Punctuation

The semi-colon

The semi-colon can be used instead of a full stop between two separate sentences, when you want to show a close relationship between them.

- This is Wednesday; we meet on Friday.

The semi-colon can also be used instead of a full stop in front of connectives.

- She was angry; however, she tried not to let it show.

The semi-colon should be used to separate items in a list that are longer than individual words.

- Wood Green High School College of Sport, Maths, and Computing is renowned for its exceptional exam results; the quality of its curriculum; its diverse offering of sporting activities; its superb teaching staff and friendly pupils.

The colon

The colon should be used when you want to introduce.

- There are two foods I dislike: tripe and beetroot.

The colon can be used to introduce a quotation, particularly a long quotation.

- These were the last words of Cecil Rhodes: "So little done, so much to do."

Apostrophe

Apostrophe of omission

When two words are combined into one (elision), an apostrophe must be used to replace the missing letter or letters.

- Was not -> wasn't
- Is not -> isn't
- Have not -> haven't
- Will not -> won't
- It's -> it is/it has
- They've -> they have

Apostrophe of possession

The apostrophe is used to show belonging or possession.

- The boy's coat = the coat belonging to the boy
- The boys' coats = the coats belonging to the boys

The apostrophe is place immediately after the "owner": in the first example, the boy is the owner: in the second, it is the boys. If the owner's name already ends with "s", just add an apostrophe. If the owner's name does not end with an "s", add an apostrophe plus "s".

Sometimes it is more logical to see the apostrophe as representing the word "of", rather than meaning "the owner of".

- Today's issues -> the issues of today
- The charity's generosity -> the generosity of the charity
- The people's compassion -> the compassion of the people