

September 2026

Dear Parent/Carer



It has been a pleasure to welcome pupils back to Hawarden High School following the summer break. The new academic year has begun very positively, and I have been particularly pleased with the way our new Year 7 and sixth form students have settled into school life. Across the school, pupils have returned looking smart, well prepared and ready to learn, and I am grateful to parents and carers for your support in helping us establish such a purposeful start to the year.

I am grateful to you for reading the entirety of this letter. Whilst I appreciate that it is lengthy, it provides a number of useful updates and reminders for the year ahead.

The beginning of this academic year marks an important point in the school's continued development. As you will know, our Estyn inspection took place during the spring term, with the report published in May. Inspectors recognised many important strengths at Hawarden High, including our inclusive and welcoming ethos, the quality of pastoral care, the breadth of opportunities available to pupils and the support provided for pupils and families facing disadvantage.

The report also identified three areas in which we need to improve further: the consistency and impact of teaching; pupils' attendance and engagement; and the development of Welsh language and culture across the school. These now form the basis of our improvement work for 2026–27.

Our priorities this year are therefore deliberately straightforward: ensuring consistently strong learning in every classroom; developing pupils' knowledge, skills and use of Cymraeg; and strengthening engagement, attendance and pupils' sense of belonging. We have made a number of changes to leadership and staffing to support this work, including additional specialist leadership for teaching, inclusion, engagement and Cymraeg, alongside further investment in our Welsh provision.

For parents and carers, the underlying message is a simple one: we want every pupil to attend regularly, behave well, participate fully and experience teaching that enables them to succeed.

Attendance and punctuality

Regular attendance is one of the strongest foundations for successful learning. Even relatively small amounts of absence accumulate quickly and can make it increasingly difficult for pupils to keep pace with their learning. Evidence continues to demonstrate a significant correlation between absence during the early weeks of the school year and persistent absence later in the academic year.

In addition to its impact on academic achievement, regular attendance plays a crucial role in supporting pupils' social and emotional development. The beginning of the academic year is a particularly important period during which friendship groups are established, classroom relationships are developed and pupils become familiar with new routines and expectations. Absence during these formative weeks can result in pupils missing valuable opportunities to strengthen social connections and integrate fully into school life. Such disruption may affect confidence, engagement and a pupil's overall sense of belonging, potentially creating barriers to both learning and wellbeing.

Our own GCSE results from 2026 demonstrate very clearly the relationship between attendance and achievement:

- Of pupils whose attendance was **95% or better**, more than **three quarters (77%)** achieved at least five GCSE grades at A*–C.
- Where attendance was between **80% and 90%**, this fell to **63%**.
- Among pupils whose attendance fell **below 80%**, only **7%** achieved five A*–C grades.

Put another way, of the 27 pupils in our 2026 Year 11 cohort whose attendance was below 80%, only two achieved this benchmark. The impact of sustained absence on pupils' eventual outcomes is therefore stark.

We will consequently be placing an even greater emphasis on attendance this year and working closely with pupils and families where attendance begins to cause concern. We recognise, of course, that children will sometimes be genuinely unwell and that some circumstances are unavoidable. Where difficulties arise, we would much rather work with families early to identify appropriate support than allow problems to become established.

Reporting a pupil absence

If your child is unable to attend school, please inform us **as soon as possible on the morning of the absence** by one of the following methods:

- **Telephone:** Call the main school line on **01244 526400** and select the appropriate option to report an absence.
- **Email:** Send an email to hhmail@hawardenhigh.flintshire.sch.uk.

To help us maintain accurate records, please clearly state your child's **full name, form group and the reason for the absence**.

Following morning registration, the school will endeavour to send an absence alert if your child has not been registered as present and we do not have a reason for their absence.

Parents and carers are reminded that holidays taken during term time will not normally be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Punctuality is also very important. Pupils should arrive on site in sufficient time to be ready for registration and the start of the school day.

Staffing

I am pleased to be able to welcome a number of new staff to the school following departures at the end of last academic year. I am sure you will join me in welcoming them to the school community:

- Mrs N. Bowker, Head of History
- Miss B. Coppack, Cover Supervisor
- Mrs N. Dyas, Teacher of Welsh
- Mr R. Eboigbe, Teacher of Maths
- Mrs L. Evans, Teacher of Welsh
- Mrs G. Goodchild, Lead Practitioner: Cymraeg
- Mrs S. Welsh-Clark, Learning Support Assistant
- Mr J. Woodmansee, Teacher of Science

Learning and the curriculum

One of our central priorities this year is to ensure that pupils experience consistently purposeful and challenging learning. Staff have already begun work this term focusing on classroom expectations, effective questioning, appropriate levels of challenge and ensuring that pupils are active participants in their learning.

Parental support at home also makes a significant difference to pupils' learning and wellbeing. Talking with your child about what they are learning, encouraging good routines for homework and revision and showing an interest in the work they are completing can help to build confidence and effective study habits.

Further ideas, guidance and resources for families can be found on our dedicated [curriculum support page](#). We will continue to communicate directly with parents of examination groups throughout the year about revision, examinations and other important milestones. Please look out for those emails.

ePraise

We continue to use ePraise as an important way of recognising pupils' achievements and helping families to stay informed about school life. Parents and carers are encouraged to access their ePraise account regularly, where you can view information relating to your child, including House Points and other rewards they have received.

House Points are awarded throughout the school day to recognise positive contributions, effort, achievement and participation in wider school life. Checking ePraise provides a useful opportunity to celebrate these successes at home and to talk to your child about how they are getting on in school.

If you have not yet accessed your parent account, or are experiencing difficulty logging in, please contact the school and we will be happy to assist.

Cymraeg and our Welsh identity

Developing pupils' confidence in using Cymraeg and strengthening the Welsh dimension of school life is another important priority this year.

We have strengthened our Welsh department and leadership capacity and will be creating more opportunities for pupils to hear, speak and use Welsh both within lessons and as part of wider school life. This is not simply the responsibility of the Welsh department: we want Cymraeg and our sense of Welsh identity to become increasingly visible across the whole school.

We look forward to sharing more of this work with families during the year.

Behaviour, standards and belonging

Our expectations of pupils remain high. Good behaviour, respectful relationships and consistent routines create the conditions in which everyone can learn successfully.

We also want pupils to feel that they belong to Hawarden High and that there are opportunities beyond the classroom through which they can develop their talents and interests.

Societies and clubs

We encourage all pupils to take part in extracurricular activities wherever possible. They provide valuable opportunities to develop new skills, make friends, pursue personal interests and become more involved in school life. There really is something for everyone, ranging from sport and performing arts to activities such as Dungeons & Dragons, Cheerleading, Dodgeball and Chess.

The full and regularly updated extracurricular timetable is available through the school [website](#).

Support with school costs and uniform

We recognise that the current financial climate can make purchasing school uniform and other essentials difficult for some families. If this is the case, please contact Student Support. We can provide direct assistance in some circumstances and advise families about other sources of support.

Families may also be eligible for the Welsh Government [School Essentials Grant](#).

As a reminder, our **Uniform Exchange** is available to all parents and carers, offering families the opportunity either to donate or obtain school uniform.

We welcome donations of good-quality jumpers, shirts, ties and PE kit. If your child has outgrown any of these items, please drop them at the School Office so that we can maintain a good supply for families who may need them. You do **not** need to donate items in order to use the service. All families are welcome to request uniform at any time, and the exchange is completely confidential.

If you would like to request specific items, please complete our [online Uniform Exchange form](#). We will contact you by email when your order is ready for collection.

You should also have received information from us regarding **Free School Meals**. Further details about eligibility and applications can be found through the [Flintshire County Council website](#).

Welsh Water Financial Support

We would like to make parents and carers aware of financial support available through Welsh Water for customers who are receiving eligible means-tested or disability-related benefits. Depending on individual circumstances, households may be able to access support which could reduce their annual water bill by up to £300. Families who feel they may be eligible are encouraged to visit dwrcymru.com/extrahelp to find out more about the assistance available and how to apply.

Examination group information evenings

We have arranged information sessions for parents and carers of pupils in our examination groups. These evenings are intended to explain the expectations for the year ahead and provide practical advice about how families can best support pupils as they prepare for examinations.

At the Year 10 and Year 11 events, parents will hear from the Deputy Headteacher, Mr Boyd, alongside Curriculum Leaders for English, Maths and Science. Presentations will include revision strategies, subject-specific guidance and an overview of important examination timelines.

Both the Year 10 and Year 11 sessions will take place on **Thursday, 1 October**. Further details, including session times for each year group, will be communicated to parents and carers in due course via email.

Open Evening

This term we will hold our annual **Open Evening** for prospective pupils and parents. These events take place on:

Thursday 8th October – from 6.00pm

This occasion is an important opportunity to showcase our school, and many of our pupils will be directly involved in welcoming visitors and supporting activities. Further details can be found [here](#).

Health and wellbeing

As part of our wider commitment to pupils' wellbeing, I would also like to draw your attention to information provided by **Public Health Wales** regarding routine vaccinations for children and young people.

This includes information relating to flu, HPV, MenACWY and the teenage booster, together with details of eligibility, catch-up programmes and further guidance.

Families can find the most up-to-date information on the [Public Health Wales school-age children and young people pages](#).

Traffic, parking and pupil safety

The beginning and end of the school day remain exceptionally busy around The Highway, and I would again ask parents and carers to help us keep pupils safe.

Please avoid driving onto the school site at the beginning or end of the school day unless this is necessary. Where vehicle access is required, please follow the directions of staff and ensure that entrances, the bus bay and surrounding roads remain clear.

Parents collecting or dropping off pupils should park legally and considerately and must not stop on yellow lines, zig-zag markings or in ways which obstruct local residents. The car park at the Gladstone playing fields also provides an alternative location for drop-off and collection.

Pupils should use the designated pedestrian entrances and footpaths rather than walking through vehicle access areas.

Please also remind your child to take particular care when using the relatively new pedestrian crossing on The Highway near Upper Aston Hall Lane. Pupils should never assume that an approaching vehicle has seen them or will stop and should check carefully before crossing.

We have witnessed a number of vehicles driving straight through the crossing despite children waiting to cross, and I have therefore raised this matter directly with Flintshire County Council and North Wales Police.

Working in partnership

As ever, we greatly value the partnership between school and home. Your role in supporting high standards of attendance, behaviour, uniform, homework and readiness to learn makes a real difference, and I am grateful for your continued commitment.

There will inevitably be occasions during a school year when parents need to contact us. In most cases, the quickest route to resolving an issue is through your child's form tutor or Head of House, who can be contacted via the School Office at hhmail@hawardenhigh.flintshire.sch.uk.

Members of staff will aim to make contact with you within two working days to discuss any concerns that you have. For urgent family emergencies or safeguarding and welfare issues, please telephone the School Office, who will escalate your concerns on your behalf.

Careers Wales

Careers Wales will be hosting a series of online information evenings for parents and carers offering them the opportunity to discuss their child's future with a qualified Careers Adviser. This will be an opportunity for parents and carers to find out how they can support their child in making informed decisions about their future. The event offers an opportunity to book a 20-minute Microsoft Teams appointment and will be available between 4.00pm and 7.00pm and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The next online parent/carer evening will be held on **30 September 2026** for parents and carers of young people in Year 12 and Year 13. Please book [here](#).

Could you foster a child in Flintshire?

Foster Wales Flintshire is looking for caring, supportive families who can provide a safe and loving home for children and young people in our local community. Foster families of all kinds can make a real difference, helping local children feel safe, loved and supported while building better futures. If you would like to find out more about fostering, please contact 01352 701965 or visit flintshire.fosterwales.gov.wales

Looking ahead

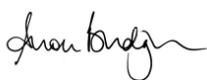
Key dates for the year can be found in the 2026–27 [pupil calendar](#) on our website, and I would encourage families to refer to this regularly. Our website will also continue to provide school policies, curriculum information, extracurricular opportunities and details of forthcoming events.

There is much to look forward to during 2026–27. Alongside our improvement priorities, we remain determined to protect the things that make Hawarden High distinctive: a broad curriculum, strong pastoral support, extensive opportunities beyond the classroom and a school community in which young people are known, supported and encouraged to succeed.

We look forward to building on the strong start already made this term and ensuring a productive and successful year for all pupils.

Thank you, as always, for your support. I look forward to working with you throughout the year.

Yours sincerely



Mr. S. Budgen
Headteacher