

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Moving forwards with confidence

I hope you had a good week which has finally felt like spring (apart from today...) and there has been an optimistic and positive energy in the air as a result. GCSEs have now started with practical examinations in subjects such as art and photography. It was a privilege to lead year 11 last assembly on Monday morning before written examinations begin next week. They were focused, calm and ready for what they are about to face. Also this week, I led a parent tour for prospective pupils and parents joining us in year 7 next academic year. It was a really positive tour where they saw a number of engaging lessons with year 7 making fruit salads in food tech, year 10 working hard in the multi-gym and year 9 questioning the amount of tax high earners have to pay in maths! Also this week we had colleagues from our Trust visit to do some filming as part of a promotional video. I would like to thank Isla, Mia C and Charlie F in year 7 for being involved in this filming and demonstrating our school in such an excellent light. Lastly, we also hosted year 7 virtual parents evening yesterday evening. As a teacher of year 7 myself, it was great to be able to meet with families and discuss their progress this year.

Updates this week are as follows:

1. Covered lessons – The Academy is understanding of the fact that there are subjects with a higher proportion of covered lessons currently and we would like to thank you for your support with this. This situation is either due to unforeseen staff absence or an inability to recruit teachers which meet the standards that we expect. Teacher recruitment is in crisis both locally and nationally. There are currently 11,954 teaching jobs being advertised in the UK right now to start in September and 443 within 30-mile radius of JFAN. This [recent article](#) in *The Guardian* demonstrates the extent to which this is a national issue. We are doing everything that we can to recruit as many teaching staff as we can for September and there are adverts live on national recruitment portals, our website and our social media channels. If you know any secondary teachers who might be interested in joining our fantastic school, please do point them in the direction of our website for more information as this is updating all the time and I will keep you updated as the picture changes.
2. Vaping – Please can we remind you that it is illegal for children to buy a vape or have a vape in their possession below the age of 18. If a pupil is caught vaping or has a vape on their person in school, this will trigger a serious consequence. Additionally, the Academy is exploring initiatives to stamp out vaping within our community. This includes vape sensors in toilets and increased CCTV around our site. If pupils are caught vaping outside of school, but in uniform, similar consequences will be issued.
3. Lockdown drill – As a result of our new access control which we have installed this year, the Academy has not as yet undertaken a lockdown drill which would be activated an intruder were to come on site. This process is signalled with 10 rings of the lesson bell and a further 10 rings when the intervention is complete. The Academy will be enacting a lockdown drill at some stage this term and will provide a summary of the lessons learned from this, to our community, at a later stage.
4. Year 7 parents evening – Thank you again to the parents and carers of pupils in our year 7 cohort for their attendance to parents evening yesterday. We would also like to apologise if you were unable to see the full range of teaching staff for your child. It is difficult in year 7 and 8 to see some teachers due to the number of pupils they teach in that particular year group. However, we also understand that due to unforeseen absence and with it being virtual, appointments may have been more challenging for you to make compared with usual. The Academy is looking at ways we can provide you with an update in particular subjects where meetings did not take place.
5. New uniform – Just to make you aware that our new uniform is currently being displayed in Main Reception. As I said in my letter last week, I will be writing to parents and carers with a more detailed summary of our plans from September before May half-term.

6. Update on School Rebuilding Programme – As you may remember, JFAN has been named as one of the schools who will benefit from School Rebuilding Programme. Just before Easter, I went to a meeting in London which explained how this process would work. Currently, the Department for Education are evaluating which schools will be in phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3 based upon the evidence each school has supplied and their own understanding of need. Phase 1 projects will begin sooner than the others. The Academy should know which phase it is in before the end of the summer term and I will inform you of this once we know more.
7. Pupil achievements – This week we want to celebrate the achievements on Ashton X in year 10 who's football team, AFC Sudbury, won their league by 9 points off the back of a 21 winning game run in all competitions. I am always so impressed by the sporting achievements of our pupils and this is yet another to add to a long list. Well done, Ashton.

This concludes the updates for this week. Believe it or not, I am trying to make them slightly shorter each week based upon your feedback before Easter. I also noted some of your feedback during that exercise where you said that you enjoyed the positive tone and the 'good news' stories but provide some understanding of the barriers to our progress and I hope that this letter sheds more light on some of these for you. In a week though where further tragic incidents have taken place in the UK, it is important that we always celebrate our positives. One parent who visited the school this week commented, for example, on how happy the pupils look at JFAN. This is the type of immediate response to our culture that we strive for whilst being realistic to the challenges we and other schools continue to face.

In the words of New Zealand artist and author, Peter McIntyre, "Confidence comes not from always being right but from not fearing to be wrong."

Have a great weekend,

Duncan Roberts
Principal