

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family have had a restful and enjoyable summer break. As we prepare to welcome students back for the start of a new academic year, I wanted to take the opportunity to share some important updates and to say how much we are looking forward to the school year ahead.

Celebrating Summer Results

We often speak to students and families about the importance of keeping doors open. A strong set of GCSE results gives young people choices, opportunities and the freedom to pursue the future they aspire to. This year's GCSE outcomes, the strongest the school has achieved in close to a decade, mean more of our students are progressing to their next destinations with a wider range of options available to them. In several subjects, attainment has increased dramatically, with some areas seeing results more than double compared to previous years. We also celebrated more Grade 9s than ever before, while our English results were the strongest in the school's history, with 27.5% of students achieving a Grade 7 or above. These successes, alongside many other impressive performances across key subjects, reflect the hard work and ambition of our students.

As I shared with the *Welwyn Hatfield Times*, *"This significant improvement in attainment demonstrates not only the tremendous talent of our students, but also the positive cultural shift that has taken place in a remarkably short period of time."* I would encourage parents and carers to read the article and celebrate the success of our students and the exciting journey that Gracewood Academy is on. We are equally thrilled with the success of our final A Level cohort, who achieved an average grade of B, a full grade higher than last year. These outstanding results have opened doors to a wide range of exciting destinations, with students progressing to prestigious university courses including Economics at the University of Bristol and Medicine at the University of Kent, alongside many embarking on highly competitive apprenticeship programmes and other ambitious next steps.

Communication at Gracewood Academy

Throughout last year, it became clear from conversations with parents that communication is an area where we can continue to improve. In response, we have created a new **Parent Handbook** that brings together the key information families need to know about life at Gracewood. [Read our Parent Handbook here](#)

As school systems, policies or procedures evolve, we will update the handbook and ensure families are made aware of any changes. **Do have a read so you are clear on our uniform and behaviour expectations ready for next week's return to school.** You will also notice the launch of **The Gracewood Roots Network**, a new parent and carer partnership group that will meet throughout the year. The network will provide opportunities to share feedback, support community and school events, contribute ideas and help strengthen the partnership between home and school. Alongside this, we are introducing our **Communication Promise**. We are committed to responding to communications within 72 hours at the latest, although our aim is always to speak with families and resolve issues much sooner wherever possible. I hope parents already feel that we are making positive strides in this area. As always, my door remains open, and I welcome the opportunity to speak with families about any aspect of school life.

Changes to School Life

We are excited to be starting the 2026-27 academic year with a number of positive developments across the school. In addition to our new school bells, refreshed school values and updated uniform, we are especially delighted to welcome several exceptional new teachers and support staff to the Gracewood team. These colleagues bring a wealth of expertise and experience in their specialist subjects and areas, further strengthening the high-quality education and support we provide for our students. Their passion, knowledge and dedication will

enrich school life and create even more opportunities for students to thrive. Over the summer, we have also continued to invest in our school environment, making improvements to buildings and facilities so that students can learn in surroundings they can be proud of. We look forward to welcoming students back, sharing these developments and ensuring every young person feels positive, supported and excited about the year ahead.

September Return

We are looking forward to welcoming students back next week and beginning another exciting year at Gracewood Academy. The first few days of term have been carefully planned to help students settle back into school routines, understand any changes for the new academic year and start positively. Students will receive their new timetables, meet new teachers, and take part in assemblies and tutor activities that will reintroduce key expectations, school systems and opportunities available to them this year. Our staggered return allows us to give each year group the attention and support they need, ensuring every student is well prepared for a successful start to the new term.

Year Group	Date of Return	Arrival Time	School Day
Year 7	Thursday 3 September	Arrive by 8:50am for a prompt 9 am start	9:00am – 3:00pm
Year 11	Thursday 3 September	Arrive by 8:10 am for a prompt 8:25 am start	8:25am – 3:00pm
Years 8 & 9	Friday 4 September	Arrive by 8:50am for a prompt 9 am start	9:00am – 3:00pm
Year 10	Friday 4 September	Arrive by 8:50am for a prompt 9 am start	9:00am – 3:00pm

Return to Normal School Day

Year 7 and Year 11 should arrive at usual times, 8.10am for a prompt 8.25am start, on **Friday 4th September**. From **Monday 7th September**, the whole school will return to normal operating hours.

- School gates open from **8:10am**
- All students should arrive in good time before the **8:25am bell**
- Lessons begin promptly after morning line-up
- The school day finishes at **3:00pm**

Finally, if there have been any significant changes or circumstances over the summer that you feel the school should be aware of, please do get in touch with us. Whether it relates to wellbeing, medical information, family circumstances or additional support needs, we want to ensure that we are able to provide the best possible support from the very start of term.

Thank you for your continued support of Gracewood Academy. We are excited for the year ahead and look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure every child thrives.

Yours Sincerely,



Ms Georgina Charles

Principal
Gracewood Academy