

6<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear students and parents

I trust all of our community had a restful break over Christmas and would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. With the start of the spring term, I would like to share with you all a range of updates about Collyer's as well as some exciting new projects for the college.

The autumn term was a very productive one with students getting fully back into their studies as well as broader activities such as events and Collyer's 360 enrichment. Well done to all students for all your hard work over the last few months which I am sure will be reflected in your Progress Review that is published tomorrow. Many of you will have mock exams in the week before February half term and I wish you the best of luck for these and any other formal assessments you may be taking during the term.

### **Recent events**

The second half of the autumn term is always busy with college events – an opportunity to show Collyer's at its best to our prospective students and our broader local community. Thank you to all staff and students who took part in the very successful Open Evenings on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of November. Our visitors received an incredibly warm welcome to our college community and were hugely impressed by what they heard and saw. Following record applications last year, interest in joining Collyer's has grown even further this year with applications up another 5% year on year so far. We are clearly seeing now increased demand from a growing demographic, but also benefitting from our outstanding reputation for sixth form education across the region.

December saw two very important events for our college and a way to show our appreciation to our local community. On December 2<sup>nd</sup> we had a packed audience at St. Mary's Church for our annual Christmas Concert which included classical music, Jazz, a choir and some enthusiastic carol singing from all present. As always the quality of the music and singing was incredibly high – well done to all involved:





In the last week of term on December 17<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our prize-giving event – an annual highlight of the academic year that sees us welcoming back recent Old Collyerians to the college. Certainly the class of '24 achieved very highly whilst with us and have gone on to forge their adult lives with great confidence. It was lovely to have so many back on site and to hear very uplifting citations read for their prizes, some of which were presented by the Master of the Mercers' Company who kindly joined us. And thank you to Calum, Jacob and Woody for some great jazz music to open the evening:





## Academisation

I wrote to all our community on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to share the exciting news that our joint application with The Forest School to form a new multi-academy trust was approved by the Department for Education. The new trust will be called the Horsham Learning Alliance, with a core mission to use the power of education to improve the lives of local young people. Since November we have been working very hard with our partners at Forest to plan all the steps required for our conversion to a 16-19 academy on 1st September 2025. A very important part of this process is to undertake a formal public consultation, which will run from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January to Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February. This is an opportunity for all our college community as well as other stakeholders such as the local community and schools across the region to find out more about the mission, vision and values of the trust and why we feel strongly that it will have a very positive impact on the local educational landscape.

I will write again next Monday to announce that the consultation has gone live and all of the relevant information will be hosted on our new trust website, an image of which is below. I very much hope you will support our plans and welcome you to submit your comments to the consultation via the survey form once it opens. I look forward to meeting some of you in person at one of the 'Town Hall' events we have planned in late January which will be detailed on the new website.



## Property strategy

Our Property Strategy 2023-26 has two distinct parts – one focused on improving what we already have in terms of teaching accommodation but also importantly social, catering and outside spaces - and the other looking to the future and expansion of the campus. Both parts are linked by a desire to respect our past heritage but prepare for a new, exciting future. Both have at their heart an absolute commitment to developing an attractive and healthy campus, one which encourages socialising, enhances nature and creates spaces which all our community can be proud of.

In my autumn term newsletter I shared pictures taken at the end of the summer holidays of brand new but rather empty looking social spaces – Café Annexe, Canopy and Common Room. I can assure you they are all very well used and much appreciated by students and we welcome the positive feedback received from our Richard Collyer Union and Student Governors. We also understand that as the college grows we need to keep considering options for new social and catering space, and we have started consulting on plans that will benefit students from September 2025 and which I look forward to sharing in future newsletters.

Also last time I wrote I showed exterior pictures of The Village – our new temporary area of teaching accommodation that has rehoused Music due to the discovery of RAAC early in 2024 and has also welcomed Geography as a new home. As hoped, these new classrooms have proven very popular, not least because they are notably larger than our existing teaching spaces. Overleaf I have included photos of both the Geography and Music classrooms as well as one of our three Music practice areas.

In terms of the RAAC project, our application to complete the works required is with the DfE and as soon as it is approved we will start work on removing the 'crumbly concrete' and replacing the floor with brand new concrete slabs. Some enabling works will take place during the spring term but the bulk of the major work will be confined to the summer holidays to avoid any impact on exams running in the Duckering Hall.

**Geography classroom**



**Geography classroom**



## Music classroom



## Music practice area



Looking further ahead, I am delighted to share that following a very popular and competitive public competition, we have appointed a team comprising two internationally renowned architects to lead development of the next stage of our masterplan. [BDP](#) and [Ritchie Studio](#) have enormous experience and expertise in projects such as ours and the team have already started rethinking how our campus can feel and look as it grows with new buildings. I hope to be able to share more detail next time I write, including some visuals of designs which will show a campus that continues to feel like a mini university, with a really attractive new state-of-the-art Tech Centre as the next phase of its development. During the coming months we will be involving more students and staff in the design of this new building and of course consulting with our local community as part of the planning process.

## Strikes

As you know we have an ongoing industrial action from the National Education Union (NEU) due to the Government not providing the same level of funding for pay to non-academised sixth form colleges (SFCs) as they have to academised SFCs and all state schools. I very much hope there will be a resolution soon to this dispute, which our professional body the Sixth Form Colleges Association has challenged through a Judicial Review. Schools have implemented the pay award of 5.5% since September 2024. Academised SFCs have received the additional funding to afford a pay award of 5.5% but cannot deliver it to their staff because they are in national collective pay bargaining with the non-academised SFCs, like Collyer's, who have received no additional funding.

I fully appreciate strike days cause disruption to our community and that any lost learning can have a negative impact. I would like to confirm that Collyer's will remain fully open on strike days and that we continue to anticipate that the majority of lessons will go ahead. At the time of writing, we have further strike days planned this week as follows:

- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Further information about this industrial action can be found in our [Strike Action FAQs](#).

## Safety in the park

During the autumn term I wrote on a number of occasions to highlight safety in Horsham Park and the fantastic response of both Sussex Police and Horsham District Council to the incidents back in October. I would like now to share one last update about this matter and some further positive news. We are very grateful to Cllr Sam Raby and officers from both Police and Council for joining a meeting at Collyer's with students on 17<sup>th</sup> December, at which safety both in the park and more broadly across the local area was discussed. A number of very positive safety initiatives are already in place, and officers listened openly to points made by our student representatives about further future improvements.

Groundworks in the Park have been completed during the Christmas holidays and have made a huge difference to sight lines from the footpath between Collyer's and the Pavilions leisure centre. Now almost all of the pathway is fully open to the park, which will reassure all using it. Clear signage about CCTV coverage is in place where the alleyway enters the main park and a mobile CCTV unit will be in operation covering that area amongst others. Whilst all our community should remain vigilant to their safety when out and about, it is clear that the area of the park close to Collyer's is much improved now.

Finally I would like to wish all our community an excellent spring term and all the best with your studies.



Dan Lodge  
Principal