

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Creating memories

I hope you have had a positive week. Once again, it has been another very busy five days. I feel like I am saying this most weeks currently possibly because of the length of this half-term and the amount of events and experiences that need to be squeezed in over a relatively short period of time. This week we have had a science A-level trip to Babraham Institute where students joined the stem cell research team. The project is looking at the time it takes for embryos to develop and how it is controlled in different species. The students looked at data using confocal laser microscopes and ran gel electrophoresis on some DNA samples which had undergone PCR and digestion with different endonucleases. Furthermore, a lecturer at Writtle College brought in a selection of invertebrates and vertebrates to show the A level biologists and invited year 11 pupils. His talk focused around natural selection and evolution from insects, via amphibians to reptiles (locusts to corn snakes!). Furthermore, 103 pupils in year 9 went to the West End to watch the inspirational *Hamilton* and we had more success in sport with the under-15s and under-16s football teams making it through to the semi-finals of the Essex Cup, following in the footsteps of our under-14s who won the tournament for the first-time last week. Year 11 have completed their spring mock exams this week with the same dedication, drive and focus that they completed the winter mocks with. We have also popped into some great lessons this week, with several examples of the vocational aspects of our curriculum bringing out the best in our young people. Whether it is mini-performances in drama, creating specific shapes out of wood in DT or doing fifteen minutes on the cross trainer in PE it has been great to see so many 'hands on' activities taking place so regularly.

Further updates this week are as follows:

1. Closure of School Lane from 19th March – A reminder that School Lane will close from 19th March and the following will need to take place:
 - a. There will be significant disruption during the drop off and pick up times, especially.
 - b. Breheny construction will be providing two Marshalls at these times to manage the buses and traffic which is driving into Bury Water Lane. They will be standing on the footpath outside of our entrance to A Block and the Sixth Form Centre. It is likely that traffic will build up substantially on Cambridge Road during these time periods. It is vital that we therefore limit the traffic as much as possible coming into Bury Water Lane so that staff and buses can access the site.
 - c. The buses will drive into Bury Water Lane and drop off pupils in the morning, just past the crossing, on the opposite side to the bus stop. They will then drive down the bottom of Bury Water Lane and turn round at the end of this road before driving back down Bury Water Lane to access Cambridge Road.
 - d. Any buses which drop pupils off on Cambridge Road will continue to do so. In order to reduce the amount of buses during these times, Stephenson's will be combining the 417 and 419 into one bus route.
 - e. When picking up, buses will again drive into Bury Water Lane and wait for the Marshall's signal to go. They will then drive past the Academy, turn in the same place at the bottom of Bury Water Lane before picking up the pupils in the afternoon.
 - f. In summary, in light of this it is not going to be possible for parents and carers to use Bury Water Lane until this work is complete. It might therefore be worth practising other options next week so that you and your child/ren are prepared for the change that will need to take place.
2. Our Academy priorities – I realise that I haven't shared our key four priorities for a period of time. Therefore, for clarity, they are as follows:
 - a. Embedding a culture of responsive teaching where all pupils' needs are met and teachers are continually developing their practice
 - b. Refining our curriculum to ensure that it is accessible for all pupils

- c. Sustaining a model of distributed leadership where staff and pupils are confident in the systems and processes, especially in relation to behaviour and assessment for learning
- d. Continuing to regenerate the learning environment with improved security features and inspiring learning spaces

Thank you to those of you who have expressed an interest in the 4-year strategic plan working group that I advertised last week. The response has been impressive! The group does need to be restricted to 5-6 parents therefore I will be working through expressions of interest over the coming weeks and responding to you before Easter with further details of the project.

3. Uniform survey response – Thank you to the many of you who responded to our survey regarding our uniform moving forward. We have now closed this survey and I will be providing a summary of all our uniform changes for September 2024 at the end of this term.
4. Impact time on Fridays – As you are aware, part of our behaviour for learning policy is where pupils are given an impact time after school as a consequence for a situation that has arisen. Unfortunately, attendance to these slots has not always been consistent. Therefore, if a pupil does not attend an impact slot on a Friday without a valid reason, they will be out of circulation the following Monday including all lessons, break time and lunch time that day. We trialled this for the first-time last Monday. We hope that in time, attendance to the Friday impact slot becomes consistent and at which stage we will no longer need to implement this initiative on the following Monday. As ever, thank you for your support with ensuring our high expectations of pupils are met.
5. Pupil survey – Anglian Learning academies have launched a new pupil survey which will stay open until 22nd March. We will be encouraging pupils in years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 to complete this survey in tutor time. A link has been sent to all pupils' school email address from "Edurio" with a link which takes you straight to the survey page. If your child is having trouble accessing this, please ask them to inform their form tutor.
6. Maths Challenge results – Last half-term the Academy took part in the national maths challenge and achieved some exceptional results. Achieving intermediate Bronze in year 9 was Daniel D and Charlotte W. In year 10, Mary B, Dudley C, Charley M and Bethan W all achieved Bronze. George K achieved an impressive Silver. Well done to all the pupils who participated in this new initiative that we have launched this year.
7. Cake Sale – Pupils in year 10 will be raising funds for the vital work of the Stroke Association, through a cake sale, outside Main Reception on 26th March at lunch time. All funds raised will go to this important charity who are doing excellent work in an area which is still significantly underfunded and under-researched when compared with other health conditions.
8. Further student successes – Finally this week, the winner of the annual chess tournament and JFAN Grand Master was Seb M in year 11. In second place though was Will C in year 8, an impressive achievement from a key stage 3 pupil. Well done to those two pupils and those who took part.

This concludes the updates for this week. Yesterday, we had our termly governor visit day at the Academy, where members of our Local Governing Body have tours of the school, pop into lessons, speak to pupils, staff and even have lunch in our canteen. It was a very productive day with some positive observations and insightful feedback that will continue to help shape our school improvement planning moving forward. One pupil in the pupil panel meeting who has experienced different secondary schools said, "I'm happy to get up in the morning now and come to school every day." A powerful comment, to end the week with.

In the words of AA Milne, "We didn't realise we were making memories, we just knew we were having fun."

Have a great weekend,

Duncan Roberts

Principal