

27 October 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your family well and that you are enjoying a lovely half term break.

One of the things that has struck me so profoundly in the last seven weeks is the sense of community surrounding John Smeaton Academy. I am poignantly aware of the strength of feeling connected to the importance of realising our promises in respect of the transformation of our school.

Inevitably the first step in our journey was always going to be the need to address the standards and expectations within the academy; I am delighted to say that we have been exceptionally pleased with the vast majority of students who are keen to adhere to the expectations that have been established and who are enjoying the calm and purposeful environment as a consequence. As I have said previously, the consistency of our expectations is key, and the Positive Discipline system is invaluable in ensuring that all of us are clear regarding those standards. This system promotes a positive climate for learning and, most importantly, a climate that has students' safety at its heart.

The Positive Discipline Reward trip which took place on Friday 1 October was a huge success and the feedback from this event has been heart-warming. Our students were complimented for their exceptional behaviour and their impeccable manners; the bus drivers appreciated the thanks and the courteous manner in which the students who attended the trip behaved.

Students have enjoyed using the academy's new minibus to travel to competitive fixtures and I know from speaking to them just how much this has been missed in recent years. Furthermore, our first peripatetic music lessons are due to take place after half term and rehearsals for the academy's first production in a number of years will also commence in coming weeks. We are very excited that 'Grease' will be performed by our students in March and we look forward to being able to invite you to secure your tickets for this hotly-anticipated event in due course.

The official launch of the 100% Attendance Club took place on Thursday 21 October and it was incredible to see so many students gaining access to the rewards on offer. Students thoroughly enjoyed the Miami Ride, photo booth, hot dog stand, ice cream van, inflatables and penalty shoot-out and I think everyone was in awe when the helicopter arrived on the academy's front field! Four students from each key stage were selected at random from those who had 100% attendance since the start of term, to enjoy a trip of a life-time in the beautiful clear skies above Leeds. Students travelled out towards Harewood House with a visibility of 60 miles accompanied by a very experienced and knowledgeable pilot. It is fair to say that it was smiles aplenty as the helicopter touched down and the experience of the journey was recounted. The academy's Twitter feed is a fantastic place to go to see what is happening in the academy and I would encourage you to visit the site to see the tremendous things that have been taking place.

As we move into the second half term of the year I am delighted to share with you that we will be welcoming 12 students from Afghanistan, after they sought sanctuary in Leeds with their families. The students fled their homes and lives after the collapse of the country to The Taliban following

the withdrawal of western troops earlier this year. Our new students were able to join us during the academy's CPD day on Friday 22 October so that they were able to have some time to experience the academy when it was a little quieter; this was especially important as their levels of English vary and so they will need some time to settle in and adjust.

I am confident that all members of our community will recognise the importance of supporting our students from Afghanistan. Indeed, over the course of this half term our current students were involved in donating stationery for the Aid Afghanistan Education (AAE) appeal – their contributions were tremendous and it was wonderful to witness the passion and generosity of the student body.

Celebrating and embracing difference is a central ethos of The GORSE Academies Trust and each person as an individual is critical within this. We want to assure you that we will not tolerate discrimination or bullying of any kind; every person has a right to a high standard of education and a right to access this without fear. I have every confidence that our new Afghan students will settle in quickly and will receive a warm welcome. Of course, we have high standards and expectations of all and this term it is important we focus on addressing any gaps in knowledge, skills or understanding that remain from the pandemic and that all students feel equipped to be moving forward at an accelerated rate.

I hope that you have enjoyed re-living some of the highlights from the half term that has just passed and that you have started to build your trust in the approach we are taking. There is no doubt that much has changed and the steep onward trajectory is one we intend to keep on taking. We are passionate about our students securing the Gift of Choice and that will only happen in an academy that has outstanding behaviour along with an exceptional pastoral offer. On that note, I do just want to mention that we have a new Senior Assistant Principal starting with us after half term. Her name is Mrs Emma Jackson and she is an extremely experienced colleague having worked at The Morley Academy for over 15 years. Her remit will be Positive Discipline and Pastoral Support (Inclusion) and I know she is very much looking forward to working with you.

I would also like to remind you that Half Term 2 commences on Monday 1 November at the usual time (pre-form from 8.25am with all students being expected in school by 8.40am). Students must come correctly equipped and dressed in accordance with the academy's uniform policy; details as always are available on the academy's website: [Uniform and equipment - John Smeaton Academy](#).

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has supported us in the first part of this transformational journey. We are exceptionally proud of what has been achieved for our students and pleased that the academy's positive reputation is growing. We know how important this coming term is for our students and the success of the academy moving forward and thank you in anticipation of your continuing support.

With very best wishes



Mrs L Griffiths
Principal