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## HITCHIN BOYS' SCHOOL

An Academy Trust

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4<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of a busy and successful Spring Term, I have been reflecting on the many achievements and events that have taken place across the school. There have been so many standout moments, but often what impresses me most is the daily efforts of our students - the small acts of kindness, the respect, the commitment to learning and the ambition to 'strive for excellence'. It is these everyday moments that truly define our school community and make it such a special place - a place where we want all boys to feel it is their community, a community where they can flourish and say, "I am valued, I am happy, I can grow, I feel safe".

To maintain and grow such a flourishing community we must also find time to reflect on those things that strive to stifle, undermine and harm, and in so doing make our boys feel unsafe. As a parent I spend time considering what concerns me most, whether it's my children's general motivation, or their over reliance on social media and all that this exposes them too. I am anxious about what unpalatable opinions they are potentially reading, what misinformation they may be 'accepting' and what they are watching. So, I try to spend time talking to them to understand what motivates them, what their loves are and what they believe in. In trying to understand their motivations, as well as their anxieties, I feel more equipped to support them; sometimes though it seems we speak different languages! Are we watching 'helplessly' an ever-growing gulf between the young and the old(er)?

What I am certain of is that my priorities for my children are not always aligned with their own vision for the future. A recent extensive survey revealed the issues that teenage boys are most concerned about today: money/success, future/jobs, mental health, and academic results. Worryingly, the least concerning issues for them are social media addiction and sexism/misogyny. With such a strong focus on wealth, success, fame, and the rise of the entrepreneur as their new role model, many seem convinced they will amass great fortunes by starting their own businesses. Meanwhile, those who profit the most are the ones exploiting their teenage angst and desire for belonging—a commodification of the teenage mind that generates billions. Our children watch, share, and buy into this. The algorithms understand them deeply, recognizing their age and capitalising on their doubts,

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Head Teacher: Mr T E Bennett

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**Ofsted  
Outstanding  
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indecisiveness, and uncertainties, which have become valuable commodities in their own right.

As school, we will continue to shed light on an online world that is proving toxic and embroiling boys into a 'manosphere' hidden in an often perplexing world to us as parents. I attach a few links below that may well be of interest but I would also ask that you read the recent newsletter article by Mr Ajagbonna [here](#) where we focus on our latest response, our successes going phone free and reflections on this ever growing national concern.

Together we must aim to support them to solve problems, to think critically and to be adaptable and collaborative. We must all ensure that their entrepreneurial ambitions are also tempered by reality.

Together we must continue to support our boys in discovering what true 'masculinity' looks like. That it is not being physically strong but it's having a strength of character, of purpose and resolve. We need to raise boys who are true to themselves and others. We must recognise that ensuring we raise 'Strong and True' Hitchin boys is not easy, but if we are to continue to believe that it is 'great to be a Hitchin boy', we must all work to ensure we create and adapt the underlying conditions that make this possible for generations to come.

Together we must search for solutions through informed discussions because information from experts - actual experts - makes them less vulnerable. We must teach them to think critically, to keep an open mind, read extensively and have access to well informed podcasts.

Together we must help them to take control, to question their screen time and how it is stealing 'real' time. The fact is that by the time our boys are 80 years old, at the current rate, they will have spent 23 of those years on screens!

BUT we cannot do it for them, we cannot remove all risk, we can only support them to be fully aware and fully informed. We must, as a community, stay together to help educate our young adults and support them going forward.

Interesting links:

1. Chloe Combi: <https://chloecombi.net/>
2. The Richard Dimbleby Lecture: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00293l5>
3. Jack Thorne: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0egyyq1z47o>
4. Jack Thorne: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3vwye69yxwo>

I don't apologise for delaying the Spring Term highlights on this occasion as we have a duty to help all our young people through these difficult times and to ensure they feel safe and supported. This is a special place with so many highlights, where everyone should feel part of the community and have every opportunity to thrive.

## **Spring term highlights**

The Creative Arts department this term has been extremely busy, and highlights have included the fantastic and very funny production of Spamalot in February, our annual music competition and the Spring Concert. We have also hosted instrumental masterclasses and the HBS Jazz Band competed in a Regional Music Festival. Last Friday our talented performers busked in the square to raise funds for Comic Relief and collected a total of more than £500 from members of the public in Hitchin. With this and donations for the non-uniform day, HBS were able to donate a grand total of £2,360.23 to Comic Relief on its 40th Anniversary.

On the sporting front, we are extremely proud of our teams' achievements. Two of our hockey teams reached the national schools finals – an outstanding achievement - with the Under 14s coming 7th and the Under 18s finishing 6th in the country. In rugby, our U16s were runners-up in the prestigious QE Rugby 7s Schools Tournament, narrowly missing out in the final against Berkhamsted School

Sustainability remains a key focus at our school. This term, Mr. Waterman, along with approximately 40 parents and students, planted 400 saplings to enhance the hedgerow along the Fishponds Road boundary. Additionally, all school lighting has been upgraded to energy-efficient LED lights, with contractors working overnight to minimise disruption to the school day.

During March we celebrated World Book Day and hosted the North Herts Schools Book Award at HBS. The library continues to thrive and is bustling with boys every break and lunchtime which is a delight to see.

School trips this term have included the annual ski trip to Austria and the Sheringham geography trips for Year 10 GCSE students. Over Easter the rugby tour goes to Paris and there is a STEM trip to NASA, Houston. Thank you to staff for giving up holiday time to offer these opportunities to our students.

Our 6th form enrichment programme this term has included a wide range of speakers. In the last couple of weeks, a former BBC Political Journalist and our local MP Alistair Strathern have visited HBS. Students heard about current issues and asked some interesting and pertinent questions to the MP.

As Year 11 and Year 13 students approach their public examinations in the summer term, they have been working hard throughout this term. We encourage them to use the Easter break wisely - balancing rest with focused revision. This is the time now for the final push! I have been impressed by the high attendance at extra intervention sessions and the Peer Coaching sessions held on Saturday mornings. A huge thank you to our staff and Year 12 students for their dedication in running these valuable sessions.

## **Parents' Society**

Thank you to the Parents' Society for their ongoing support of the school. The Quiz night last Thursday, was a very enjoyable evening and raised a fantastic £1000. Funds raised at these events really make a difference to the school and Heads of Department are currently submitting bids to the Parents' Society for items which they are unable to purchase within their normal budgets.

## **Parental feedback**

I am enormously grateful to all the parents that respond to the survey following a parents' evening and would encourage you all to continue to do so. Whilst there are many notes of thanks, there are also areas highlighted for further consideration and development; I welcome both in equal measure. Some of the concerns raised can be dealt with on an individual basis but we are able to pick up trends which need us to go back to the process and procedures that lead our current thinking and see if there is a better way. By way of example, it has become clear that there are concerns, from a significant minority, around awareness of academic progress and the understanding of how your son is doing. We will be looking at how we keep parents better informed and also at what makes a productive parents' evening meeting. I would be grateful for any further thoughts to be directed to Martin Monks, Deputy Head Academic, [mmonks@hitchinboys.co.uk](mailto:mmonks@hitchinboys.co.uk) in the first instance. As I have said previously when home and school are aligned nothing is insurmountable.

## **SLT surgery**

On a similar note, and now in their second year, I would also like to highlight our regular SLT Surgeries provide a valuable opportunity for parents to discuss concerns with senior staff. If you would like to attend, please email my PA Mrs Leaver on [hleaver@hitchinboys.co.uk](mailto:hleaver@hitchinboys.co.uk) to book a slot. The SLT Surgery will take place on the following dates (between 9.15 - 11.15am during the summer term):

Friday 25th April  
Friday 16th May  
Friday 13th June  
Friday 4th July

## **School Uniform**

As we look forward to warmer weather, please be reminded that boys can opt to wear a navy HBS polo shirt during the summer term. This is designed to be an alternative uniform for the warmer weather and should not be worn with a jumper or blazer. Of course, students can continue to wear regular uniform throughout the summer term if they prefer. Please click [here](#) for full details of uniform guidelines. The HBS polo shirts can be purchased from Beat School Uniform [here](#)

**Summer term key dates:**

**22nd April** - Term starts

**30th April** - Year 7 Consultation evening

**5th May** - Bank Holiday, school closed

**8th May** - Year 10 Consultation evening

**12th May** - Year 13 Study leave starts

**26th - 30th May** - Half term holiday, school closed

**10th June** - Post 18 options parents presentation

**12th June** - Music summer recital

**16th - 25th June** - Year 12 Mock exams / study leave

**23rd - 25th June** - 6th form induction / taster sessions

**27th June** - Founders' Day (Year 11 & Y13 to attend service at St Mary's Church)

**2nd July** - Year 6 into Year 7 induction meetings (School closes at 12.30pm for students)

**3rd July** - Music Summer Concert

**8th July** - Sports Day

**10th July** - Secondary transfer day

**14th - 18th July** - Year 12 Work Experience

**18th July** - End of term, school closes at 12.30pm

We look forward to another exciting term ahead and would like to wish all the boys and their families a restful and enjoyable Easter break.

Kind regards



**Mr T.E. Bennett**

Headteacher