WILLIAM HOWARD SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER'S BULLETIN

August 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back!

I hope you and your families have enjoyed a restful and enjoyable summer break. As we begin a new academic year, we are very much looking forward to welcoming all students back to school on **Thursday, 3rd September**.

The summer has brought much to celebrate for our school community, with strong GCSE and A Level results. We are incredibly proud of our students' achievements and wish all our students every success for the next stage of their journeys.

Whilst students have been away, the school has remained a hive of activity, with a number of refurbishment and enhancement projects taking place across the site. This letter contains important information about our return to school, including details of changes to our reception areas and our new mobile phone policy.

We are also excited to welcome our new Year 7 cohort and hope they are looking forward to beginning their WHS journey and thriving as members of our school community.

Should you have any questions or require further information, contact details for the relevant members of staff are included within this letter.

Here's to a positive, productive, and successful academic year ahead.

Yours sincerely

Ms K Pigdon
Headteacher

Our School Improvement Priorities for the Year Ahead 2
The First Two Days 2
Timetables 2
Edulink 2
Updated Policy and Practice on Mobile Phones and Personal Devices 3
School Building and System Changes 4
Uniform 4
House Badges 4
Homework 5
Bus and Community Behaviour 5
Parent Pay Accounts 5
Parental Engagement 5
Communication 6
First Half-Term Key Dates 6

Congratulations to our students who received strong GCSE, A Level and BTEC results during the summer

Our School Improvement Priorities for the Year Ahead

Being a high-performing school means never standing still. We are continually striving to improve the educational experience we provide for our students and to ensure every young person achieves their full potential.

Alongside our ongoing focus on securing the highest possible outcomes for all students, we have identified five key priorities for the year ahead. These are:

- **Improving the use of accurate assessment so that learning needs are identified and addressed promptly.**
- **Raising the attendance and engagement of our most vulnerable students.**
- **Increasing student participation and challenge in lessons through the use of strategies such as whiteboards and active learning techniques.**
- **Strengthening the leadership capacity of our Middle Leaders to drive improvement within departments.**
- **Developing students' foundational literacy and numeracy skills so that they can access, enjoy and succeed across the full curriculum.**

Together, these priorities will help us continue to provide an ambitious, inclusive and aspirational education for every student.

The First Two Days

During the first two days back there will be a thorough and effective induction back into school life. During the first day, students will revisit our expectations for behaviour, teaching and learning, and key routines that underpin success at William Howard School. Timetables and planners will also be distributed.

Year group assemblies will provide an opportunity to welcome students back, celebrate the opportunities ahead, and encourage everyone to strive to be the very best version of themselves this year. Students will also take part in a *Freshers' Fair*, where our wide range of extra-curricular activities will be showcased through student-led stalls. This will give students the chance to ask questions, see clubs in action, and discover new opportunities to get involved. Our aspiration is that every young person participates in at least one extra-curricular activity each week.

As part of the day, students will write a letter to their future selves, outlining their goals for the year ahead and how they intend to make the most of every opportunity, both inside and outside the classroom. Form groups will also take part in team-building activities designed to strengthen relationships and foster the sense of belonging that we know is so important to wellbeing and success.

From the second day of term, students will follow their normal timetables, with routines and expectations continuing to be reinforced through high-quality teaching and pastoral support. By taking the time to establish and embed the *William Howard Way* from the very beginning, we are confident that all students will be well placed to enjoy a positive and successful academic year.

Any students who are unable to attend on the first day will receive the same information and support through their year group team. However, it is vital that all students attend during the first week of term so that they can benefit fully from this important start to the year.

Timetables

There are often a few final adjustments to student timetables before the start of term. Therefore, we have turned off the Edulink function to view timetables in advance. Students will receive their confirmed timetable on their first day back in school, ensuring they have the most up-to-date version. Some Key Stage 3 classes will be taught in more of a mixed-attainment group and therefore class codes will reflect this and are not hierarchical. Further information will be shared with parents and students in due course.

Edulink

Edulink is our primary platform for communication between home and school, and we strongly encourage all parents and carers to ensure they have access to it.

Through Edulink, you can view a wide range of important information about your child, including attendance, behaviour, homework, timetables, achievement points, and school reports.

Edulink login details will be issued following the start of term for new students. If you require any assistance accessing the platform or have any questions about its use, please contact the school reception upon our return, where a member of staff will be happy to help.

Updated Policy and Practice on Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

As you may be aware, there has been a statutory change relating to the use of mobile phones and personal devices in schools. In line with this guidance, our updated mobile phone policy will be in effect from the first day of term. Under the latest statutory guidance, schools have the authority to confiscate mobile phones and issue appropriate sanctions where students do not comply with school rules regarding their use.

Following consultation and feedback from students, we have developed an approach that we believe best supports learning, wellbeing, and positive relationships within our rural school community.

The expectation is simple: **mobile phones and personal devices must not be used, seen or heard at any time during the school day or on school site.** There are only two exceptions to this rule:

- Sixth Form students may use their phones within the Sixth Form Centre ONLY.
- Students with an agreed and verified medical need may use their device where this has been authorised by the school.

For all other students, mobile phones and devices must be **switched off and stored in their school bag** throughout the day. If a student does not have a school bag, they will be required to hand their phone in to Student Services for safekeeping. As all students are expected to have a school bag, we ask parents and carers to ensure this expectation is met from the start of term.

Mobile phones and devices must not be visible at any point during the school day from the point of entry to the point of exit. This includes carrying phones in blazer pockets or having them partially visible. Where there is a suspicion that a phone is being concealed, staff may use a detection wand to investigate. Mobile phones/devices are now treated as banned items under the new guidance.

Our approach is clear:
NOT SEEN, NOT HEARD, NOT USED.

It is therefore essential that parents and carers do not attempt to contact their child directly via mobile phone/ device during the school day. Should you need to pass on a message or contact your child urgently, please do so through **Student Services** or the relevant **Year Group Team**. Likewise, if students need to contact home, appropriate support will be provided through school staff.

Please be aware that any use of a mobile phone or personal device during the school day will result in a sanction being issued, regardless of the reason for the contact. We ask for your support in helping us implement this policy consistently and fairly. By working together, we can avoid placing young people in difficult situations and ensure that expectations are applied equally to all members of our school community.

UPDATED SANCTIONS

The sanctions for mobile phone and personal device use have also been updated and are outlined below:

First offence: Parents/carers will be asked to collect the phone after school (between 3.15pm- 4.30pm each day).

Second offence: Parents/carers will be asked to collect the phone after school (between 3.15pm- 4.30pm each day). The student will be required to hand their phone in to Student Services each morning for a period of 4 weeks and collect at the end of the school day.

Third offence: The phone will be confiscated and returned to a parent/carer during an arranged parental meeting. Due to repeated breaches of the school's mobile phone policy, the student will not be permitted to bring a mobile phone onto the school site for the remainder of the academic year. Any breach of this ban will result in the device being confiscated by the school for a period of two weeks.

Refusal to comply with these expectations will be treated as a failure to follow a reasonable instruction and as defiance under the school's Behaviour Policy.

Information about mobile phone/device use on school trips will be communicated by the trip lead for each individual trip.

We believe this policy will help create a calm, focused learning environment where students can fully engage with their education, develop positive social interactions, and make the most of every opportunity available to them.

Although we will make this expectation very clear to all students on their return to school, we ask that you discuss it with your child in advance to ensure they fully understand the requirements and consequences of not adhering to them.

If you feel your child may find it difficult to limit their phone use during the school day, we encourage you to begin reducing screen time at home now to help them prepare for a successful return to school.

Under the Department for Education's guidance, references to mobile phones should also be taken to include other communication and smart technologies that have similar functionality. This includes devices that can send or receive messages or notifications, access the internet, make calls, or record audio and video. As a result, the school's expectations apply not only to mobile phones but also to smartwatches and other smart devices with comparable capabilities.

Examples include:

- Mobile phones and smartphones.
- Smartwatches, smart glasses capable of messaging, calling, or receiving notifications.
- Devices that can connect to mobile networks.
- Devices that can record audio or video.
- Earphones/air pods etc

By providing this clarity, we hope to ensure that students, parents, and staff all have a shared understanding of our expectations.

School Building and System Changes

Over the summer break, significant work has taken place across the school site to further enhance the learning environment for our students.

The work completed includes the refurbishment of student toilets, upgrades to our science laboratories, extensive painting and decoration across key areas of the school, and improvements to our reception and student services facilities. In addition, we have invested in enhanced site security through the installation of more magnetic locking systems (maglocks), helping to ensure a safe and secure environment for all members of our school community.

As part of these developments, we have created a new, dedicated Reception area for parents and visitors. This means that there is no longer a parental waiting or reception area within Student Services. Parents and carers can still speak directly with Student Services staff via a new service window; however, access to the Student Services area itself will no longer be available. We believe this new arrangement will improve both the experience for visitors and the efficiency of support provided to students throughout the school day.

We would like to thank our site team and contractors for their hard work over the summer and look forward to welcoming students back to an improved learning environment that will benefit the whole school community.

Uniform

As we prepare for the new school year, we would like to remind all parents and carers to familiarise themselves with our school uniform expectations. Full details can be found on our website. Uniform - William Howard School

All uniform items are now ordered online, although we do still have some stock of our legacy PE kit available. We are aware that there have been delays in the delivery of the new PE kit for some Year 7 students. In the meantime, students may attend PE lessons wearing a plain blue or black T-shirt with plain black or navy shorts, tracksuit bottoms, or leggings as appropriate.

All students are expected to bring a change of socks and suitable trainers for PE lessons.

As we return for the autumn term, blazers are a compulsory part of our uniform and must be worn at all times unless otherwise directed by staff. We also have clear expectations regarding jewellery, make-up, false nails, and other accessories, so please take the time to review these requirements if needed.

We take great pride in the smart appearance of our students and the positive impression they make within the school and wider community. Your support in ensuring that students arrive in full, correct uniform from the first day of term is greatly appreciated.

House Badges

Our new Year 7 students will receive their house badges during their house induction activities, which will take place within the first two weeks of term.

It is an expectation that all students in Years 7 to 9 wear their house badge, securely ironed or sewn onto their blazer, as part of their school uniform. Should a replacement badge be required, these can be purchased from the main reception for £1.

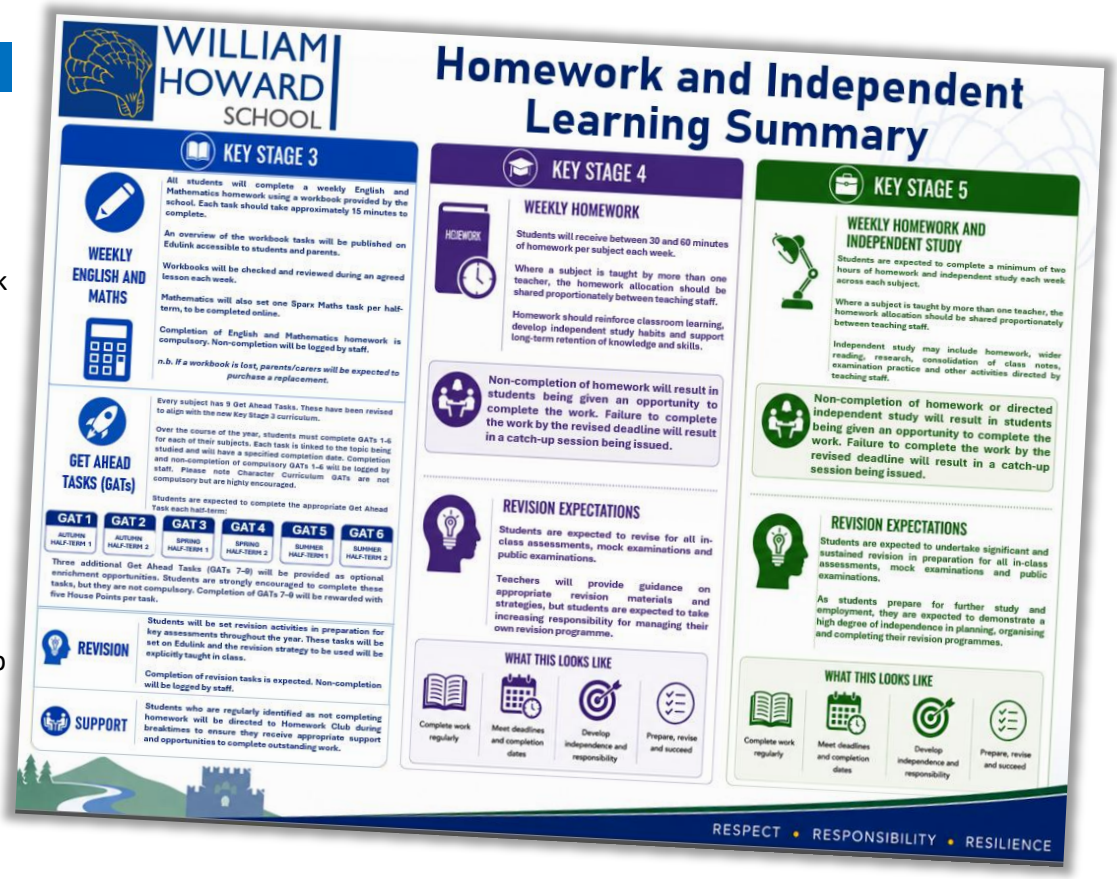
Wearing a house badge helps to foster a sense of belonging, pride, and identity within our school community, and we appreciate your support in ensuring students wear theirs correctly.

Homework

Homework is a compulsory part of learning for all year groups, as outlined below. We ask for your support in establishing positive homework routines from the very start of term, ensuring that dedicated time is set aside for its completion.

The link between regular homework completion and strong academic achievement is well established.

By working together to develop good study habits, we can help students build confidence, reinforce their learning, and achieve their full potential.



Bus and Community Behaviour

A reminder that the values of the William Howard Way extend beyond the school gates. We expect all students to demonstrate respectful and responsible behaviour when travelling to and from school, whether on school transport, public buses, or within the local community. We ask parents and carers to reinforce the importance of safe and considerate travel, including following instructions from bus drivers, treating others with respect, and representing the school positively. These expectations are also outlined in the local authority guidance issued alongside student bus passes. We are proud of our students and want bus drivers, local residents and the wider community to have a positive impression of William Howard School students as they return for the new academic year.

If you have a query regarding William Howard School buses, please contact Wendy Dixon otherwise it is the local authority transport team.

Parent Pay Accounts

Information about new ParentPay accounts will be issued to parents and carers in due course. If you have any questions regarding your account, please contact the Finance Office directly.

As a reminder, William Howard School operates a **cashless catering system**, so we ask parents and carers to ensure that their child's account is topped up regularly. However, we will never allow a student to go hungry. If there is an issue with account credit at break or lunchtime and a student needs to contact home, this will be arranged through their Year Group Team or Student Services, who will be happy to provide support.

ParentPay

ParentPay - William Howard School

Parental Engagement

We view strong parental engagement as a vital part of a successful school community. Just as we aim for 100% student attendance, we also aspire to 100% parental engagement at key school events, particularly Parents' Evenings and information sessions. Within the first month of the academic year, we host our Step-Up Evenings for Years 8, 9, 10 and Sixth Form, providing parents and carers with essential information about the year ahead. We recognise that every year group's journey is different, and by sharing key expectations, milestones and opportunities, we empower parents to support their child as effectively as possible throughout the year. We also encourage families to support the fantastic work of the Friends of William Howard, whose dedication continues to make a significant difference to our school community. One highlight of the year is the annual Colour Run on 20th September. It was a great success and tremendous fun last year, and we would love to see as many families as possible joining us and showing their support.

Communication

At William Howard School, we pride ourselves on the positive relationships we build with our families and value the partnership we share in supporting our young people. We understand that, from time to time, challenges may arise and frustrations can occur. However, we ask that all communication between home and school always remains respectful and professional. Our staff are committed to listening, supporting and working collaboratively to resolve concerns, and we ask that this is met with the same courtesy and respect. By working together in a positive manner, we can ensure the best outcomes for all students.

As a large organisation, we appreciate that knowing who to contact can sometimes be a challenge. Please be aware our staff will monitor, respond and send emails between the hours of 7am and 7pm weekly and only in emergency during the weekend. We will endeavour to respond to all communication within a 24 hour period.

Please respect the work-life balance of our staff and ensure emails are not sent outside the hours of 7am and 7pm in the week and only in an emergency during the weekend. This is to safeguard the wellbeing of our staff and ensure they are well rested to provide the best learning experiences every day for your child.

We appreciate emails may need to be written when convenient, so we ask that you use the scheduling feature which is available on most accounts and devices.

In an emergency, please contact either the Headteacher or a Deputy Headteacher.

- **Ms Pigdon, Headteacher**: kpigdon@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk
- **Mr O'Connor, Deputy Headteacher**: ro'connor@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk
- **Mr Trewhitt, Deputy Headteacher**: gtrewhitt@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk

Subject concerns should be directed to the curriculum leader. Details of which can be found on our website: Communication - William Howard School

For pastoral concerns, welfare matters, attendance issues, or general year group questions, please contact your child's **Director of Learning** or **Student Manager** directly.

To help ensure that queries and concerns are directed to the right person, please find below the key contacts for each year group:

Year	Director of Learning	Student Manager
7	Mrs K Buckley	Ms C Furniss
8	Miss R Inglesfield	Miss S Porter
9	Mr R Davies	Miss H Elliott
10	Miss V Mulholland	Mrs K Braithwaite
11	Mr P Tidmarsh	Miss M McCamish
Sixth Form	Mr J Connolly	Mrs J Giecco

First Half-Term Key Dates

Thursday 3 September	**All students return to school**
Tuesday 8 September	**Year 10 Step Up Evening**
Wednesday 9 September	**Year 9 Step Up Evening**
Tuesday 15 September	**Year 8 Step Up Evening**
Tuesday 22 September	**Year 12/13 Step Up Evening**
Wednesday 23 September	**Year 6 Open Evening**
Tuesday 20 October	**Year 11 Step Up Evening**