



# WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

woodhousegrove.co.uk

18 December 2024

Dear Parents

As we look forward to the Festive season with great optimism and excitement, the End of Term provides us all with a timely opportunity to reflect on key moments, events and achievements over the past few months. The Chancellor's announcement on 29 July 2024, introducing significant changes to the tax policy affecting Independent Schools, effective from 1 January 2025, was both unexpected and deeply unwelcome. Keir Starmer insists that his decision to place VAT on Independent School fees is not ideological, describing it as a "difficult decision" but one he deems necessary to raise revenue—revenue that will purportedly be used to hire 6,500 new teachers for State Schools, where 44,000 teachers left the profession last year.

Few would deny the urgent need for better funding in State Schools. However, it is vital to question whether this policy will achieve its aims, while also reflecting on the broader impact it will have on the thriving Independent School sector. A sector that, as many believe, significantly contributes to education as a whole. Sadly, I fear this policy threatens much of that contribution.

Beyond the financial implications, education is, at its heart, an ecosystem – thriving on diversity and interdependence. Independent schools are often mischaracterized as a problem or a detriment to society; yet, as we know, this could not be further from the truth. State and Independent Schools should coexist, working together to meet the diverse needs of every child. Woodhouse Grove's longstanding partnership with One In a Million Free School is a testament to this vision. By widening educational and sporting opportunities in our local area, this collaboration serves as a blueprint for meaningful partnerships between the sectors.

Our new Government has rightly recognized the vital role of the private and voluntary sectors in healthcare. A similar, open-minded approach to education, "unburdened by doctrine," as Prime Minister Starmer himself put it, would be equally welcome. Unfortunately, the imminent VAT changes risk undermining social mobility, special educational needs provision, faith-based education, and Britain's standing in the global education market. Even from an economic perspective, HM Treasury may have little to show for it.

Despite all these challenges, I am pleased to report that this has been another hugely successful Term in the life of Woodhouse Grove. As ever, I extend my heartfelt thanks to your children for their extraordinary commitment and contributions to what has been an exceptionally busy Term. Quite how they manage to balance academic preparation – including, end-of-unit tests, trial exams, and university applications – with leading roles in our school production, performing in music concerts, and representing The Grove in sports fixtures and other events, never ceases to amaze me.

Woodhouse Grove is a school of breadth and opportunity, much of which is regularly showcased in our fortnightly editions of [Newsflash](#) and the latest publication of [News From The Grove](#). At every level, our young people are making what they will one day realise are significant academic strides while also engaging in a multiplicity of activities. Their ability to embrace challenges, take risks, and immerse themselves in both curricular and co-curricular opportunities exemplifies the Grovian Values we hold so dear. These experiences not only nurture their

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Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.  
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intellectual growth but also develop their character, resilience, and sense of community, equipping them with skills they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

The School's Performing Arts departments should be congratulated on their production of ***Chicago: Teen Edition***, delivering two performances that were nothing short of brilliant. Under the expert direction of Mrs Habergham, the show captured the heart and spirit of this iconic musical, leaving the audiences on both nights enthralled from start to finish. Mr Sunley and his team provided outstanding technical support, creating an atmosphere that perfectly complemented the action on stage. The technical aspects – lighting, sound, and set transitions – were seamless and professional, heightening the drama and spectacle of the production. Many thanks to Mr Wilson, Mrs Kerr and all our musicians, from across the whole School community, who made up a fantastic pit band, and whose musical accompaniment brought the jazzy, sultry score of Chicago to life with flair and energy. Their skill and precision added a vibrant heartbeat to the performance, rivalling that of many professional productions.

What truly set this production apart was the impeccable attention to detail in staging, costumes, and make-up, which wouldn't have looked out of place on a West End stage. The visual elements, paired with the dynamic choreography, thanks to Miss Green, transported the audience straight into the world of 1920s Chicago. But the true stars of the evening were the talented young cast. Each performer gave their all, imbuing the story with humour, drama, and a depth of character far beyond their years. It was clear that every single performer loved being part of this show, and their passion was infectious, drawing the audience into the story and ensuring each performance was truly unforgettable. Congratulations to the entire team for pulling off a truly exceptional production!

Our Charity Committee, led by Gabby and Vee and supported by Mrs Nulty and the Chaplain, has launched an exciting year of fundraising guided by our school values of ***Kindness and Generosity***. After a Whole School vote, our chosen charities for this year are Bradford North Foodbank, Save the Children, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), St. Gemma's Hospice, Cancer Research UK, and the British Heart Foundation. Highlights include a Non-Uniform day for Save the Children, a Battle of the Bands fundraising concert for WWF, an Easter fundraiser for St. Gemma's Hospice, a House Cake Bake for Cancer Research, and an End of Year Non-Uniform day for the British Heart Foundation. We continue to support the Royal British Legion during Remembrance and Candlelighters at Christmas. A huge thank you to everyone who helps make these fundraisers impactful and educational for our young people.

At the End of Term, I would like to share some updates regarding staff changes at the School. At Half Term Mrs Frazer joined the English department to provide cover for Miss Hughes, who is currently on maternity leave. We also welcomed Mr Leak, who has been appointed as supply cover for the Maths and Computing teams following Mr Higgins' departure. Mr Leak brings a wealth of international teaching experience. At the end of this Term, we bid farewell to Mr Bradburne, our Director of Sport, whose hard work and impact on the School community have been greatly appreciated. Please rest assured that despite these changes, we remain committed to maintaining the highest standards of education and student experience, which I am pleased to report our new colleagues have embraced with enthusiasm.

Following a very convivial Boarders' Christmas Ball and a magical Carol Service, the Term time festivities concluded yesterday evening with the spectacular Christmas Concert. If you are staying local this Christmas, please do come and join us for the **Family Carol Service being held in the School Chapel on Tuesday 24 December at 5.00 pm.**

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The following Parents' Meetings will be held remotely next Term. Further details will be sent out under separate cover nearer the time:

- Year 10 Wednesday 15 January
- Year 12 Thursday 13 February
- Year 7 (for Forms W, H and G) Wednesday 26 February
- Year 7 (for Forms S, V and E) Tuesday 04 March
- Year 8 (for Forms W, H and G) Thursday 13 March
- Year 8 (for Forms S, V and E) Monday 17 March

**Please note that the Year 9 Parents' Meeting and Options Talk will be held in person on Tuesday 28 January. Further details will also be sent out under separate cover nearer the time.**

Our boarders return to School from 6.00 pm on Monday 06 January 2025, with the Term commencing for day pupils at 8.30 am on the following day, Tuesday 07 January 2025.

Sarah and I wish you all a very peaceful and relaxing Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

With all my best wishes,

Yours sincerely

**James Lockwood MA**  
**Headmaster**

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