HEREFORD CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

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Dear Old Herefordian,

RE: Strategic update, choral developments and introduction of Heads of Year

It has been lovely to have met so many of you at various events since becoming Headmaster of HCS in September and it is, of course, a tremendous privilege and responsibility to lead our venerable and wonderful School.

At the heart of our vision is a commitment to ensure that all pupils leave real-world ready and are equipped to thrive in a rapidly-changing world of technological disruption, environmental challenge, and geopolitical uncertainty. In addition to strong qualifications, it is imperative that our young people also have the digital, social, and cognitive literacies that they need. Our introduction of personal laptop devices for all pupils from this September and the related curricular changes is one such example of what this means in practice. Similarly illustrative is the introduction of the HCS Diploma, which will accompany pupils' three A-Levels, and through our new Elective programme, Sixth Formers will leave HCS having completed short courses on subjects as diverse as personal finance, cooking, coding, and how to have difficult conversations. This will be alongside opportunities for leadership and service within the wider community.

We have recently launched a new educational podcast series called *HCS: Helping Children Succeed*, which can be found here. Each episode, I talk with a high-profile guest along themes relating to real-world readiness. In the first episode, I'm joined by former Scotland international Joe Ansbro as we discuss race, rugby and resilience.

In addition to updating you on the exciting developments above, I also wanted to share with you the wonderful news that the Chapter of Hereford Cathedral has announced today that it will be welcoming girls to join the internationally-renowned Hereford Cathedral Choir. The choir, which has been in existence for many centuries, has until now consisted of boy choristers ranging from ages 7-13. This year, for the first time in its history, girls of the same age as the boys will also be invited to audition for the choir and to receive a full musical education as choristers. As a School, we are delighted that this exceptional musical and educational opportunity is now going to be offered to girls as well as boys, further enhancing the Cathedral's offering of worship as well as our own sector-leading reputation for music.

I also wanted to write to explain how we are strengthening our pastoral structures and academic monitoring in order to support our pupils to the greatest possible extent. The House system is an integral part of HCS and provides a vertical pastoral structure with each House consisting of pupils across the entire age range from Year 7 to Year 13. The principal benefits of the House system are the collegiality and identity that it brings, as well as the opportunities for pupils across different year groups to come together and integrate.

Consequently, the House system at HCS will continue, and each pupil will remain a member of either Cornwall, Langford, Somerset or Stuart, with House Assemblies and inter-house competitions remaining

a key part of school culture. Nevertheless, from September 2022, the principal structures for the pastoral and academic support of pupils will now be through Heads of Year.

Each Head of Year will have responsibility for significantly fewer pupils; at present the 560 pupils in the Senior School are split across just four Heads of House. This will mean that the pastoral leads can know the pupils better and spend more time with them. Additionally, the Heads of Year can specialise in the specific themes which are more pertinent to their year group, whether that is helping Year 7 pupils to settle into the School, guiding Year 9 pupils with their GCSE option choices, or university guidance in the Sixth Form. The change will also ensure greater consistency across a year group in addressing any incidents relating to pastoral care or pupils' conduct which would be dealt with by a single individual, rather than by up to four different Heads of House. It is also the case that the introduction of Heads of Year will enable the tracking of a year group's academic progress with greater effectiveness, harnessing the power of our new academic tracking system, and facilitating the requisite interventions to enable each pupil to fulfil their potential.

This is an exciting chapter of HCS's long and prestigious history and I do hope that you will continue to come and visit us in the Close at various OH events to learn more about these developments as we take the School from strength to strength and equip our pupils for a rapidly-changing world.

With many thanks and warmest wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Michael Gray
Headmaster