

1 October 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones well.

I wanted to take a moment to reflect on all that we have collectively achieved in September and to thank you for the passionate support I have received from your children and, in many cases, from yourselves during the first stage of our transformational journey.

One thing has become extremely clear to me over the last month: a number of leaders have tried to change the climate and ethos within the academy over the last decade. Whilst I have no doubt that all of their intentions were admirable and well placed one resounding question has been presented to me time and time again: 'But Mrs Griffiths, with respect, you are the 8<sup>th</sup> Headteacher in 5 years and every one of those has said that they are going to transform the academy; why is it *really* going to be different this time?'... Each time a question of this nature has been asked of me I have replied with passion and shared aspects of the following:

- ✓ John Smeaton Academy is now a part of The GORSE Academies Trust, without question one of the highest performing trusts in the country, not by accident or luck but because of the quality of leadership and educational experience we provide. This is made possible because of the fundamental structure of the trust that sees us all able to work together, in person, regularly. Through doing this we share outstanding practice and benefit from support that is simply impossible when you are not geographically located in an advantageous manner.
- ✓ Within the trust we know how to create Outstanding schools. We have a track record that demonstrates we are able to transform schools rapidly but with a depth that sees the transformation embed for the long term so that the community can rebuild its trust within the school and have the confidence that, no matter what month it is, their child will not fall unlucky with the teacher they are taught by or with their experience outside of the classroom be this pastorally or through enrichment.
- ✓ Sir John Townsley our Chief Executive Officer and I are based at John Smeaton Academy. I do not mean this to sound arrogant in any way. But the reality is that we are leaders in our field. And we are leaders in our field because we are connected to students, their families and the professionals we work alongside. We genuinely care about standards and the quality of teaching and learning and we would never expect anyone to do something we were not capable of or prepared to do ourselves. You will find us in the corridors, in our classrooms and on our sports fields. You will find us in meetings with students and parents/carers. You will find us seeking out opportunities to give students genuine, meaningful praise. As a consequence, we model high expectations across the staff and student body and provide a support structure that empowers change and excellence.
- ✓ Our governance structure is Outstanding. We have knowledgeable governors who work tirelessly to drive change and hold leaders to account. Cllr Ryan Stephenson has recently been appointed as the Chair of Governors at John Smeaton Academy; he is extremely committed to this role and to ensuring his team of governors support our collective vision of ensuring the academy is able to be recognised as an Outstanding provider when it is next inspected.

All of the above equates to one thing: trust. Every day that you send your child to John Smeaton Academy you entrust the care of your child to us and to Sir John and I. But a month on I hope that you can see for yourselves that this time it *really is different*. In the last week change has begun to properly embed itself. Uniform standards are exceptional. Students are fully engaged and there is an absolute belief and

determination within the student body *that this time it is different*. You can feel it alive within the academy and it is truly magical.

I wish that I could somehow capture this in words or in a film but the reality is it is very hard to do this. I could share with you hundreds of comments that students have said about how happy they are now that school has changed and why this is but what I truly want is for you to really be able to connect with this. So, I am offering you the opportunity to come and experience this for yourself so that you can really feel that sense of pride that we should all rightly have that the first stage of the transformational journey is complete. If you would like to take advantage of this offer please email Lisa Roberts, Principal's PA, at: [RobertsL01@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk](mailto:RobertsL01@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk) and we will be in touch.

The next chapter will see the joy of the Positive Discipline Reward Trip truly embed and the start of our Enrichment++ offer, indeed our students will soon be embarking upon their first GORSE Games fixtures and I know how excited many of them are about this. Please encourage your son/daughter to participate in at least one Enrichment++ activity; there is something for everyone and we are keen to see as many students take part as possible so that they can enjoy time doing something outside of structured classroom time that they enjoy and that supports the development of their wider skill set. This is needed if they are to truly be enabled to Secure the Gift of Choice. If there is an event that your son/daughter would like to do that they have not yet signed up for please contact us using the academy's [enquiries@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk) email address and we will ensure they are signed up so they can participate. Mr Huddlestone's communication regarding Enrichment++ is available on the academy's website via this link: [Latest letters home - John Smeaton Academy](#) and contains the Enrichment++ schedule.

Attendance at school is essential and obviously a legal requirement. As the winter months take hold it will be important for our students to be resilient and continue to attend school even if they are feeling tired or 'under the weather'. Of course if they have a sickness bug or Covid symptoms they must adhere to the regulations surrounding this but we are keen to impress upon students the importance of being in school every day whenever possible. To do this we need to eat well, sleep well and maintain excellent standards of hygiene and our GORSE Gets Healthy programme is also something we will be launching over the coming weeks. Furthermore, the big launch event of the 100% Attendance Club will soon be here and I am incredibly excited about what is in store for this day.

So, as I conclude, I hope that this letter will be greeted with positivity about what we have achieved together and how far we have come. Your actions have meant we have been able to feel confident about the behaviour and standards within school and as a consequence, by the time you read this letter, 416 students will have received their choice of a Positive Discipline Trip at Alton Towers, 23 students at Chester Zoo and 99 students will have enjoyed a Bowling and Cinema experience. This is despite the challenges presented by the national driver shortages and fuel issues and I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in making what has felt like the impossible at times, actually happen. The excitement around these trips has been tangible and I hope everyone who has earned their place on the trip has a phenomenal time.

With very best wishes



**Mrs L Griffiths**  
**Principal**