wish a very prosperous and **Happy Diwali** to all students, parents, carers, families, staff and governors. This festival of light is celebrated by many people from the Hindu and Sikh communities. Some Jain families also celebrate Diwali. In the Hindu community, Diwali is celebrated over five days between 21<sup>st</sup> October to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and by many of our Sikh families on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The exact dates change each year and are determined by the position of the moon, but it usually falls between October and November.

This festival is also a celebration of good triumphing over evil, and different legends based on this theme are associated with Diwali. In Northern India, Hindus celebrate the return of the deities (Hindu Gods) Lord Rama and Sita to the city of Ayodhya, after defeating the evil king Ravana. In the region of Bengal, people worship the Goddess Kali, the destroyer of evil forces, during Diwali. And in Nepal, people celebrate Lord Krishna's victory over the wicked king Narakaasura. For some people, Diwali honours the Hindu goddess of wealth, Lakshmi. The lights and lamps are said to help Lakshmi find her way into peoples' homes, bringing prosperity in the year to come.

The **Harvest Festival** is also celebrated this half term. This festival celebrates the time of year when crops have been gathered from the field and people can reflect on the food that they have. It dates back to ancient Britain when people relied on crops for food and farmers would give thanks for a good harvest. As a community, we are mindful of some of the difficulties and challenges that our families face.

Here in the UK, the harvest festival does not have an official public holiday date. Instead, it is usually celebrated on the Sunday nearest to the harvest moon, which is the full moon that occurs nearest to the Autumn equinox, usually towards the end of September.



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After half term, there will be **further family celebrations** of Halloween and Guy Fawkes. I am mindful that there are festivals and events that some of us recognise and celebrate more than others. If you are celebrating other renown festivals from Japan, Brazil or any other part of the world over half term, I really hope that you have a wonderful time and can spend quality time with your friends and family.

### **Attendance & Punctuality**

Having spoken to a number of students, children enjoy coming to School. Attendance is vital and establishing good attendance patterns from an early age can help children later on in life. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate why attending School every day is important for our whole community.

In our experience and some research suggests that pupils who attend school more regularly achieve better outcomes in their examinations (such as GCSE) than those with poor or inconsistent attendance. In addition to missing academic work, children will also miss out on the social aspect of School. This, especially in the first few years of education, can affect children's ability to make and maintain positive friendships and relationships. Arriving at School on time is vital. Arriving late at School can be disruptive for your child, the teacher and other children in the class. We request that you continue to support your children as they organise their books and bags for the next day as well as leaving plenty of time for travel to School each morning.

Colleges, universities, apprenticeship schemes and prospective employers will want someone reliable. Having a secure punctuality and attendance record demonstrates reliability and may enhance chances of success and fulfilment after education.

In some rare occasions and in exceptional circumstances, we understand that some children will miss School due to ill health or personal challenges. The School encourages you to talk to your child's Form Tutor and Head of Year for any concerns. We will continue to work with families where external support is required (such as mentoring or counselling). If regular attendance patterns are not established, research has indicated that some young people who regularly miss School for no valid reason may be drawn into anti-social or disruptive behaviour. If you are having difficulty in getting your child to School, please contact your child's Head of Year in the first instance.

### **Safeguarding**

As a School, we have a duty of care to respond robustly to poor or challenging behaviour to ensure we safeguard the learning of students and create an environment where the whole community feels safe and able to learn. Whilst we accept responsibility for the management of behaviour while pupils are in the School, responsibility for that behaviour also rests with the pupil and parents/carers. Over the half term, please be mindful of what your children are doing in their spare time. The use of social media and technology sensibly and respectfully continues to be an important aspect of teaching young people about how to learn and grow in a safe environment.

When you accepted a place here at The Heathland School for your child you agreed to our values and ethos. Central to our mission statement is our firm belief that students learn best within a secure, well-disciplined learning environment that provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Please continue to engage with what your child is learning at School.

We wish you an enjoyable and restful half term break with your friends and family. The children are expected to return to School on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs S. Huxley  
**Headteacher**