

Parents' Newsletter – Autumn Term 2024

13 September 2024

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents and Students

I am delighted to welcome everyone back after the summer break, and to extend a warm 'Hello!' to all of the new students joining the school and sixth form. With a fresh academic year ahead of us, the opportunities are there for all to enjoy and make the most of.

Whilst our vision for The Burgate School & Sixth Form remains for every student to enjoy their learning and feel valued for who they are, we have refocussed our school values, of which we previously had eight. It was felt that, to make our values more purposeful and memorable and with less overlap, we should reduce the number to three. After consultation amongst staff and trustees, then with students, a final decision was made by the Student Council for three overarching values:

1. Kindness to promote a supportive atmosphere.

When students and staff practice kindness, it creates a culture of respect and empathy. This makes the school a more welcoming, inclusive place where everyone feels safe and valued. Kindness also fosters emotional well-being by reducing feelings of isolation and stress. Being kind teaches students how their actions affect others, promoting a sense of responsibility and consideration for the community. Kindness also helps in conflict resolution and builds stronger relationships going forward.

2. Curiosity to drive a love for learning.

Curiosity motivates students to explore, ask questions, and engage with subjects on a deeper level. It leads to active, rather than passive, learning. Curious students are more likely to seek solutions and think critically about challenges. This enhances their ability to apply knowledge creatively and to solve problems. Curiosity also instils a mindset of continuous learning beyond school, preparing students for success in a fast-changing world.

3. Ambition to inspire self-improvement.

Ambition encourages students to set goals, work hard, and strive for excellence, helping them realise their full potential. Ambitious students learn to overcome obstacles and develop resilience and a growth mindset, seeing challenges as opportunities for development rather than setbacks. Ambition also aligns with long-term goals, helping students build the work ethic and determination needed for personal and professional success in the future.

These values will underpin our lessons, activities and interactions at The Burgate, and we should continuously aim to refer to them as our school culture and encourage others to observe them too. As always, we benefit greatly from your support in striving for our aspirations as a school.

At the end of this newsletter there is a link to the 2024-2025 information pack. Within this you will find key messages and reminders for the year ahead, including our School Improvement Plan. Key objectives for the academic year ahead are:

- to continue to develop our quality of teaching through 'adaptive teaching',

L E A R N I N G F O R L I F E

- to develop the formative (student) element of the learner profile linked to our value of 'ambition',
- to improve our school IT network and hardware.

With very stable staffing at the school, we continue to build upon our success in 'quality first teaching', improving and innovating to achieve the very highest standards. Each member of staff receives individualised continuous professional development throughout the year to enable them to teach in an adaptive way dependent upon the class and individual students they are teaching.

One of the most obvious ways we can determine our school's success is doing well is through our public examination results. Burgate Year 11 students prepared really well for this summer's exams and their GCSE results were truly exceptional with a pass rate of 85% at grade four or higher across all subjects, which is far above the national average. Also, extremely satisfying was the figure for strong passes with 65% of grades at 5 – 9 compared with the national average of 52%. This demonstrates a tremendous effort on the part of our students, parents and staff and means students have achieved the grades to move on with complete confidence into the sixth form or an alternative course elsewhere. Additionally, the number of students achieving a pass grade in both English and Maths was also particularly high at 84% and an exceptional 93% of students passed their English exam, demonstrating the success of our literacy strategy, which is a whole school initiative in raising standards.

A school gets judged in many ways and we were all delighted with these fantastic GCSE results which are, of course, a key benchmark. However, I believe it's more important how the young people achieved them, which this cohort did with enjoyment and a real sense of positivity.

We will congratulate last year's Year 11 students on all their tremendous achievements, which are a testament to the hard work and dedication they have shown throughout their years at Burgate, at their Prizegiving on Wednesday 18 September. Please do come and join us.

Most of our Year 11 students have graduated into the Burgate Sixth Form to Study A Levels where they have been joined by Year 11 students from other local schools. As far as we are aware, every single student moving on from The Burgate has stayed in education or entered employment with training. Those who have gone on to study their A Levels with us here at The Burgate have joined a sixth form where, once again, students achieved very good results which were consistently above the national average. Almost every single student gained their first-choice place at university or secured their desired training or apprenticeship. I should like to thank all the parents and our staff for the unstinting support and guidance they have given to our students.

Do continue to follow The Burgate through our website, Facebook and Instagram pages and please share upcoming events and student achievements beyond school and college. Every single student's success is important, and we are keen to hear of their accomplishments so that we can also share the good news on our social media platforms, in our newsletters and at our celebration of success events. Please take the time to read the 2024 – 2025 Information Pack the link to which can be found <https://www.theburgate.com/newsletters-page>.

In the Christmas Newsletter we will celebrate all the activities and achievements of the term.

Wishing you all the very best,

David Pover
Headteacher

Message from the School Trustees

Dear Parents and Students

A very warm welcome to the new academic year, particularly to those students and staff who are joining the Burgate community for the first time. Congratulations to students and staff on an excellent set of examinations results across all year groups. These truly are the foundation stones for students to be able to achieve their goals in life. Many will not know what those goals are now and indeed these may change over time but working hard at school to achieve the very best each individual can will create the framework for future success in whatever form that takes. Our school vision of enjoyment of learning and feeling valued helps students evolve confidence, awareness of others and flexibility such that they are equipped for the world beyond formal education.

We all have a role to play in ensuring the school achieves its goals at an individual and collective level. Clearly students and staff need to focus on the detailed delivery of key actions. This is the hard work delivered daily at the school. As Trustees we are responsible for oversight of the school, ensuring policies and procedures are appropriate together with the strategic actions required to ensure the school can deliver its vision consistently over time. Parents, carers and guardians are responsible for ensuring students attend, are prepared for schoolwork and create a nurturing environment supportive of learning. Working together really does make a difference to the students' experience and development.

There are many challenging pressures on students today linked to speed of societal change, constant information, social media and peer pressure. We are fortunate to live in a part of the world with many opportunities and the ability to shape the future. Our collective role is giving our students the guidance and tools to enable them to navigate through these challenging pressures. As we embark on this new academic year let us all recommit ourselves to work together to achieve our vision for Burgate students.

Jim Mowbray
Chair of the Board of Trustees