

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Optimism

We have made it to the end of the epic month that is, January. It feels like we are nearing the home stretch of the end of winter; snow drops are appearing and the nights are starting to get just a little shorter. In school this week, there were plenty of reasons to feel optimistic. Whether it was the quality of work that our young people are producing in a range of subjects, the enjoyment they demonstrate when socialising with friends or the success that continues to arise in co-curricular activities such as sport. It was great to hear that our Under 16 football team are through to the Essex Cup quarter finals this week with a win against Clacton albeit through a nail-biting penalty shoot-out...

It is also great to see that our pupils continue to represent themselves and our school so brilliantly outside the school gates. Pupils, Reuben C 11 and Dom R in year 11, Chloe M in year 10, Lyla B and Toby C in year 9 and Ruby P and Emma R in year 8 all performed in the Nats Newport Production of Hansel and Gretel last weekend. I have heard really good things about the production and it is great to hear that our pupils played such an important part in this community production.

Further updates this week are as follows:

1. Pupil welfare update letters – On Wednesday, the Academy shared two letters relating to pupil welfare. The first was about the consequences of vaping and was a letter from Association of Headteachers in Essex for whom I am a member of and the second was from Essex Police about ways to keep your phone safe from theft with some very useful tips. If you and your child/ren haven't had a chance to read these letters as yet, please do try to make some time to do so when you can.
2. Attendance to school – Our school attendance is in most cases in-line with national averages if not better and we would like to thank you for your support with this. There has been some interesting data that has been published from the Children's Commissioner Report into attendance which stated that 78% of children who were rarely absent in both year 10 and year 11 passed at least 5 GCSEs including English and maths whilst only 36% of pupils who were persistently absent (under 90%) achieved the same standard. Furthermore, 54% of pupils who were persistently absent in year 10 and then rarely absent in year 11, passed at least 5 GCSEs including English and maths. The correlation between good attendance and strong outcomes is becoming increasingly clear.
3. Absence from school due to illness – Even though attendance to school is incredibly important for the reasons outlined in the above point, it is also the case that if your child is unwell, especially with stomach bugs which can be passed on, they do not come into school and there needs to be a 48-hour absence after the last instance of sickness. Furthermore, seasonal flu and Covid is also seemingly on the rise within the community therefore it is important to remember the importance of good hygiene standards to reduce the spread of germs.
4. Parenting an anxious child or teen workshop – Inger Madsen is once again running a session on Wednesday 6th February from 18:30-20:30 to support those parents and carers with parenting an anxious child or teen. Inger has done sessions before for JFAN and we always have very positive feedback about the practical suggestions and guidance that she provides. If you would like to reserve a place for this session, please [click here](#).
5. February Open Morning – A reminder that we have now launched the booking for our next open morning for parents and carers of current pupils. Booking for this can be accessed by [clicking here](#).
6. School Lane closure – We are still awaiting a date for the closure of School Lane for repairs to the bridge over Wicken water. Once this is confirmed, we will provide you with more information but it is highly likely that Bury Water Lane will need to be closed during drop-off and pick-up times to allow for bus and staff access. It is worth considering alternative options for pick-up and drop off now before this comes into force later this term.
7. JFAN chess tournament – A reminder that our annual chess tournament takes place next week, on 5th February in B6. The winner of the pupil tournament will play against the winner of the teacher tournament in the Grand Final to become JFAN's Grandmaster. All years are welcome as well as all abilities. You can sign up to play in B6.

This completes the updates this week. I would like to finish my newsletter today by thanking Mr Stoneham for completing last week's communication and for all the school staff for their work last week when I was not present in school as much as I would be usually. The school ran very smoothly as I knew it would do. I would also like to thank the many of you who have written or spoken to me over this week to express your condolences; this was greatly appreciated. Despite experiencing a challenging time, there were a number of reasons for optimism over the past few days, epitomised, as always, through the way that pupils greet me every morning on the crossing as they arrive for their school day.

In the words of the truly inspirational Maya Angelou, "Nothing can dim the light that shines from within."

Have a great weekend,

Duncan Roberts

Principal