

Friday 28th April 2017

Dear Parents and Staff,

Letter from the Headmaster-elect

I am delighted to be the Headmaster-elect of Huddersfield Grammar School and look forward to becoming part of what is clearly a very special community of pupils, colleagues and parents. It is abundantly clear in my ongoing discussions with the Headmaster, and within Cognita, that Huddersfield Grammar School is very highly regarded, both in the local community and across the family of schools.

I am conscious of the excellent work of Tim Hoyle over the last six years, during which time you have come together as a community to achieve outstanding academic results, while enjoying significant building improvements and establishing an enviable reputation as a community-facing school that puts families first. Having spent two productive days at the school over the Easter break to begin the handover process with Tim, tour the facilities and meet a number of colleagues, I left with a very favourable impression and with great excitement for what we will achieve together in the years that lie ahead. My wife, Trine, also enjoyed touring Yorkshire as the hunt for a family home began!

Over the next weeks and months, I will continue to work very closely with Tim and the senior leadership team as I learn more about the success that the school has enjoyed to date and begin planning for this new chapter. I also look forward to spending several days in school during the penultimate week of the Summer Term to meet you all and will be attending the New Parents' Meeting and what promises to be a splendid Garden Party. Well ahead of this, I will be interviewed by pupils from the School Council and will doubtless need to be on my mettle!

Whilst Huddersfield Grammar School will continue to evolve under my leadership, our ambition for the pupils, the warmth of our welcome to families and our ties to the wider community will remain undimmed. We will continue to ensure that we encourage each and every child to go *above and beyond expectation*, be it academically, on the stage or on the sports field, and to do so with kindness and humility. At all times, our mantra will be 'excellence in everything we do'.

As an educator, I have been very fortunate to have worked in a range of British and international schools, from the hamlets of Suffolk and Sussex through to the metropolis of Jakarta and the desert setting of the United Arab Emirates. Although the landscapes have shifted, I have been anchored throughout by the firm belief that children achieve excellence when they are happy, inspired and excited by their learning every day. The days of factory-line education are thankfully behind us.

Just as great works of art and design are first imagined and then executed through a rigorous approach, I believe that creativity and rigour are independent facets of inspirational teaching, and that the finest schools fuse the two in their approach to teaching and learning. So whilst great teachers will never settle for sloppy thinking, reluctant participation in debates or half-hearted writing, they will also want the pupils to have fun, to provoke an emotional response to the subject and to have a sense of awe in the extraordinary world in which they live. And so they will combine rigour with relentless creativity in the way that they teach, knowing that an engaged and enthused child is best placed to truly excel. This is, of course, every bit as true on the stage or on the sports field as it is in the classroom.

I have served at different phases of my career as a Head of Section, Director of Learning and, more recently, as Head of Senior School in two independent schools. Perhaps my most formative experience came at Brighton College Al Ain, an overseas branch of England's most academically successful co-educational school, where I led the Senior School. Within eight months of its opening in September 2013, the College achieved the highest school ranking in the Abu Dhabi emirate and, less than two years into its lifespan, achieved universally 'excellent' judgements in an ISI framework inspection delivered by senior leaders at Brighton at UK. Our first set of GCSE results were the seventh highest across the entire Middle Eastern and North African region (MENA), and we shared the top ranking in the country by year three. It was a wonderful period of growth for the school.

I am married to Trine, who hails from Denmark, and is a former Executive PA. We have an eight-year old daughter, Ellis, and a son, Alex, who is six. Our two dogs will be joining us in Huddersfield and, as Arabian salukis, may take a while to get adjusted to the drop in temperature! One of my fondest memories as a child was exploring the Yorkshire Dales with my parents, and we have strong family ties to Yorkshire, so look forward to exploring this beautiful part of the world whilst also learning more about Huddersfield's rich industrial heritage. After several years abroad, my family and I really looking forward to settling in Yorkshire for many years to come.

I wish you the very best for a successful Summer Term and look forward immensely to seeing you soon.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Seaton', written in a cursive style.

Michael Seaton