

# HIGHDOWN LOWDOWN



Issue 1: November 2024

Where prospective parents can get the lowdown on Highdown

## Introducing...Laura Mathews

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of the Highdown Lowdown and to introduce myself as the newly appointed Headteacher at Highdown!

Highdown is a place where there is a real buzz. I first encountered it when I came to the school as Assistant Headteacher in 2018 with responsibility for teaching and learning. I'd just spent two years outside of education working for Jamie's Farm: a charity that works with young people at risk of social, emotional or academic exclusion and on my first visit to Highdown, I could see the school values of aspiration,

respect and excellence chimed with my own educational philosophy of an ambitious education for all: Highdown is a school where success is desirable, demanded and achieved.

The high expectations staff have of every pupil and the high expectations pupils set for themselves is what has drawn me back to Highdown 6 years later.

Highdown is a place of boundless opportunity. It goes without saying that we enjoy the very best in academic standards, with passionate specialist teachers in every department from Mandarin to Further Maths to Textiles. This summer 80% of our students passed English and Maths at GCSE and over 20% of A-Levels were graded at A or A\*. But our co-curricular offer is where school comes alive, from our leadership pathways to our international trips, there is something for every child to excel in and to develop their resources, skills and resilience so they can feel confident in embracing their future.

I hope you enjoy this bulletin and if you do have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch: [office@highdown.reading.sch.uk](mailto:office@highdown.reading.sch.uk). I cannot wait to get started at Highdown in January 2025 and, of course, I hope to be able to welcome you to the school soon.



## You are warmly invited to the Highdown Christmas Concert - Thursday 5th December

There will be performances by the Junior choir, Senior Choir, Orchestra, String Ensemble, Funk & Soul group and Barbershop as well as solo items, small ensembles and readings. There will even be an opportunity for the audience to join in with festive carols, accompanied by the school orchestra.

Come along and see what the Highdown Performing Arts department gets up to at Christmas!



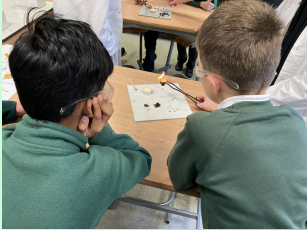
**BOOK HERE**



## Transition to Highdown Begins in Year 5

We pride ourselves on our continually evolving transition process, and the foundations of this process lie in maintaining close links with our primary school partners.

We know from experience - and from parent and student feedback - that familiarity helps to smooth the transition from primary school to life as a Highdowner. We look to offer primary children as much exposure as possible to Highdown School with the transition process starting in Year 5 with a comprehensive outreach programme which is being offered to all local schools. This week we were thrilled to host 60 Year 5 students from Caversham Primary to our science labs where they measured and compared the amount of energy stored in a variety of crisps, supported by Dr Love and his fabulous Year 12 Science Ambassadors. The marriage of crisps and fire was a winning combo but...the cheers of Year 5 could be heard all around the school as their teachers and parent helpers bravely held flaming methane bubbles. What great sports!



Not only can Year 5 students experience the expertise of our specialist teachers through our outreach programme, but all local Year 5 students will have the opportunity to attend our fabulous Highdown Experience Day on Weds 9th July 2025. This is a fun-packed day of hands-on lessons and activities laid on by our fantastic staff and supported by our wonderful Buddies. Details will be shared via your child's school and on our school website.

The Year 5 day was a really valuable day to show to my child that secondary school could be fun and wasn't anything to be scared of. The tours during the day (open mornings) were also really insightful.

**Year 7 Parent, Nov 2024**

Our child has been very happy since joining Highdown and many of the teaching staff are truly excellent. There is a true community spirit and high expectations set for all students.

**Year 7 Parent, Nov 2024**

The teachers have been fantastic and understanding and my son has settled in brilliantly. I feel the staff have the children's learning and best interests at heart and we definitely made the right decision in choosing Highdown.

**Year 7 Parent, Nov 2024**

## YOU'VE GOT A BUDDY

Each year, thirty-four Year 7 students are selected to be Buddies to the incoming cohort, starting with the Year 6 transition day in the summer term, where they are allocated to a mentor group to provide guidance, support and friendly, familiar faces. From our Year 7 student feedback, we know that these fantastic young people are a huge help in settling nerves over the summer and smoothing transition in their first weeks. The Buddies are leaders at:

- Year 5 Experience Day
- Year 6 Transition Day & Parent Information Evening/Meet the Mentor Event
- First Day of Term and escorting to lessons for first 2 weeks and beyond...

