

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Purposeful starts

I write to you at the end of our first week back at school after the long summer break and it feels like summer has only just arrived! On Thursday afternoon, the thermometer reached the heights of 31C; there is a certain 'Law' that I have in mind that we have had a summer of largely rain and grey skies but return to glorious sunshine. The pupils and staff have done incredibly well despite the heat which, in some classrooms, has been extremely difficult to reduce. I have been into a number of classrooms and learning spaces over the past few days and learning is focused, purposeful and calm. Pupils are well equipped and ready to learn and I thank you for your support with this. Being a parent of a child who has just started year 7, I know that this is no mean feat!

Updates this week for you are as follows:

1. The "Standards Cycle" – A reminder that we will be focusing strongly on ensuring that our mobile phone policy is complied with over the next two weeks. Currently, pupils have been adhering to this well and we hope that this continues.
2. Changes to our Behaviour for Learning policy – As I said last week, the changes to our behaviour for learning policy this year are minimal as we embed the philosophy that we introduced last academic year. There have been some slight tweaks with the introduction of 'impact time' which has been introduced to pupils in assemblies this week. We will particularly need your support if your child receives an extended 'impact time' after school. The updated policy has gone 'live' on our website and can be viewed [here](#).
3. Open Evening (Thursday 14th September) and early closure - Our annual Open Evening for prospective year 7 pupils will take place next Thursday. The event takes place from 17:30-20:00. To allow staff to prepare for this event, which we believe will be extremely busy, we will be closing the Academy at 13:20. We will be contacting bus companies to request an early pick up. If it is the case that your child/ren are unable to be picked up or find transport home at this time, please contact your child's/ren's form tutor/s and we will ensure supervision is put in place. Additionally, teachers will be uploading work on Teams for Period 5 and will be expecting this work to be completed, unless your child/ren are involved in Open Evening.
4. Co-curricular Clubs – Next week we will be going 'live' with our extensive co-curricular programme for this year, listing the lunchtime and after school clubs your child can get involved in. Timetables will be shared in forms next week. Your child does not need to register for a club. They simply need to arrive at the correct time and location to take part. I will once again be running by 'Debate Club' this year on Wednesday lunch times where I am looking forward to meeting the politicians of the future...
5. This year's drama production – I am pleased to announce that this year's drama production will be Lewis Carroll's classic, *Alice in Wonderland*. Our productions are open for all year groups to audition. Pupils should keep an eye on when these will take place through posters in our drama department over the coming weeks.
6. Learning environment and developments to site – As I said in my communication to you on Monday, lots of exciting work has taken place over the summer to improve the learning environment for your child. This includes:
 - a. Access control has been installed on external doors across the site and in key offices. This software will control all main entry points. If a key card is not scanned, the door will not open. The measure will be fully commissioned on Wednesday 27th September which gives the Academy three weeks to prepare the community for this substantial change. Guidance for pupils will be shared in assembly and/or form time in the coming weeks.
 - b. Additionally, the Academy has installed over 40 external CCTV cameras throughout the site to further support the drive to keep our community as safe as possible.
 - c. We have also been working hard to reduce our carbon footprint. Solar panels have been installed on the roof of the Peake Building (a good week to do it!) and brand-new LED lighting has been fitted in The Shackleton Building (A Block) including our Sixth Form centre.
 - d. The canopy between The Dahl Building (E Block) and The Mandela Building (D Block) has been extended to cover the full area. This will mean that the canteen queue management can take place in an even calmer and, hopefully, quicker fashion which we know our pupils will be pleased about.

Our Academy Council regularly raised this as a request last year. It will also provide a clear 'entrance' and 'exit' to the canteen at peak times.

- e. The Academy has also resurfaced the whole of the area outside Main Reception and by the crossing to ensure better access for wheelchair users and a smarter look to this part of the school. The painting and decorating program has also continued as well as improvements to our toilet facilities. These are all significant steps forward in our regeneration of the Academy site to ensure it provides a high-quality learning environment.
7. Update on Mr Gamble – I am very pleased to inform you that Mr Gamble has now left hospital and is recovering from surgery at home. This is excellent progress and we look forward to being able to welcome Mr Gamble back to our community when he is ready and able to do so. The thoughts and well-wishes of the whole community remain with him and his family during this time.

This concludes the updates for this week in what has been a very enjoyable start to the new academic year. The pupils I have spoken with over the past few days have enjoyed their start. What's particularly noticeable is how well year 7 have settled into their new environment, making friends and finding their way around the school. Let's keep up this momentum...

In the words of Plato, "The beginning is the most important part of the work."

Have a great weekend,
Duncan Roberts

Principal