THE BURGESS HILL ACADEMY

Stronger Together:

Our First Half Term with Sussex Learning Trust



INSIDE, WE ALSO TALK ABOUT:

Behind the Scenes at TBHA - Page 3

Our New Headteacher - Page 4

Student Voice - Page 5

A strong start, new opportunities, and plenty to celebrate.

It's been a busy and positive first half term at The Burgess Hill Academy as we begin an exciting new chapter as part of Sussex Learning Trust.

There has been plenty happening across the academy, from welcoming our new Year 7 cohort and strengthening relationships with local primary schools, to developing teaching, learning, and support for our children.

Behind the scenes, staff have also been working hard to build on the academy's strengths, strengthen our systems, and create even more opportunities for children and the wider community.

Here's a look at some of the highlights from our first half term together.



A warm welcome, and growing interest in our academy

It's been wonderful to see such strong interest in The Burgess Hill Academy from prospective families this year.

Our September 2026 Open Evening saw a **23% increase in attendance** from the previous year, a fantastic reflection of the interest in our academy and the opportunities we offer.

We've also seen a significant increase in families wanting to experience the academy through a personal tour. We extended our tour programme from three days in 2025 to **16 days** this year, resulting in a **125% increase** in the number of families taking up the opportunity to visit.

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Open Evening and tours such a success, particularly the staff and children who took the time to share what makes The Burgess Hill Academy special.

A fantastic start for our new Year 7

We've been delighted to see how well our new Year 7 children have settled into life at The Burgess Hill Academy. This year's intake is **21% larger** than last year's, making it a particularly exciting start to the academic year.

Feedback from our Year 7 parent survey has been very encouraging:

- 94% of parents who responded said their child had **settled well**.
- 92% said their child was **positive** about coming to school.
- 89% said their child felt **safe and supported** at the academy.

We are particularly pleased to see such positive feedback around children's sense of belonging, safety, and wellbeing. Starting secondary school is a significant milestone, and we are grateful to our staff, children, and families for helping make the transition such a positive experience.

We also recognise that communication with families remains an important area of focus, and we will continue working to ensure parents feel informed and connected to academy life.

From the desk of Phil Snelling, Acting Headteacher



It has been a really positive start to the year. Students' conduct and focus on their learning have been exceptional, whilst their voices have helped us update our breaktime routines to create a more comfortable environment.

Alongside our colleagues at Sussex Learning Trust, we continue to shape how we develop the site, with some exciting developments to come very soon.

Lesson checks are showing calm, focused classrooms, with students engaged in purposeful learning and teachers clear about our simplified expectations for teaching.

We have also strengthened communication with parents and the wider community through our '5 by Friday' positive-contact initiative, and a clear expectation that teachers contact home before setting an after-school detention.

Inclusion remains a key priority. Working closely with our new governing body and colleagues from Sussex Learning Trust, we are continuing to strengthen our SEND provision so that it responds to students' needs and helps them access learning and thrive.

Teachers are clear about applying our Know, Adapt and Teach approach to inclusion in the classroom, and we are seeing more students thrive in all of their lessons.

There is more to do, but this positive start gives us a strong foundation to keep improving the experience we offer every student. With the continued dedication from all staff, our new governing body, Sussex Learning Trust, and our Executive Principal, Dan Wynne Willson, the school really is going from strength to strength.

Building on strong foundations: What's happening behind the scenes?

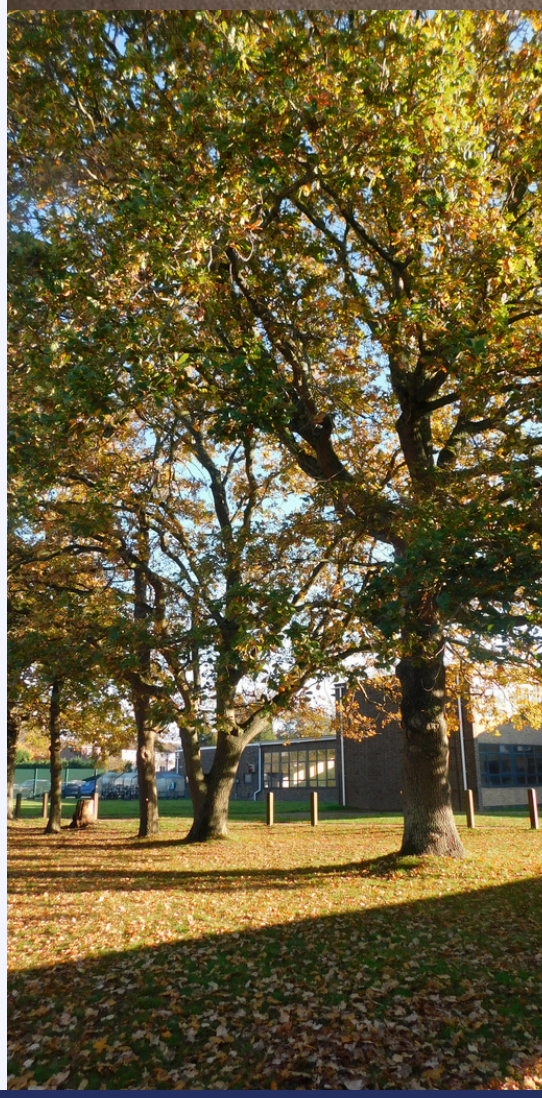
A great deal of work happens behind the scenes to make sure children have the best possible experience at school.

This first half term has seen staff working together across The Burgess Hill Academy and Sussex Learning Trust to review existing practices, strengthen support, and identify opportunities for further improvement.

Some of the work underway includes:

- **Stronger communication with parents:** Supporting the Headteacher to develop and implement a refreshed communication strategy, helping families stay informed and connected.
- **A calm environment for learning:** Reviewing and strengthening the academy's behaviour strategy to support consistency and protect the calm learning environment children need to thrive.
- **Sharing expertise across the Trust:** Colleagues at Warden Park Secondary Academy have been supporting the implementation of a new professional development structure for staff, bringing together experience and expertise from across our schools.
- **Preparing for the future:** Supporting the development of the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning, alongside preparations for external review and inspection.
- **Strengthening safeguarding:** Three members of staff have embarked on Sussex Learning Trust-led Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training, supporting the continued development of safeguarding expertise.
- **Listening and responding:** Reviewing administrative support, quality-assuring teaching and learning reviews, and gathering feedback from parents to help inform future improvements.





What's happening behind the scenes? continued:

- **Developing our governance:** Supporting the recruitment of a new governor and Chair of Governors to strengthen the academy's governance and oversight.
- **Enhancing the school environment:** Identifying practical improvements to the academy site, with an initial focus on classroom seating and more inspiring wall displays.

This work is about building on what already works well, while making sure the academy has the right structures, support, and opportunities to continue moving forward.

Looking ahead to a new chapter

There's an exciting new chapter ahead for The Burgess Hill Academy, with **Simon Addison** preparing to take up the role of **permanent Headteacher at Easter.**

Simon will begin working with the academy ahead of his full-time start, building relationships with staff and getting to know the school. Working alongside Mr Snelling, this will help ensure a **smooth transition and provide continuity** as the academy moves forward.

We look forward to welcoming Simon and building on the academy's strengths, ambitions and opportunities as part of Sussex Learning Trust.

Stronger connections with our local primary schools

Developing meaningful relationships with our local primary schools is a key priority for The Burgess Hill Academy.

We want children across Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, and Hassocks to have opportunities to experience what the academy offers, build relationships with our staff, and **feel confident** about the next stage of their education.

Departments across the academy are incorporating **primary liaison** into their staff development objectives, with plans to welcome younger children into the academy for subject-specific lessons and activities. From experiencing specialist facilities, to taking part in exciting learning opportunities, these visits will help primary-aged children discover more about secondary education.

Our **School Sports Coordinator** is also playing an important role in developing these relationships, with an ambitious programme of sporting opportunities already underway.

It's a great example of how being part of a wider Trust can help us bring schools together and **create opportunities that benefit children** across our communities.

Developing the next generation of sports leaders

Sport is creating exciting opportunities for our children to develop their confidence, teamwork, and leadership skills, while strengthening The Burgess Hill Academy's connections with local primary schools.

Our new **Year 8 Sports Leaders** programme has already welcomed 50 children, with a further 25 Year 9 children joining a new leadership programme.

The Year 8 leaders have already helped deliver a **Key Stage 1 Multi-Skills event**, attended by 90 primary-aged children.



Looking ahead, our **Year 9 leaders** will help deliver a primary handball event in November, while our Year 8 team is preparing to host a Year 2 and 3 **Football Festival**, with around 80 children expected to attend.

The programme has also helped establish relationships with **12 primary schools** across Burgess Hill and Hassocks, with plans to extend sporting opportunities further across Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, and the surrounding area.

These experiences are about more than sport. They give our older children the opportunity to take **responsibility**, develop valuable **life skills**, and make a **positive contribution** to their local community, while giving younger children opportunities to enjoy sport and build confidence.

Listening to our children: Making sure every voice counts

Understanding children's experiences of school is essential to making sure the right support is in place and that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Recent feedback gathered from our SEND and Pupil Premium children has provided some encouraging insights into their experiences of learning, relationships and support at The Burgess Hill Academy.

Among the findings:

96%
Feel safe in lessons and during social times.

93%
Say teachers notice when they need extra support.

92%
Say teachers explain what they have done well and how to improve.

96%
Understand the academy's expectations for behaviour for learning.

Making sure every voice counts continued:

The feedback also highlighted positive experiences around teaching and learning, with **89%** saying teachers adapt their explanations when they are struggling and **92%** saying the academy helps them develop confidence and skills for life beyond school.

These insights are important. They help us recognise what is working well while identifying where we can **continue to improve** the experience and support available to every child.

We will continue to listen carefully to children's voices and use their feedback to inform the academy's ongoing development.

Working together, listening to parents

A strong school community depends on **open, honest, and constructive relationships** between the academy and its families.

As part of our first half term with Sussex Learning Trust, we have been making opportunities to **hear directly from parents** and understand their experiences, views, and priorities.

We believe that listening is an important part of moving forward together. Parent feedback helps us recognise **what matters most to** families and where we can make **improvements**.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their views. Your feedback is valued and will continue to play an important role in shaping the academy's future.

If you haven't seen it yet, take a look at the video below of some of our parents talking about their children's experiences of life at The Burgess Hill Academy. Click the image below to view.



Looking ahead to the next half term

There is plenty to build on as we look ahead to the next half term.

We will continue developing our relationships with local primary schools, **creating opportunities** for children to learn and lead, **strengthening the support** available across the academy, and **listening** to the views of our community.

Our first half term has been about getting to know one another, building connections, and **laying strong foundations** for the future.

As part of Sussex Learning Trust, The Burgess Hill Academy benefits from being connected to a wider community of schools, colleagues, and shared expertise, while continuing to build on its own identity, strengths, and ambitions.

Thank you to our children, parents, staff, governors, and wider community for the part you have played in such a positive start.

We're looking forward to seeing what we can achieve **together**.

SUSSEX LEARNING TRUST





Stay in touch!

01444 241691 (TBHA) | 01444 457881 (SLT)

TBHA | SLT

TBHA | SLT

TBHA | SLT

TBHA | SLT