

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family have had a wonderful summer break. As we prepare to welcome our new Year 7 students to Gracewood Academy, I wanted to take the opportunity to say how excited we are for your child to join us and to begin the next stage of their educational journey.

We are looking forward to welcoming students for their first day with us and helping them settle into life at Gracewood. A great deal of planning has taken place to ensure that the transition from primary to secondary school is as smooth and positive as possible. Students will join their teaching groups when they start in September. Following the transition days, we have made some adjustments to classes based on the information we have gathered from primary schools and our own observations. As students settle in, we will continue to monitor groupings during the first few weeks of term and may make further adjustments where we feel this would support friendships, learning and wellbeing.

Managing Transition

We know that moving to secondary school is an exciting milestone, but it can also bring some understandable nerves. To support students who may be feeling anxious about the transition, we are offering an additional transition session on **Wednesday 2 September**. The **Mental Health Support Team** will be joining us from **1:00pm to 2:00pm** to work with a small group of students and help them prepare emotionally for their first day. We would strongly encourage families of students who may benefit from this support to bring them to school at **12:50pm** and collect them shortly after **2:00pm**. Our Inclusion Team will also be on hand throughout the session to provide additional support and reassurance.

Who is this session for? This session may be particularly helpful for students who are feeling anxious about starting secondary school, missed one of our transition events, or would benefit from spending some time in the school building before the start of term. It is also ideal for students who would find it reassuring to visit the school in a small group, with support from our Inclusion Team and the Mental Health Support Team, helping them feel calm, confident and ready for their first day at Gracewood

Sign Up Here:

Communication at Gracewood Academy

Find below our **Parent Handbook** that brings together the key information families need to know about life at Gracewood. We hope this helps you get clear on life here at secondary school: [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.**

As part of our transition programme, we will also be holding a **Year 7 Settling In Evening** in early October. This will provide an opportunity for parents and carers to hear how students are progressing and to learn more about life at Gracewood. Please take time to look through the Parent Handbook, which contains details of this event, other parent information evenings and key dates throughout the year. 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.

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.

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