



WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

IMBERHORNE SCHOOL

Headteacher: Matthew Whatford

Compassion
Achievement
Respect
Endeavour

*The cornerstones of our
learning community*

28th February 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you (or more likely your children) had a restful half term break. We have been extremely impressed with the way in which students have settled back into school this week, in particular Year 11, who have shown a real maturity, recognising the importance of the next few months, which, for them, will go very quickly indeed!

Just before we broke for the holiday, we were delighted to have a new data set about our Sixth Form shared with us by the DFE. This data shows that from our 2024 results we were 2nd in West Sussex for value added to student outcomes and the top maintained Sixth Form. This means that students performed better here than they were expected when compared to those in all other maintained Sixth Forms. We are extremely proud of these student outcomes and know that they worked extremely hard to achieve them. We are also very proud of the efforts of our Sixth Form teaching staff to support students and are aware that they regularly go the extra mile to help students be the very best they can be.

I am aware of some social media speculation around our school dogs over the half term break and wanted to take the opportunity to explain the situation. It is true that they are not in school at the moment and this is because we have some students with severe allergies. These allergies are airborne and can cause an anaphylactic response, meaning that these students are highly at risk with the dogs in situ. The dogs are owned by a member of staff and were not acquired with the aim of being school dogs/therapy dogs and are therefore not hypoallergenic. After consultation with West Sussex County Council, The School Nursing Team and allergy specialist doctors, we were told that no risk assessment or management plan could fully mitigate the risk to these students. This, we are told, means that the potential consequences of keeping the dogs in school could be disastrous for these students. The dogs will return to school when it is safe for them to do so and we expect them to be based at Windmill Lane from September, where the risk is assessed to have been reduced enough for them to do so by this point in time. I realise this will have caused disappointment in the community - please be assured that every avenue to keep the dogs in school was explored before these actions were taken and that we have to put student safety first.

Mr Tighe and the Safeguarding Team have this week written to parents and carers about safe mobile device and social media usage. This follows Safer Internet Day from before the holiday and some targeted input through assemblies. Please do read the letter that was sent. Social media companies have relaxed their rules and regulations meaning that they are now fact checked less and have fewer censorship rules. This means that there is greater risk of young people accessing material which may be harmful to them and society as a whole. A national issue and one that we are aware of across West Sussex is that students are having increased free use of social media, often outside of age-restrictions to these providers, and don't always understand the risks and impact of their actions on different platforms. It is hard for us as a school as we obviously do not control their use of devices and these platforms, but we often pick up the issues that follow. Any opportunities that you have to check, manage and educate your children in their use of social media is much appreciated. You may also wish to watch the Channel 4 documentary 'Swiped – The School That Banned Smartphones' which I know many families have found enlightening.

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You may remember that in previous letters I have mentioned our work with the Tanbridge House SCITT which is a teacher training hub based in the school. They are continuing to recruit trainees to start their training in September 2025 and have an information event on Tuesday 18th March from 4-5pm. The profession continues to need moral, capable and dynamic persons who are seeking a change of career or who are coming out of University. At Imberhorne, we have trainees from the Hub currently learning their craft with us and are very open to applicants spending their year with us from September 2025 to do so. This will include one six-week placement in a contrasting school around February 2026. Trainees spend Monday-Thursday embedded in their training school, with Fridays based at Tanbridge House for all of their additional training needs and academic study. If you or anyone you know is interested in what I would consider (with unashamed bias) to be one of the greatest jobs in the world, please do encourage them to go along to the event or make contact with the Hub directly. A flyer about the event is attached to this letter.

Yours faithfully

Mr Matthew Whatford
Headteacher

Sporting success

U12 RUGBY- DISTRICT CUP

IMBERHORNE 05 : DOWNLANDS 15

A really tight game, in a fixture with a few key players missing. Excellent to see 2 brilliant scrum halves pitted against each other, a couple of missed tackles and a couple of squandered scoring opportunities cost us the game, but a thoroughly enjoyable game to watch.

U12 RUGBY - COUNTY SHIELD

LEWES PRIORY 05 : 40 IMBERHORNE

Two successive wins sees the U12s top their group in the shield. Some nice rugby played in spells and a deserved win. We're off to the finals!!

Try scorers: James P x 2, Zaiyn x1, Jonjo x 1, Seb x 2, Carter x 2

Man of the match: Astor

Words by Mr Byrne