



Highworth Combined School & Nursery

Newsletter – 21st July 2026

Dear all

As we come to the end of another wonderful school year, it is also a time when we say farewell and thank you to some very special members of our staff team. Their contribution to our school community has been immense, and it is important that we take a moment to recognise the difference they have made to the lives of our children, families and colleagues.

This year, we bid a fond farewell to four members of staff who are retiring after many years of dedicated service.

Karen Tavender has been the person behind all things medical in our school and a reassuring presence for pupils, parents and staff alike. Calm in a crisis and always willing to help, Karen's knowledge of our school and the way it works is second to none. Whether ordering everyday essentials such as glue sticks or managing the logistical challenge of not one but two staff room refurbishments following a flood, Karen has always ensured that everything runs smoothly behind the scenes. We are enormously grateful for her commitment and dedication over the years. Karen, we hope retirement brings you many more opportunities to enjoy time in Spain and to make the most of this exciting new chapter.

Maria Smith has worked tirelessly to support our school community in countless ways. While many of us may not always think about it, Maria has been the person ensuring that staff are paid correctly every month, and for that we are all extremely grateful. She has also played a crucial role in recruitment, ensuring references are obtained, safeguarding requirements are met and that the school remains fully compliant. Her careful attention to detail has helped keep our children safe and our school running effectively. Maria, we wish you a long, happy retirement and hope you enjoy every precious moment with your grandchildren, especially the newest addition to your family, who arrived just a few weeks ago.

Brenda Desmond, our bursar, has been central to the successful management of our school's finances. She has carefully overseen budgets, ensured our spending is well planned, paid our suppliers promptly and helped guarantee that we always have the resources we need for our pupils to thrive. Brenda has also provided invaluable support to our governing body and played a key role in ensuring the long-term financial stability of the school. We thank her for her wisdom, diligence and unwavering commitment. Brenda, we wish you every happiness in your future adventures and hope that one day you achieve your dream of moving to the Dorset coast to live by the sea.

We also have to say farewell to Yvonne Kern, who retires after more than 25 years of service in Buckinghamshire schools. Throughout her career, Yvonne has taught and inspired generations of children. She has witnessed enormous changes in education and has always met them with positivity and a willingness to embrace new ideas. Her colleagues will particularly miss her wonderful sense of humour and the many entertaining stories she has shared over the years, including tales from one especially memorable residential trip. We know that Yvonne had hoped for a different ending to her teaching career and that ill health has made her final months particularly challenging. We sincerely hope that retirement brings improved health, rest and happiness, and that she is able to enjoy the retirement she has so richly earned.

We would also like to thank two valued members of staff who are moving on to new opportunities.

Olga Nunn has been a dedicated member of our Senior Leadership Team for the past seven years. During that time, she has made a significant contribution to the life of our school, helping to lead and support staff, pupils and families through both the everyday successes and the challenges that school life can bring. Alongside her leadership responsibilities, Olga has overseen the teaching of science across the school, ensuring that our children have benefitted from engaging, high-quality learning experiences and opportunities to develop their curiosity about the world around them.

Liam Haines leaves us after three years at the school and will be greatly missed by children, parents and colleagues alike. Liam has built strong relationships across our school community and has been a popular and valued member of staff throughout his time with us. As well as his contribution in the classroom, Liam has certainly made his mark on our sporting events. His determination to win the staff race at Sports Day has become something of an annual tradition and source of amusement for pupils and staff alike. I suspect that Mr Leslie may be secretly relieved not to have to face such fierce competition on the running track next year!

On behalf of all the governors, staff, pupils, parents and carers, I would like to thank all of these members of the team for their dedication, professionalism and service to our school. They each leave behind a lasting legacy and have made our school a better place because of their hard work and care.

Best wishes

Clare Pankhania