



Hillcrest School

Spring Term Newsletter

This has been a busy and productive term at Hillcrest. We have moved hugely forward in key areas in school. Our OFSTED Report in January 2015 stated that:

Behaviour is not consistently good. Recently introduced strategies to improve behaviour are yet to show an impact. The poor attitudes and lack of motivation of a few students prevents them from learning successfully.

We have really challenged this head on.

The Hillcrest community have:

- Clear boundaries and expectations set out in our behaviour policy. The children are clear about how they will be individually rewarded and how their choices will have consequences. 91% of pupils feel that the school works hard at stopping inappropriate behaviour and 100% feel that Hillcrest is a safe place to be. We have a rigorous system for monitoring behaviour. So far we have saw a dramatic reduction in inappropriate incidences and a significant increase in rewards.
- Pupils emotional health and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do. 97% of pupils feel that school work hard to stop bullying and 100% of staff feel that any cases of bullying will be dealt with effectively. It is imperative that pupils feel safe and secure in their learning environment and can trust the adults that they are working with to keep them safe. We have a designated Anti-Bullying Champion within our school who runs mentoring sessions, peer support and friendship groups. We had Show Racism the Red Card and an LGBT workshop delivered by an outside charity for Anti Bullying week.
- A school that is a calm and orderly environment. Our School Improvement Partner, Lynn Watson, the Director of Education for the Percy Hedley Foundation, commented in her Spring report that: ***'pupils were observed managing transitions well. The atmosphere was calm and at best pupils were quickly engaged in learning following transitions.'***
- A priority of keeping children safe online. As part of Internet Safety Day all children had an update of their E safety skills and risks they are exposed to in a digital world. Our school web site regularly updates and has useful links and documents for E safety.

- Helped pupils develop positive aspirations by having a careers week in school. Speakers from trades, services and further education were in school. Duke of Edinburgh and work experience continue to build on this. Our new 6th Form Lead, Alison Miller is helping to plan transition routes for our students to ensure that aspirations are met and every student is working towards positive routes into the future.
- Attendance remains good at 93% (although we are aiming for 95%) and staff have relevant information on who is at risk of non-attendance. As a result school continues to support pupils at risk. Strategies we use to promote good attendance are:
 - ◇ Weekly attendance meeting with Head, Parent Partnership and office.
 - ◇ First concern letters go out when attendance dips below 92%. This is followed up by a home visit from Parent Partnership Support to see if there is any support required to help improve attendance.
 - ◇ Second concern letters go out if attendance does not improve following the first concern letter. Home visit from Parent Partnership Support
 - ◇ If attendance continues to decline, then referral to EWO.
 - ◇ Half termly letters to all parents to let them know what their child's attendance is.
 - ◇ Half termly rewards to students who have full attendance.
- Supported all of our learners to make progress across all areas of school life, developing maturity towards adulthood and functional living and celebrating these achievements. We are able to carefully monitor and track how the students progress across:
 - ◇ Self-control and management of behaviour
 - ◇ Social Skills
 - ◇ Skills for Learning
 - ◇ Approach to Learning
 - ◇ Self-awareness and Learning

Overall 85% of our learners have made good progress in all areas of which the greatest improvement has been in skills and approach to learning.

Parental Questionnaires

Your views are always important to us and help us to make either whole school improvements or changes for your own child. Thank you to all those parents who returned our last questionnaire. Please send them in after Easter if you have not already done so. The table below gives a summary of your views

	Agree	Disagree
My child is happy at school.	100%	
My child feels safe at school.	100%	
My child makes good progress at school.	100%	
My child is taught well.	100%	
My child receives homework when appropriate.	66.7%	33.3%
The school expects my child to work hard and do his or her best.	100%	
I receive valuable information from the school about my child's progress.	100%	
The school makes sure my child is well prepared for the future (e.g. changing year group, finishing school, entering employment or further or higher education).	100%	
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle.	83.3%	16.7%
The school informs me about the types of support available for my child's particular needs.	91.7%	8.3%
The school provides specialist support for my child's particular needs.	100%	
The school meets my child's particular needs.	100%	
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour.	100%	
The school deals effectively with bullying.	100%	
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits for my child to take part in.	91.7%	8.3%
The school is well led and managed.	100%	
The school treats my child fairly and with respect.	100%	
The school responds well to any concerns I raise.	100%	
I would recommend this school to another parent.	100%	

I am delighted that parents recognise how hard we work to ensure the very best outcomes for the children of Hillcrest. Some of the positive comments include:

"I have seen a marked improvement in attitude, behaviour and school work since she started at your school."

"Safe environment."

"Making sure all children are safe and that they get the one to one attention."

"It is like a family because of its size so the children get the right amount of attention."

"...understanding of each child's individual needs both emotionally and educationally."

"Good communication between school and parents."

"...care and consideration for the students."

From the survey it is evident we need to look at our homework policy again. We shall consult with parents and carers in the summer term.

What we are looking forward to in the summer term:

- We are launching a new assessment system that tracks every step of progress in English, maths, science and computing-our new curriculum will really support and be enriched by this!
- Information about the progress your child is making will be used to support staff in building their own training to support every learner even more.
- We are welcoming 2 new teaching staff to the team who I know are keen to come in and make a difference-bringing expertise in English, creative approaches and speech and language specialisms.
- Healthy lifestyles are really important for positive outcomes and at Hillcrest we have begun to build a multi-gym within school, thanks to the grants from Northumbria Police and ASDAN.
- We have successfully begun the transformation of our dining experience at lunch and are going to continue with the good ideas brought forward from the School Council.

It is at this point we want to thank you for your continued support, enthusiasm and positive views of our school. Hillcrest really is transforming and it is great that you are with us as we are going through this. We cannot state how proud the staff are to work here and how proud the pupils are to show the progress they are making. Many of our visitors, parents, governors and professional working colleagues constantly inform us of how special a place Hillcrest is and how proud your children are of the work they are doing and also how much they enjoy being here. We hope you enjoy your Easter break and I hope you find the time to pop in for our Governors coffee and cake afternoon on Thursday 28th April 1-3pm.

Andrea Mead

Mark Phillips