

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Perseverance and enjoying 'the struggle'

We have now completed our first full week back and it has flown by! The pupils have returned to school in a calm and purposeful manner. It was great, for example, to speak to year 11 in assembly on Monday about the strengths and concerns about artificial intelligence, along with the overriding message that the things we have over the computers is our human emotions – kindness, compassion, empathy and self-sacrifice. Unfortunately, assemblies for other year groups couldn't take place this week due to a technical issue but I will be leading them with all the remaining year groups once this has been resolved. We also conducted year 11 parents' evening yesterday which was very well attended. It was very good to see the productive conversations between colleagues, pupils and their parents in this important time.

Further updates this week are as follows:

1. Punctuality reminder at the beginning of the day – Can we reminder parents and carers that our warning bell for registration will sound at 8:35. Pupils need to be on school site by this time to ensure that they can report to their form rooms by 8:40. The Academy is understanding that there are sometimes particular circumstances which mean that it is not possible to arrive at this time, for example, a bus being late. However, if there is not a relevant reason for lateness the Academy will issue consequences in-line with our behaviour for learning policy.
2. Punctuality to lessons – We are pleased that the large majority of our pupil community attend all lessons on time. If a pupil arrives to a lesson two minutes after the bell they will be marked in as 'Late'. It might be that there is a valid reason for this and if this is the case, this reason will be noted in a 'comment' on our system. If there is not a relevant reason for this and the pupil is repeatedly marked in as late, consequences will be implemented, such as a 'punctuality and attendance' report that will need to be signed by each teacher and by you. This will continue until we are confident that punctuality has improved.
3. Attendance checking – It has been great to see parents and carers using our Sims Parent App recently to check whether or not your child has been marked into a lesson. All registers should be completed within 10 minutes of the lesson starting. If you notice that your child has been marked absent for a lesson when you believe they were present, or they have not been marked in, please contact the teacher of this lesson directly so that matter can be looked into further.
4. Anglian Learning Parent Survey – Thank you again to those who completed our Trust parent survey at the end of last term. We had a total of 195 responses. In many cases, the positive responses were either in-line or slightly above the national level for secondary schools. We are now working through the analysis of the results, both in terms of the positive feedback but also, and the aspects of school improvement that we continue to work on. For example, we know that our reporting systems, especially in relation to academic progress in key stage 3 need to be revised and this piece of work has started. The question in this parent survey provides further evidence that this needs to be addressed. A parent working group will be meeting later this half-term to discuss the proposed model for next academic year which we intend to pilot for a particular year group, this half-term.
5. Relevant equipment to lessons – Last week, the Academy summarised the importance of bringing the right equipment to lessons. Can we also remind parents of pupils in years 7 and 8 in particular, that they should have a reading book in their bag. This can be fiction or non-fiction. At the start of all English lessons and during some form time registrations, pupils will need a book to read. The Academy library is open during break times and lunch times if a pupil wishes to borrow a book to read.
6. Saffron Walden Rotary Club Ukraine Appeal – The SWRC is running a collection for 3.5 million Ukrainian refugees, currently in crisis. This will take place on Saturday 3rd February, from 9:00-13:00 at Saffron Walden Common Car Park. All cash donations are going towards the purchase of generators which will help greatly during a severe winter. Goods needed include everyday food items, toiletries, warm clothing, cleaning materials, cooking utensils, torches, batteries and crockery.
7. Tuesday Open Mornings – A reminder that it is now possible to book our first monthly Tuesday Open Morning tour of the Academy. Parents and carers of existing pupils and students on roll can see our Academy 'in action' during a typical school day. There will then be an opportunity for you to take part in a

Q and A session with a member of the leadership team after the tour. Bookings are on a 'first come, first serve basis.' The first tour will take place on Tuesday 23rd January and [you can book a place here](#).

8. Parking on site – Please can we politely request that you do not collect your child on site between 15:15-15:30. We understand that that it is difficult to find a suitable place to pick-up near the Academy and, in winter weather, you would like to get as close as possible. However, it is causing blockages at the top of the site near the sports centre. Therefore, please could you arrange to pick up your child/ren in a different part of the village such as the train station car park or recreational ground car park.
9. Pupil achievement – This week's celebratory 'shout out' goes to Fraser R in year 10 who was selected last week for a once in a lifetime experience of being a matchday mascot at Tottenham Hotspur. It is extremely difficult to be selected for something like this and I am sure Fraser did himself and the school proud. As some may know, I have affiliation with the other team in north London, nevertheless, I can still see how impressive the achievement is. Well done, Fraser.

This concludes the updates for this week. My theme of the communications is around perseverance and enjoying 'the struggle'. When we pop into lessons or speaking to pupils about their learning or indeed look at the outcome of their work, we are always most impressed with those who have clearly struggled and found something challenging but persevered to overcome this challenge. I often think back to my school days and ask myself, 'could I have understood and remembered this?'. Often, sadly, the answer would be no! In the news this week, we have also seen what inspiring perseverance can look like through Alan Bates, the sub-postmaster, who fought for justice against the wrongful convictions of his colleagues. It's very easy to give up when things get too difficult or seem impossible to resolve. Those that keep going, whilst showing the compassion and the empathy and the self-sacrifice that I mention in assembly this week, are so often the ones that succeed.

In the words of American novelist, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, "Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat."

Have a great weekend,

Duncan Roberts

Principal