

## Highlands School Annual Governance Report 2024

I look forward to the beginning of every new academic year with a sense of excitement and purpose, trying to find ways of building and improving on the successes of the previous year. Try as one might, perfection does not exist in any school and so we strive for the next best thing which is to continue on our upward journey of improvement by learning from the past and planning for the future.

The board of governors and the senior leadership team share one indomitable spirit; only the best will do for our students. Through determined governance, we will redouble our efforts to ensure that no students are left behind and that whatever their backgrounds or abilities, every student has the opportunity to thrive. Governance is only as good as the difference it makes.

Once again, the GCSE results were very pleasing and great credit must go to the students, their teachers and everyone who played a part. Addressing educational inequality continues to be one of our country's greatest challenges, and I believe every school has a role to play in trying to create a fairer society. That is why I am incredibly proud of how at Highlands we have managed to improve the progress of students from less advantaged backgrounds this year compared with students who encounter fewer barriers to learning.

Our sixth form has also provided the foundation for another highly impressive raft of A Level results with 84% of our students achieving their first or second choice university place. Additionally, one third of all A Level grades were awarded at A or A\*, with over 60% of all grades falling within the A-B\* range. Our BTEC students have also excelled, with 65% achieve Distinction or Distinction\* grades. Very well done to all of the students and staff, we couldn't be prouder.

Aside of excellent academic achievement in the classroom, we believe we have developed something special in terms of encouraging other life experiences, very often referred to as 'cultural capital'. Our DARE days where every student has the opportunity to participate in exciting activities and experiences have proved a resounding success, enriching the taught curriculum and opening our students' eyes to the wider world of culture, arts, sport and academia.

In terms of the bigger picture, the educational landscape is moving onwards and upwards too. I'm sure most of you will be aware that the DfE have announced that Ofsted will be scrapping the one-word judgements from the start of this year and transitioning to a more nuanced and supportive inspectorial regime with improvement at the heart of their work, or in their words, "doing good as you go." I'm sure that this will pave the way for greater trust and understanding between the inspectors and the inspected. Let's hope so.

Where does that leave us you may ask? Well, I can speak on behalf of Mr McInerney and my colleagues on the board of governors in assuring you that there will be no let up in our commitment to providing what we aspire to be a world class education for all at Highlands.

And that is where you as parents and carers come in too. You play a crucial role in supporting your child's education. Making sure that they attend school every single day (unless they are unwell) is a good starting point, but beyond that, showing an active interest in their learning is important too. Most student's progress does not form a neat linear trajectory, they will suffer road bumps along the way and that is where you can work with the school to help get them back on track.

A great way of keeping in touch is through our excellent weekly newsletter. It provides breaking news, important information about school activities and wonderful stories of individual and class achievements. It tells you what is happening in school in a way that most students don't think to mention to parents and carers when asked!

Before I sign off, I would like to extend a big Highlands welcome to the Year 7 students – you will find your feet soon enough – and the students who have joined us in year 12 for the first time, and all other new students and of course their families and carers.

As I said, it promises to be an exciting year ahead and I'm sure we will achieve great things, remembering of course, ***it takes all of us!***

Matt Miller MBE  
Chair of Governors  
Highlands School

September 2024