

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: The grass that pushes through the concrete

We have completed another week of November and I hope that you have had a positive five or so days. At JFAN, the week started on Sunday morning at St Mary's Church in the village to mark Remembrance Sunday. I was joined by Holly H and Oren Y in year 11 who represented the Academy impressively and were a credit to us whilst they stood in the rain. On Monday evening, it was a pleasure to be invited to the private viewing of Platform 23, at Michaelhouse Café in Cambridge where artwork was showcased by pupils from all Anglian Learning secondary schools including ours. The work really is excellent. We also took the year 11 GCSE art pupils to the Tate Modern last Friday; a very successful trip and the feedback from the young people who attended has been very positive. Additionally, we have had a very smooth start to the year 11 mock exam season and we would like to thank parents and carers with children in this cohort for their support of this process. I have also popped into several lessons this week and it is always great to see the core business of teaching and learning at our Academy. Whether they were making sponge cakes, reading a piece of fiction, working through some algebra, crafting a speaker holder out of wood or exploring the structure of a castle, pupils were engaged, enthusiastic and inquisitive. Casting is taking place for our summer show, *Alice in Wonderland* with 60 pupils currently involved. Lastly, we have also got into the next round of Essex Cup in girls football, with our Under-16 team winning 2-1 against an impressive Heddingham side. A pretty successful five days...

Updates this week for you are as follows:

1. Uniform supplier – As you may remember last year, the Academy and Anglian Learning Trust conducted a procurement process for our uniform supplier as the contract with Gray Palmer had concluded. The company who will now supply our uniform from January 2024 will be Price Buckland. Shortly, a specific website will be launched to order JFAN uniform. Although there is not a Price Buckland local store, there will be a reduction in price for current items. There is free delivery for orders over £70. The Academy is also exploring a 'click and collect' service where there would be no delivery charge and uniform would arrive at school for you to collect. Otherwise, there is a £4.50 delivery charge for all items.
2. Uniform changes – From **September 2024**, there will be some changes to our uniform policy. These are mostly quite small changes and decisions in relation to this are still being consulted upon. The biggest change though will be the kilt. The Academy has decided that the kilt will be phased out from next September. It will be replaced with a more modern skirt. Trousers will remain an option for all pupils. Consultation in relation to the new skirt is taking place with a group of pupils and this will continue this half-term. I have been informed that there will be a significant reduction in price for families for all uniform next academic year. The timeline for any changes will be carefully thought through and previous uniform items will be acceptable in phase 1 for some year groups. I will provide more information about this timeline as the year progresses.
3. The field – To ensure that we can provide pupils with as much space as possible at break and lunch times and give them opportunities to play sport, we try to keep the field open for as long as possible into the autumn. Unfortunately, as a result of the relentless rain in recent times, it has now become impossible to keep it open any longer. Therefore, from Monday, pupils will not be allowed on the field at break and lunch. We do intend to provide some other options and further details will be provided to them next week about this.
4. Platform 23 – A reminder that the Platform 23 exhibition as referenced above, at Michaelhouse Cafe, Trinity Street, Cambridge, runs until **Saturday 25th November**. It really is an excellent showcase of work from our schools so if you are in the area, it is well worth a visit.
5. Parent virtual workshop: Parenting an anxious teen – Inger Madsen, a specialist in supporting families, has done lots of work with the JFAN community over recent years and is once again running a virtual workshop for our parent community in parenting an anxious teen. This session will be on **Wednesday 29th November** from 18:30-20:30. For more information and to book a slot, please [click here](#).
6. Careers Fair – A reminder that we are excited to be involved with the Uttlesford Careers Fair again this year in partnership with Harlow Regional College, Forest Hall School, Helena Romanes School and Saffron Walden County High School to host the Uttlesford Careers Fair on **Tuesday 21st November 2023** at Saffron

Hall, Saffron Walden. There are bookable slots for you to visit from 16:00. To access this booking information, please visit our social media pages where there is a poster and QR code.

7. Christmas Card Competition – We are once again very excited to launch our annual Christmas Card Competition for this year. The competition is for all year groups and there are art prizes to be won! Additionally, the winning card will be sent out to the local community on my behalf and JFAN. Pupils can use any material they like to create the card as long as it is 2D and can be photocopied clearly. Work must be handed to your child’s art teacher by **Friday 1st December**.
8. Pupil achievement – This week we would like to give a special mention to Roxanne A in year 9 and her impressive reading coverage. Roxanne started reading *The Inheritance Series* by Christopher Paolini in September. Since then, Roxanne has read all four books in the series. Well done Roxanne, this is a superb commitment to reading.
9. Sixth Form Facebook page - We have launched a dedicated Facebook page for our Sixth Form. You can access it [here](#) and on it you will find all relevant news and updates for our current and upcoming sixth form cohorts.

This concludes the key updates for this week. I finish by stating how impressed I have been with our pupil community in the first three weeks of this half-term. As the dark nights draw in and the cold weather returns, motivation can be difficult; ‘the honeymoon period’ of a new school year has worn off by November. However, by focusing on the positives, and what they have achieved which is often so much, it will keep our young people’s motivation going and the self-esteem high. Imagine themselves as the grass that pushes through the concrete...

In the words of Nelson Mandela, “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I feel down and got back up again.”

Wishing you an enjoyable and fulfilling weekend.

Duncan Roberts

Principal