

1 April 2021

Dear parent/carers

Re: Principal's Update

I write to you as we reach the end of another eventful term; lockdown, partial opening for KVV students, live lessons, phased full re-opening, on-site and home Lateral Flow Testing and finally Academy Assessment Grade (AAG) planning for our Year 11 and Year 13 students. We even coped with a boiler failure!! I am indebted to our talented and committed TDA staff team who have done a remarkable job throughout this unprecedented period.

Also, thank you for your ongoing support during remote learning and again since the full return to the Academy. This home-academy partnership has been exceedingly important as our students have reconnected with each other, Academy staff and their learning.

CS Lewis said, 'You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending'. I have been hugely impressed by the resilience, determination and focus shown by our young people, both during remote learning and since 8 March 2021. TDA students have certainly countered a cynical press narrative of a 'lost generation' and shown themselves to be an optimistic 'bounce back generation'.

Attendance and Behaviour

Attendance has been exceedingly strong since the return to the Academy. Excluding students absent due to COVID, weekly attendance, since 8 March 2021, has been above 94% and over the past week above 95%. This has built upon the 95%+ attendance during remote learning. Nationally, secondary attendance this week was 89%. High levels of attendance will support reconnection activities and ensure our students excel.

Behaviour has also improved since our return. The number of positive recognition points have increased and there have been fewer negative C1 and C2 incidents. Our ambition of 'Disruption Free Learning' is becoming a reality. I was delighted to see so many students rewarded for their integrity, ambition and excellence during celebration assemblies this week.

Over 80% of families have accessed our ClassCharts app to monitor their child's behaviour, attendance and home learning. If you have not yet signed up, please contact our Admin Team on office@dukeries.atrust.org.uk who will be delighted to assist you.

Please contact your child's Pastoral Leader if you wish to discuss any aspect of attendance or behaviour.

Academy Assessed Grades (AAG)

Over the past week, Year 11 and Year 13 students have been completing formal assessments as part of the Academy Assessed Grade process, which replaces examinations. Assessments will continue throughout April and May, following the Easter break. My team have written to you to provide details of the AAG process and information about the content being assessed. Please support your child to revise regularly and to

attend the Academy every day. If you have any questions about the AAG process please contact Mr Robinson j.robinson@dukeries.atrust.org.uk or Miss Maycock l.maycock@dukeries.atrust.org.uk (Year 11) or Miss Hackett m.hackett@dukeries.atrust.org.uk (Year 13)

Curriculum 2021 and the new Academy Home Learning Policy

We have utilised the lockdown period to evaluate our curriculum offer and to further develop aspects of our practice. After Easter we will be launching a new Home Learning Policy to replace our current Homework Policy. The new policy utilises recent research evidence to support students' ability to memorise and apply the knowledge and skills which have been developed in lessons with our expert staff. Mr Brett will write to you to provide more details.

Further, as TDA continues its journey from Good to Great, we have developed our ambitious Curriculum 2021 strategy. Mrs Rosaman is leading on this project and will share the strategy with you during week commencing 19 April 2021. We will also be formally seeking the views of staff, students, parents/carers and other stakeholders on key aspects of the exciting proposals contained within the strategy.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group

Fosslien and Duffy (2019) noted that, 'Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice heard'. It is imperative, in our Academy, that all young people feel that they can have their voices heard. We understand that we must create an Academy culture and climate underpinned by integrity, where honesty, kindness, tolerance, and respect are valued and understood. An Academy community which celebrates diversity, challenges injustice, promotes equality and encourages the creation of a better world. To this end we are creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion working group to support our ambitions. The first meeting of the group will take place early in May 2021 and I would like to invite parents and carers, who would wish to be part of this working group, to contact me via my PA, Kay Shepherd k.shepherd@dukeries.atrust.org.uk

Local Academy Committee Vacancy

We also have a vacancy for a community member of our Local Academy Committee who has experience or expertise in Sixth Form or Higher Education. Again, please contact me via Kay to discuss this opportunity.

Lateral Flow Home Testing

A second batch of home testing kits were distributed to students on Wednesday afternoon. These kits will ensure home testing can continue during the Easter holiday. Further testing kits will be issued later in April. Please ensure students test themselves twice a week, 3 to 5 days apart. Results, whether positive or negative, should be reported on the government website as detailed in the self-testing guide which accompanies the kits. Please ensure you contact the Academy if your child tests positive for COVID by emailing us on office@dukeries.atrust.org.uk.

Free School Meals

Vouchers for Free School Meals, over the Easter break, have now been distributed. Please contact office@dukeries.atrust.org.uk if you have not received them. Year 12 and Year 13 bursary students can submit food receipts upon return to the Academy for a refund up to the value of £15 per week.

Extra-Curricular Clubs

I am delighted to announce that extra-curricular sports clubs will begin again after the Easter break. Students should check out the notice boards in the PE department and look out for information during tutor time. We will also share timetables on our website and on our social

media channels. The free late bus is available for students taking part in extra-curricular clubs.

Shining a Light on Excellence

Our Year 9, 10, and 11 Brilliant Club cohort showed amazing academic excellence and resilience by completing their extended essays despite the national lockdown. Students achieved fantastic grades, including one student who obtained a First Class Honours for her assignment on 'Epistolary Communication in the 17th Century Derbyshire Gentry'. Students will be attending a virtual graduation ceremony with the University of Nottingham and are excited about wearing their caps and gowns. Parents and carers will also be invited to celebrate this excellent achievement.

Brilliant Club

Our Key Stage 5 cohort will attend their virtual launch for their Brilliant Club project at Cambridge University. They will be attending lectures and seminars on the topic of 'Adolescent Delinquency and the Justice System - Retribution, Reformation and Research-Based Societal Solutions' and will then complete a mini dissertation based on their own research, which is an excellent way of preparing for higher level study. Students also have targeted sessions that guide them through the university process and look at key life skills such as budgeting, research skills and oracy. Our spring cohort are very excited to be starting their project.

First Story

Students in Year 12 and Year 13 have been taking part in First Story creative writing workshops with BBC poet and playwright of the year Kevin Fegan. The sessions have been described by students as 'invigorating and thought-provoking during a difficult time' and 'an excellent way to explore our writer's voice and our own identity'. We were very pleased to be able to continue these sessions during lockdown and to offer additional sessions to Key Stage 4 students exploring diversity and identity which students really enjoyed and which led to some excellent creative writing. One of our students, Emily Freeman, has been invited to be part of the Oxford Young Writer's Festival showcase after her brilliant poem, 4AM, was shared on our Dukeries' Academy Twitter and received lots of praise. This showcase will be used to highlight excellence in creative writing for young people throughout the UK.

Have a wonderful Easter break and I look forward to welcoming students back to the Academy on Monday 19 April 2021 at 8.40am.

Kind regards



Mr Ged Rae
Principal