

Headteacher Overview – December 2024

Writing the overview for the Headship pack is akin to writing your own obituary! I believe Christopher Whitehead is a truly unique and special school with lovely students and superbly conscientious staff with a committed caring core, who are unknowingly fabulously talented. This is a school that will thrive, continue to thrive and requires a Head who is passionate about this community, the young people. I hope you are that person and will assist you in whatever way I can, without, I hope, being a looming ex Manchester United manager Alex Fergusson omnipresent ghost, always there looking on!

I believe some of the school's current strengths are, in no particular order:

- Parental popularity – our recent Open Days for Year 7/12 were the largest ever and we are universally first choice. Being full and able to budget is so reassuring. 32 staff currently have their children at the school, a lovely accolade.
- Student behaviour is exemplary. We do not have fights, have a very strong pastoral safeguarding team with clear processes that assist the behaviour. The last five Ofsted inspections have rightly graded this outstanding – with the invaluable personalised PSHE curriculum, taught by specialists, backed by a bespoke assembly programme.
- Sixth Form is becoming an embedded strength. 139 students joined in 2024 and the staff are now confident and articulate A-level/Level 3 practitioners. Students have individualised pathways with three students attending Cambridge to study Veterinary Science, Maths and Geography, a showcase of the successful, wide variety of courses. Yet, Police, Army and M&S apprenticeships also show the students go on pathways to suit their need, not the prestige of the school.
- Mandarin Excellence Programme is a superb challenging curriculum that offers something unique – it needs support to continue to thrive.
- A well organised ECT programme that is rigorous and follows the Tom Sherrington 'walkthru' method of lesson observation. This has led to some dynamic, well prepared younger staff.
- A wide variety of extra curricular courses and events that offer huge opportunities for all to participate and be proud of attending the school. Please see the latest newsletters.
- A vertical house system and tutor programme that ensures 60 staff and their students fully understand what is occurring in the school.
- Supportive, skilled Governors who have a wide range of skills and in many cases have given a lot of time and experience to the school.

There is always so much more to do. These are the areas I would look at in 2025, again in no particular order:

- GCSE results are average. English and Science are areas under new Heads of Department that will produce progress, need to produce progress.
- Staffing budget is 87% - we have to now reduce this budget. We now have a significant healthy balance, that has not always been the case. Nevertheless, finance or lack of it has always been an annual challenge, £138,000 spent on electricity, a £50,000 increase despite less consumption, burgeoning exam budget and decrepit minibus are examples of the pressures all schools are under. A marketing and publicity strategy starting with the website/alumni has been a long term yet not started aim!

- The potential MAT is exciting but not correct at the present time and will be a leadership challenge. How do we ensure that our unique child centred culture is not eroded by an expensive centralised team? How do we ensure that it is not a Hereford plus one MAT? Where will the sixth form support come from?
- Attendance needs to return to the pre covid 96%. It is currently 93%.
- Buildings, despite recent huge investment, are a never-ending challenge – with a 70 year old main boiler, leaking roof, the deteriorating state of the Learning Support Centre and flooded inadequate PE fields being the current problems/priorities.

However, do not be put off. This is the 'best job in the world', you will be supported, have an unbelievable, knowledgeable PA and an experienced Senior Team with a wide skill set. It is a privilege and honour to be the Headteacher at Christopher Whitehead Language College.

Whatever your intentions, thank you for reading and good luck in this demanding process and your career.

Neil Morris
Headteacher

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