



4th October 2024

Dear parents and carers,

I wanted to write to you at the end of a very busy start to term. In the last four weeks, we have packed in a drama trip to the Bristol Old Vic, many successful sports fixtures, and so many auditions for our school play that we had to hold them across extra days. It's been brilliant to see so many students get involved in so many different clubs and activities.

One particular highlight was the MacMillan Coffee morning last Friday. The event was organised by our Sixth Formers, who raised over £800 for charity: a terrific accomplishment. I'm so pleased we have a Sixth Form here at JMHS, and I am delighted to see our students embracing the opportunity to be leaders in school.

I thought of this charity work as I delivered assemblies this week to Years 7-9 on the theme of kindness. I explained to the students that their kind words and deeds ripple through the people around them and have big consequences. Even something as simple as saying 'good morning' or holding a door open matters a lot. We are very lucky to have students who demonstrate such acts of kindness many times each and every single day.

Parental communication survey

When I last wrote to you, I invited you all to visit the school and to meet with me, and I was pleased that so many – 138 – were able to do so. These events have started and it has been a real pleasure to meet some families and show them around the school. I appreciate that this is still only a relatively small proportion of our families and I therefore wanted to ask you all for your views on some key topics – mainly regarding the way we communicate with you, including our approach to parents' evenings, which are still mainly remote following the pandemic.

Can I please therefore ask you to take two minutes to fill in the survey, asking what sort of format for communication and parents' evenings you would prefer:

Link available by emailing admin@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk

In the meantime, if you did want to attend one of the remaining 'Meet the Headteacher' events, please RSVP [on this form](#). We have events on Monday 7th October at 6.00pm, Tuesday 15th October at 7.00pm and Thursday 17th October at 10.00am, with the latter including an optional tour of the school. You are all welcome but we need to know numbers so we can make sure we have enough space.

Friends of JMHS

You will also see on the survey an invitation for you to join our Parent-Teacher Association, the Friends of John Masefield High School (FJMHS). Like almost every school, our funding doesn't allow us to buy all of the things we would like to for our children. The FJMHS help us raise funds to close this gap. For example, the FJMHS helped us to renovate one room over the summer and turn it into The Haven: a calm and quiet space for children at break and lunch time, and a space where we can support students with their mental health for the rest of the day. This is an incredible resource for our children, and is entirely down to the kind support of the Friends and the community. If you can spare some time to help with our Friends, we would be most grateful.

Links with employers

Finally, on the same survey, I have asked if anybody who is part of, or connected to, local employers or businesses and who would be interested in speaking to some of our students, leaves their details with us. As you can imagine, we have students with an incredibly wide range of interests and ambitions, and we are keen for them to have a chance to hear from anybody who is already in an industry or jobs that they would like to work within.

Donations of wood

Another, slightly less obvious, way to help us is by donations of wood: our DT department are always looking for these, for students to use in their projects. This would be especially useful for our GCSE students. We are very keen for students to understand the importance to recycle and reuse materials to reduce our impact on the environment and to minimise our reliance on bought materials. If you feel you have anything you could donate we would be very appreciative. Please bring any materials to reception and we will organise for this to be brought to the workshops, or alternatively email bethan.woolley@jmhs.hereford.sch.uk.

Floods

I did not expect my first month as Headteacher at JMHS to include flooding of the school even though, being from Tewkesbury, I am very used to floods. As I said when I wrote to you over that weekend, we were incredibly fortunate to have a staff team who went above and beyond and worked well into Friday evening and over the weekend to make sure the site was safe to use on the Monday.

At that time, all our efforts were directed at ensuring the children's learning experience was protected. Now we have had more time to assess the situation, I can tell you that, unfortunately, we suffered just under £50,000 worth of damage in the storm. It could have been a lot worse. The spaces that sustained the most damage are the exact same spaces that are least used by the students, and many of our children will not be aware that we have had to pull up flooring in the least-used corners of the sports centre, and on the top floor of the IT and business block. The most noticeable damage, from the students' point of view, will be the closures to some of our toilets because of the impact of the floods on the drainage system. We already have had contractors on site to address this, and they are now back open – I'm grateful to the children for their patience. Most remaining repairs will take place over the October half term. Insurance will cover most of our bills and, though we are still facing costs of around £5,000, I feel that in the circumstances we have been fortunate.

I am aware that just about everybody reading this endured the exact same storm and some of you may have had difficult weeks of your own in the aftermath. If there is anything we can do to help, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Tesco Community Project Grants - Photography

We are very pleased to have been selected for a Tesco Community Project Grant to providing modern cameras to inspire creativity in our art and photography classes. We now need your help with the blue token customer vote in Tesco stores at the moment. The value of our grant will be decided by the public vote. The third place grant of £500 would be good but we could do so much more for the students with a £1,500 grant for first place in the voting. Really hope you can support us with plenty of Tesco blue tokens.

Staff training afternoon

Can I please remind you that Wednesday 9th October is the first of our staff training afternoons and school will finish at 12:40pm for Years 7-9 and 12:45pm for Year 10 and 12.

Buses will be running at that time for those students who use school transport. The 675 (Colwall/Malvern) and 676 (Wellington Heath) buses will run as one service picking up from school at 12:45pm. For students who take the Daffodil Line, their service will pick up at the Market House in Ledbury at 1:10pm.

If you are picking up your child by car then you should arrive from 1:05pm onwards to ensure buses have left the school site.

Year 7 routines and homework

Our Year 7s have continued to settle in well and we are now confident that they know their way around our site. This means that we feel able to keep them in lessons a little longer, until 3.15pm, before walking them to the bus park. We still want to keep a staggered exit time to try to manage the flow of people in the bus park and, mainly, to reduce the size of crowds on the narrow pavement on the Southend on the way into town. This means older students will continue to leave class at 3.20pm. Buses will still leave at the same time.

Within the day, we will release Year 7 students to brunch at 10.15am instead of 10.10am and for lunch at 12.35pm instead of 12.30pm. This is to allow them more time learning, but we will keep a close eye on things to make sure the queues and the canteen don't become too crowded. We will, of course, let students know about these changes.

We are also confident that our Year 7s are used to our systems for homework and, from next week, we will be setting homework in science and languages, as well as English and maths.

PE loyalty cards

In PE this year we have introduced a new loyalty card system to encourage students to participate in and benefit from the range of sporting activities we have at JMHS. Every time a student attends an extra-curricular sports club, represents a sports team or is involved in any other PE related events, they will receive a stamp on their loyalty card. Every 10 stamps will result in an entry to a termly prize draw. In this draw, there will be two prizes, one for the most cards completed in the term and another will be a random pick of all the entries. If your child does not have a loyalty card yet or has lost it, they can get one from the PE office.

Yours sincerely,



John Holmes
Headteacher