



20<sup>th</sup> December 2023

t: 01707 351350

admin@ridgeway.aat.school  
www.ridgeway.herts.sch.uk

Dear Parents/Carers

At the end of a busy term, we wanted to update you on the progress we are making on school improvement, in particular the three areas of focus. First, thank you for your support with our high standards and expectations. It was wonderful to celebrate student's hard work and achievement to see them receiving awards in their Prize Giving assemblies last week and our Presentation Evening on Monday.

There has been a strong focus on improving attendance and reducing lateness to school this term. High attendance is key to academic success but most importantly, to ensuring the wellbeing of students and we have seen a corresponding reduction in lateness to school over the course of the term.

Whilst we are delighted that more than 200 students have made progress in their attendance and that we have been able to award over 7000 attendance merits in the last few weeks, Persistent Absence (students whose attendance is lower than 90%) continues to be a concern and we are taking serious steps to address this. Being persistently absent will affect students' life chances in terms of both wellbeing and reaching their full academic potential.

<b>Attendance during one school year</b>	<b>Days absent</b>	<b>Weeks absent</b>	<b>Lessons missed</b>
95%	9	2	48
90%	19	4	96
85%	29	6	144
80%	38	8	192
75%	48	10	240
70%	57	11.5	276

If you are concerned about your child's attendance and would like support in addressing this, please contact Merideth Tinker (AHT with responsibility for attendance).

Standards of behaviour have continued to improve, the phone policy has been central to this, significantly reducing the incidents of inappropriate use of mobile devices and we have also seen a 110% increase in the number of rewards being issued to students, recognising the excellent effort and improved standards being seen. Recruitment to the pastoral team has been successful and we will welcome a new Head of Year and Behaviour Improvement Officer to the team in January.

In January, improved behaviour systems will be in place for the on-call and reflection processes which will support an increase in restorative practice and help for students to make positive changes to their behaviour if they have made a mistake.

In response to family feedback, we are continuing to work to improve communication with families around sanctions and rewards and have implemented a new performance data tracking system that will allow staff to have more information on every student's rewards and consequences each week of term.

To further build on our excellent personal development programme we have welcomed a number of external speakers including Paul Hannaford, who delivered a hard-hitting message around misuse of drugs, as well as Lives not Knives workshops for all year groups. In the Sixth Form, students and staff have been working hard to prepare university applications and interviews for 2024 placements have now begun. We are really excited that, again this year, we have students applying for the most prestigious universities, including Cambridge University.

Work is well underway on the recruitment strategy alongside the AAT to ensure that we are able to recruit the highest quality teachers and support staff. We still have some vacancies in English, Maths and Drama for January but are currently advertising and interviewing and anticipate filling these posts soon. In the meantime we work with our teaching agencies to employ long term qualified teachers to ensure students' learning is not disrupted. After a very busy period of recruitment we are pleased to update families on the new staff who are joining our Ridgeway Academy team in January. In English we have Taslima Hannan, a very experienced English teacher and leader, she will join the team as English Assistant Subject Leader. Luke Gallagher will join as Pastoral Head of Year and Teacher of PE and Science, he is looking forward to getting to know the students and has already spent a day at Ridgeway familiarising himself with the pastoral systems and meeting the team. We are also welcoming Justine Webb, a Lead Practitioner in Maths, Justine has a wide range of experience including Head of Maths, she will work to further develop the Maths curriculum and quality of teaching alongside Mr Ahmad, Head of Maths. In addition to this, Emma Russell has joined the Performing Arts teaching team permanently as Teacher of Drama, we have been very impressed with the quality of work the students in her classes have been producing so far and we look forward to seeing the Performing Arts team continue to flourish. We also have Stuart Turkentine joining Ridgeway Academy in February as Initial Teacher Training and Early Careers Teacher Co-ordinator and teacher of PE. He is currently Head of PE and we look forward to welcoming him into the team after February half term. In our support staff team we are also welcoming four new Teaching Assistants, an additional SEND administrator to support the excellent work of the SENDCO team, an additional attendance administrator and an IT Technician apprentice. We look forward to our new staff joining us, please look out for further updates regarding recruitment in the future editions of Ridgeway News.

We are excited to be hosting the Alban TSH 'Train to Teach' event on Monday 12 February 2024 where we invite graduates to meet teachers and trainers as part of their journey into teacher training. We have a strong affiliation with the Alban TSH and have three successful Early Career Teachers at Ridgeway who trained through this ITT route.

Now has never been a better time to start a career in teaching. As you can see below, the Government are offering significant Tax-Free scholarships in a range of subject areas. Starting salaries for qualified teachers are higher than ever before, there is a very good Pension Scheme and your holidays can fit around your children if they are still at school. In addition, we are now able to consider flexible training programmes if you are not able to commit to full-time in one year. There are also excellent career prospects in the future.

### **Applications open in January for Teacher Training Scholarships**

Scholarships are available in the following subjects to support trainee teachers through their teacher training year starting in autumn 2023:

Chemistry, Computing, Mathematics and Physics – £30k  
Languages – £27k (French, German and Spanish)

Applications for Physics Scholarships are open now and all other subjects will open in January and are made via the Scholarship body website.

In addition to tax free funding, successful applicants will receive a range of additional subject specific benefits which may include:

- free subject related memberships
- bespoke events and webinars across the ITT year and beyond to support CPD
- access to classroom resources
- support from experienced professional mentors
- networks of teachers, ex teachers, department leads, and other industry experts

For further information on other Scholarship programmes please visit [Scholarships and bursaries | Get Into Teaching GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

If you have been considering teaching or if this is something that now appeals to you, how about arranging a short session with one of our experts who can talk through the process and finer details, to help you make some decisions. No strings attached, and we know that teaching is not for everyone, however if you like working with young people, love your subject and can communicate well, then this definitely is the profession for you. For more information visit the Alban TSH website [here](#) or contact [enquiries@albantsh.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@albantsh.co.uk) and one of the team can advise you on your next steps.

We are keen to share regular communication with families and now use three social media platforms. Please do follow us on Instagram at 'ridgewayacademy' and on X (formally Twitter) @Ridgeway\_AC and on Facebook 'Ridgeway Academy'. We remind all parents to regularly check MCAS app for rewards and behaviour points, academic reports, attendance updates and communication regarding your child.

We were pleased to confirm our 2023 results for KS4. Results showed the number of students achieving grades 9-4 and 9-5 in English was above national average. The number of students achieving 9-4 in Mathematics was also above the national average.

Intervention for Year 11 is well underway with Mr Pring's Friday after school study club from 3.15pm until 5.00pm reaching record numbers. Please encourage your child to attend each Friday to earn points towards the Prom and to help Mr Pring reach #target100 - 100 students at intervention and 100 students entering the Sixth Form in September 2024. There are only four weeks until the next round of Year 11 PPEs and to support this, Year 11 subject specific intervention starts on Monday 8 January. Please see the newsletter for the subject rotation. This intervention schedule will continue until the exams in the summer. Intervention focus has now switched to the terminal exams, students who have coursework elements still to complete should speak to their teacher in order to ensure they complete the work.

We finish the term with a school assembly reflecting on 'Paying it forward', which explores how our behaviours and attitudes can have a positive effect on others and some Christmas traditions. We wish you all a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year.

Best wishes



Sarah Mitcherson  
Headteacher