

Educate for life

Thursday 16th July 2026

Dear parents and carers,

As we come to the end of another successful academic year, we would like to take this opportunity to look ahead with excitement to September and the next chapter in the journey of Cowes Enterprise College.

Introductions

September marks a new beginning for the school, and we are delighted to introduce ourselves. I will be joining Cowes Enterprise College as Executive Principal, alongside Ruth Griffiths-Nash, who will be taking up the role of Head of School.

We are both genuinely excited to become part of the Cowes community and to build upon the many strengths that already exist within the school. Having spent time getting to know the school, its staff and its achievements, it is clear that Cowes Enterprise College is a school with a great deal to celebrate and even greater potential for the future.

We are joining a school with a proud history, talented staff and wonderful young people. Our aim is to build on these strengths, retaining what works well while continuing to refine and improve where opportunities exist.

One of our core beliefs is that the best outcomes for young people are achieved when schools and families work together. Your children are our students, and while we may know them in school, you know them best. By working in partnership, with openness, trust and a shared sense of purpose, we can ensure every young person is supported to thrive academically, socially and personally.

Introduction of Parent Forums

To help strengthen these partnerships, we will be introducing regular Parent Forums throughout the year. These sessions will provide opportunities to hear about developments across the school, share perspectives, ask questions and contribute to future thinking. We will also be hosting a number of "Meet the Executive Principal and Head of School" events during the autumn term, and we look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.

Over recent months, feedback from students, staff and parents/carers has helped shape some of our priorities for the year ahead. This is not about making change for change's sake. Rather, it is about continuing to refine, strengthen and evolve the experience we provide for every young person at Cowes Enterprise College.

Clarity on Uniform

One area where clarity is particularly important is around uniform and appearance expectations. A smart appearance helps create a sense of pride, belonging and readiness for learning, and we want all students to start the new academic year positively and consistently.

We ask all families to review the academy's uniform and appearance expectations over the summer, which can be found here: <https://cowesec.org/key-info/uniform>

Students should return in September fully compliant with the published guidance, including expectations relating to hair colour, hairstyles and piercings. We ask families to use the summer holiday as an opportunity to ensure that any necessary adjustments are made before the start of term.

While nobody wants the final days of the summer holiday to be spent discussing hair dye or counting piercings, a little preparation now will help ensure that every student starts September focused on learning rather than uniform conversations. We greatly appreciate the support of families in helping us maintain high standards and a strong sense of community pride.

Equipment Expectations

Alongside this, we will be placing a renewed emphasis on students arriving fully equipped for learning each day. At a minimum, students should have a suitable school bag, pens, pencils, a ruler and any subject-specific equipment required for the day ahead. Teachers can achieve remarkable things, but even the very best struggle when students arrive armed with little more than good intentions and half a biro. Having the correct equipment is one of the simplest ways students can set themselves up for success, develop personal responsibility and make the most of every lesson.

Introduction of "You Said, We Did"

As part of our commitment to communication and engagement, we will be introducing a "You Said, We Did" approach. Feedback from staff, students and parents/carers is incredibly valuable. While not every suggestion will lead directly to a change in approach, every perspective helps us better understand the experiences of our community. We are committed to listening carefully, communicating openly and ensuring that the reasons behind our decisions are clear. By doing so, we can continue to evolve as a school while keeping the best interests of students at the heart of everything we do.

Line-Up Routines

We will also be refining our approach to line-up routines from September. Following feedback from staff and students, we will be moving to a single morning line-up each day, allowing us to establish a calm, purposeful and consistent start to learning. This evolution is designed to maximise learning time while ensuring that expectations are clear, students are greeted positively and everyone begins the day with a strong sense of belonging and readiness to learn.

Morning line-up will also provide an opportunity to ensure students are fully prepared for the day ahead, including meeting our uniform and appearance expectations and having the equipment they need to be successful in lessons. As with any routine, we will continue to review and refine our approach to ensure it works effectively for our students and staff.

Culture of Recognition and Celebration

We will also be continuing to strengthen our culture of recognition and celebration. The overwhelming majority of our students contribute positively to school life every day, and we want to ensure that effort, achievement, attendance and positive conduct are recognised consistently. A refreshed House system will help foster school pride, belonging and a healthy sense of competition.

Refreshments and Canteen

Students will also benefit from greater access to refreshments during the school day, with the canteen opening at breaktime and offering an exciting range of grab-and-go options. Whether students are fuelled by ambition, determination, or simply a pressing need for a sausage roll, there will be greater choice and quicker access to food and drink.

A Message of Thanks to Vicky Wells

As we prepare for this next chapter, it is important that we take a moment to recognise the remarkable contribution of Vicky Wells, who leaves the school after eight years of dedicated service.

Vicky joined Cowes Enterprise College in 2018 and has since served the community with unwavering commitment, first as Vice Principal and more recently as Head of School. Throughout her time at Cowes, she has worked tirelessly to ensure that students received the very best opportunities, support and educational experiences.

The reflections Vicky shares in our newsletter tell only part of the story. During her leadership, the school has continued to strengthen its academic outcomes, expand opportunities for students and develop areas of innovation that have earned recognition well beyond the Isle of Wight. From the growth of the Sixth Form and the success of disadvantaged students, to the development of the award-winning maritime curriculum, Vicky has played a significant role in helping shape the school that Cowes is today.

However, those achievements tell only one side of her legacy. Vicky's greatest impact has been on people. She has supported generations of young people through their secondary education, worked alongside families during moments of celebration and challenge, and provided calm, compassionate leadership for colleagues. Her dedication to the young people of Cowes and her belief in their potential have left a lasting mark on the school and the wider community.

The Cowes community has always been at its strongest when people come together, and Vicky has embodied that spirit throughout her time here. Whether welcoming nervous Year 6 students on transition day, celebrating examination successes, attending community events or supporting families through difficult times, she has been a constant and trusted presence.

As Vicky and her family prepare for an exciting move away from the Island, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for everything she has given to Cowes Enterprise College. While she will be greatly missed, we know she leaves with the affection, respect and appreciation of students, staff, parents and the wider community.

On behalf of everyone at Cowes Enterprise College, thank you, Vicky, for your leadership, dedication and service over the past eight years. We wish you and your family every happiness, success and adventure in the future.

Our expectations for students will remain high because high expectations are a sign of belief. We believe every student at Cowes Enterprise College can succeed, and our role is to provide the clarity, support, challenge and opportunities needed to help them achieve their full potential.

Equally, we know that young people thrive when high expectations are matched by strong relationships, excellent pastoral support and a genuine sense of belonging. Our ambition is to ensure every student feels known, valued and supported throughout their time at Cowes Enterprise College.

We are incredibly excited about the future and privileged to have the opportunity to serve the Cowes community. We look forward to working alongside students, families and staff as we continue to build a school where every young person can flourish.

In the meantime, we would like to wish all students, families and staff a safe, restful and enjoyable summer break.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back in September. A reminder that Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd September will be Staff Development Days. Students in Year 7 and Year 11 will join us on Thursday 3rd September, with Years 8, 9, 10 and sixth form returning on Friday 4th September.

Kind regards,

Paul Slaughter
Executive Principal

Ruth Griffiths-Nash
Head of School