

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: The excitement of a new beginning

It is a pleasure to write to you at the start of a new academic year. I hope you all have had an excellent summer break and managed to create some everlasting memories of adventures and experiences. After speaking to colleagues, and a number of parents in recent weeks either on results days or around the community, it seems as though this summer period has provided us with a real opportunity to switch off and recharge. However, there is also fresh anticipation and excitement about the start of a new academic year.

No doubt our community might be feeling a touch of nerves about the return to school next week which is, as I say every year, completely understandable. Whether your child is moving into a different key stage or starting secondary school, significant change can often present itself as something much worse before it actually happens. I hope too that your child/ren is/are looking forward to returning; to seeing their friends, renewing those positive relationships with our staff or competing in that sports fixture. Of course, with all school life there may be some challenges we face that we don't enjoy, but there is always lots to look forward to which outweighs the difficulties.

In this newsletter, I will be sharing with you some changes and developments for the new term, which I would greatly appreciate you sharing with your child/ren so that they are aware of these before they return next week. The theme of this year is to try to reduce the amount of new initiatives but to embed and sustain the change that we have made over the past 12 months. As with any organisation, there are always things to improve and this is what I always find most exciting. The potential of our Academy is huge and I believe we took some significant steps last year to reaching this, on our journey towards excellence, in everything we do.

This progress has been demonstrated most impressively by our year 11 and year 13 pupils who received their GCSE and A-level/BTEC results last month. We were so very proud of these young people and their excellent achievements. They, unlike the cohorts before them, had no reduction of exam content and very limited exam aids to support them. Additionally, grade boundaries returned to pre-pandemic levels. Yet, they missed three terms of schooling, just like the young people who had succeeded before them. I have always tried to avoid comparisons in levels of difficulty for year groups as a result of the pandemic because it's no doubt it was impactful for all. However, to return to 2019 standards and respond so well, is a credit to these year groups, the families who supported them and the staff who worked tirelessly to help them reach their potential.

At A-level, the students achieved an 89% pass rate and 100% distinction or merit in BTEC qualification route. There were many excellent achievements amongst our A-level cohort. There were many individuals that deserve a specific mention. Martha Hodges who has accepted a place at Oxford to study English and French, having achieved an A* in English Literature, an A in French and an A in Maths; Ella Moore who achieved A in Art, A in Maths and B in Physics, and will go on to study Architecture at Nottingham; and Clare Graves who achieved As in Spanish and Politics and a B in History. We are exceptionally proud of our Sixth Form and the personalised approach it offers. We believe in an inclusive post-16 offer and this is demonstrated in our entry requirements and high course completion rates. We are proud of the fact that we continue to offer a personalised, academic pathway of study and are working hard to further develop our offer throughout this academic year.

At GCSE, 79% of students achieved a standard pass or above in English and maths combined. Despite the grade boundary changes this was a 3% increase on last year and, with further remarks being processed, this may increase further. There was a total of 279 7-9 grades across all subjects equating to 21% of the grades awarded, 72% of pupils achieved a strong pass in English and the average number of GCSE qualifications taken per pupil was 8.3, a strong demonstration of our inclusive ethos and approach. Amongst the many students who have excelled there were notable achievements by Eva Knight (eight Grade 9s; one Grade 8 and one Grade 7), Isla Hodges and Polly

Chumbley (both with six Grade 9s and four Grade 8s), Ella Daniels (four Grade 9s; five Grade 8s; one Grade 7) and Freddie Garner-Smith (one Grade 9; four Grade 8s; five Grade 7s).

We are of course pleased by these outcomes as it provides those young people with the platform that they need for the next chapter in their lives. However, as I am sure you are aware, our Academy prides itself on the character development of our young people. Our pupils left this year once again demonstrating those values we strive to foster; the qualities of independence, insight, imagination and inquisitiveness. These values will continue to be at the centre of every decision we make and approach we take. These young people showed an exceptional inner strength, tolerance, kindness and compassion along the way. For those leaving us at the end of their time at JFAN, we wish them well and ask them to continue to keep in touch through our Old Newportonian Alumni Association; details of this can be found on our website. We are excited though to see an increase in Sixth Form pupils enrolling this year and are delighted with those year 11 pupils, both who were with us at key stage 4 and those who were not, have chosen us to support them with their post-16 education. We look forward to supporting you along the journey.

This now leads me on to explain some of the updates and reminders for the upcoming academic year. We have decided upon four, ambitious key priorities to focus upon over the next 12 months in our pursuit of excellence, in everything we do. These are:

- To embed a culture where the quality of classroom practice is consistently excellent, focusing on particular aspects of teaching such as fostering excellent pupil relationships
- To refine our curriculum across all subjects, focusing particular on subject-based reading, to ensure learning is accessible for all
- To sustain a culture where staff and pupils are confident and reflective, through systems and processes that provide everyone with the best opportunity for success
- To establish a school setting with new and improved security features that is inspiring and supports a focus on high quality teaching and learning

There are inevitable some difficult barriers to overcome when addressing these priorities. For example, the national crisis in teacher recruitment remains a concern for all schools and can limit the impact of classroom practice and reduce standards of behaviour. I am very pleased with the recruitment we undertook for this year both in terms of teaching and non-teaching staff. However, as has been the case over the past two years, the recruitment process no longer pauses; it continues throughout the year as we strive to attract the best possible people to our Academy and Anglian Learning trust.

In order to address these priorities immediately, I have the following updates to give you on the new academic year:

1. The “Standards Cycle” – Unlike in previous years, the Academy has not made significant changes to our ‘Behaviour for Learning’ policy over the summer period. This is to allow further time for the philosophy set out in this policy to embed. However, there will be refinements to some of the processes of how we track pupil behaviour (both in terms of rewards and consequences) and how this is reported to you. Further information about this will be shared with you later this month by colleagues in the Academy Leadership Team.

In this letter, I would like to draw your attention to the ‘Standards Cycle’ this academic year. Every two weeks we will be focusing on a particular aspect of our ‘Behaviour for Learning’ policy and relentlessly ensuring that all pupils comply with it. The first two weeks of this cycle will once again focus on mobile phones and electronic devices such as AirPods. The Academy will inform the community of the focus of the ‘Standards’ Cycle’ before it takes place so that all pupils have a full understanding of what is expected.

2. Mobile phone policy – As this is the first focus of our ‘Standards Cycle’, I thought it important to remind you of our mobile phone policy. At the Academy, we understand that mobile phones provide you and your child with the necessarily security needed when travelling to and from school. Therefore, they are not banned on site and neither do we ask pupils to lock them away in a central place.

However, between 8:30 and 3:15 mobile phones must be switched off and in bags. If they are seen during this period they will be confiscated and this will be centrally logged. The mobile phone will then be returned to the pupil at the end of the day from Student Reception. However, if it is a repeated occurrence,

the mobile phone will be confiscated for a longer period as set out in our 'Behaviour for Learning' policy, section 7.1. We will also ask for you to collect your child's mobile if it has been confiscated more than once. We hope you can understand the reasoning behind this approach. Mobile phones are a distraction to learning and can also place pupils in unsafe situations. Furthermore, in an age where technology seems to be moving faster than we can keep up with, the importance of oracy, where pupils talk to one another rather than message one another, I think will be of vital necessity in the years to come.

3. Uniform – Ensuring that pupils are in the correct uniform, throughout the academic day, will form a key part of the 'Standards Cycle'. We will be particularly focusing upon shirts being tucked in and kilts being at the appropriate length. Your child's/ren's form tutor will be issuing them with a Smart Card at the start of the academic year. It is vital that this card is kept on their person at all times. If our uniform policy is breached during the school day, this card will be signed. After three staff signatures, a consequence will be issued and they will be given a new card. The Academy undertook a uniform review last year with a group of pupils, particular focusing upon a change of the kilt to a formal skirt from next September. It is still the Academy's intention to make this change for several reasons; one of them being that this will be more cost effective for families. The trouser option will still be available to all pupils. Further information about this will come out later in the academic year.
4. Induction day – This year we have implemented an induction day for years 7, 10 and 12 as they begin their new key stage. This will be on Tuesday 5th September and there will be a specific program for the day for each year group which they will be informed about during registration time. There will also be some year 7 adjustments throughout the first two weeks to support them during their start at secondary school. This induction period of course has already started with a brilliant sports event last Thursday. It was great to see so many pupils on site, using our facilities and excited about the years ahead. Years 8, 9, 11 and 13 will begin their academic year on Wednesday 6th September. We are really looking forward to welcoming all our pupils back to our community. Pupils on this day will go straight to their form rooms and there will be posters around the school to direct them where to go. Additionally, on Monday 4th September, pupil timetables will be published on the Sims Student App which all pupils in years 8-11 should be able to view unless they have recently joined the Academy.
5. Staff updates- We have enjoyed welcoming our new colleagues during our inset day today and shortly our staff list will be published on our website for you to view. However, a couple of important appointments to note for your information. Firstly, Ms Gradisnik and Ms Reynolds will be continuing their role as Head of Year for this upcoming term, leading our year 8 cohort. Additionally, at the end of last academic year we appointed Mrs Daveta as our new SENDCo. We are very excited about these appointments and, with their leadership, the Academy will continue to go from strength to strength.
6. Joining the team – We currently are looking for support staff to join our team including an Attendance Officer. For further information about this post or any other, you can access our website page, [here](#).
7. Learning environment and developments to site – Over the summer period we have had a significant amount of projects being undertaken to improve the site which pupils will notice. This includes upgrades to our security features, one of our priorities for this academic year. I will update you on the details of these never developments in my next newsletter.

This concludes the main updates for the start of the new term. I do apologise for the length of this letter – new parents, please don't worry, it's not always this length (I promise...)! Over the coming weeks, I will be publishing the Academy's "development plan on a page" and self-evaluation map on our website for you to view. We also intend to conduct regular parental voice throughout this year through initiatives such as our monthly parent tours and Q and A sessions which will start after October half-term, once tours for prospective parents and open evening is completed. Additionally, at some point this half-term, I will be sharing our Ofsted report from the inspection which took place on 27th and 28th June last term. Currently, this report is still going through quality assurance by Ofsted.

I would like to finish by saying that colleagues are excited about this upcoming academic year. Although we look back on last year as largely successful, there were things which took place, out of our control, which stopped momentum and caused challenges for consistency as a result. Over the next twelve months, we are looking forward to working even closer with you in our drive to ensure excellence in everything that we do.

In the words of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, I finish my first newsletter of the year with a quote which is framed on my office wall; "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

Kind regards,
Duncan Roberts

Principal