



4 September 2023

Dear families

Re: New Academic Year Welcome Letter

I am delighted to welcome our students back this week as we begin Academic Year 23/24. I am also writing to you for the first time as the Head of Academy here at TDA. I have been a part of The Dukeries Academy for the past seven years and feel both privileged and proud to continue to work here, in the Ollerton community, leading our school. Although recognised as a Good school (Ofsted 2021), I am clear that our improvement journey to Greatness by 2025 must continue. Over the next two years, the new leadership team will be working extremely hard to deliver an exceptional Academy that everyone can celebrate and be proud of. I shared plans for improvement with staff during our Inset day, and will do the same with our students this week in our planned assemblies.

There are several significant changes to Academy life at TDA. Some of these changes will be launched during week beginning 18 September, all of which are designed to improve both education and opportunities for our students. Below, I have summarised updates that will be useful for you.

New Senior Leadership Team

Mr M Brett – Head of Academy

Mr N Caunt – Vice Principal, Culture and Climate

Mrs A Madher – Assistant Principal, Personal Development and Community Engagement

Miss J Lightfoot – Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning

Mr T McDermott – Assistant Principal, Curriculum, Outcomes and Data Systems

Ms A Javed – Assistant Principal, Inclusion, Safeguarding and SEND (Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Mr M Snowden – Associate Assistant Principal, Pastoral Care

Mrs K Young – Associate Assistant Principal, Early Career Teachers and Initial Teacher Training

Enrich Programme

We have improved our extra-curricular offer further for 23/24. We know that providing enrichment opportunities is a crucial part of Academy life, and as such, we have improved our already exceptional offer for the year ahead.

Our new Enrich programme begins week beginning 18 September and we have dedicated this as a timetabled lesson for KS3 students. This will take place on a Thursday morning during Period 1. In the first two weeks, students in Y7, Y8 and Y9 will be able to select an activity, and will then be introduced to the expectations and routines for this lesson. Students will be able to take part in a range of opportunities led by our expert team, including a variety of sporting, performance and academic activities. I look forward to seeing this latest enhancement to our extra-curricular offer over the coming weeks.

Accelerate Programme

This year we are improving the way we deliver academic intervention. My ambition is for our GCSE and A Level results to be exceptional. After school, from 3.05pm to 3.50pm, your child will be invited to “Accelerate” lessons with expert teachers. This might be to support them with English, Maths or any other subject in which they need further support. This might also be to help our very highest-performing students aiming to attend TDA6 and beyond that, university. Our Scholar Stream sessions on Friday are dedicated for these students. An overview of the weekly schedule can be seen below:

Day	Daily Interventions	Main Subjects
Tuesday	Reading SEND Support	English Maths
Wednesday		Science Geography
Thursday		History Open subjects
Friday		Scholar Stream

You will receive invites and communications week beginning 11 September, so you can help your child attend these sessions. This strategy is key in ensuring that your child receives additional support in targeted areas and also provides them with access to specialist teachers who are dedicated to helping them make better progress during their time here.

Morning Meeting and Line-Ups

I have introduced a change to the way that we begin our school day. In the morning, students will now attend a 15-minute Morning Meeting with their coach. This meeting is focused on consolidating learning and all students will have a 5-question quiz to complete in their Memory-Recall booklets. Students will focus on a different subject every day, and the questions completed will help to boost their understanding of essential knowledge. This means that every year students will answer approximately 1000 questions, helping them to know more and remember more over time.

For KS3 students, we have introduced line-ups this year. Y7 line-up during key transitions, Y8 line-up in the morning and at break and Y9 line-up in the morning. The purpose of line-ups is to create a space to give key messages regarding culture, values, and expectations, along with important weekly themes. We will also use this time to check uniform and equipment, ensuring that all students are ready for learning. I look forward to seeing the impact of Morning Meeting and Line-Ups in boosting student knowledge, but also in further improving our already strong culture.

Standards and Expectations

We have made some changes to the Academy Day and Term Dates which I wrote to you about at the end of last term. A reminder that the Academy day is now 8.40am until 3.00pm, with Accelerate lessons running until 3.50pm.

We continue to run our breakfast provision at the start of the Academy day, so please encourage your child to utilise this opportunity.

Uniform and presentation standards at the Academy have been exceedingly strong for some time. These standards are an important part of our collective identity. I want our students to wear their



Academy uniform with pride, and I expect that all students' uniform is in line with Academy policy. I also expect that your child attends the Academy equipped with the essentials for learning. All students should have:

- A school bag
- Two black pens
- Two green pens
- Two pencils
- A ruler
- An eraser
- A scientific calculator – this can be purchased at a competitive price from our Maths Faculty.

Should issues with uniform or equipment arise, we will always work proactively with families to resolve them. We continue to operate Standards Gate, where your child can access essential equipment and uniform, but we will place students in Internal Exclusion whilst we resolve serious breaches of uniform policy.

I have also detailed below some key reminders of other important standards. Students are expected to follow these high standards and where they are not met, the Pastoral Team will be in contact and your child placed in Internal Exclusion until we have arrived at a resolution.

- Hairstyles should be appropriate. No more than one hair colour and no bright, unnatural colours are allowed.
- A small amount of subtle make up is allowed.
- Extended or coloured nails are not acceptable.
- One small stud earring in each ear is allowed. A clear, flat, completely plastic retainer is allowed for a nose piercing (not septum). No other jewellery, piercing or fashion accessories are allowed.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are banned on Academy site. We understand students may carry mobile phones to contact family members before or after school in their school bag. I expect these to be switched off and out of sight. At other times, if they are seen, they will be confiscated for the remainder of the day and a detention set.

In the age of social media, short-form content, like videos on platforms such as TikTok or Snapchat are preventing children from concentrating on important long-form content commonly found in schools, such as reading, completing examinations or taking part in extended lesson activities. I would ask that you support our Academy to continue to be a phone-free space, so that our students can focus on learning, getting the best qualifications they possibly can and setting themselves up for the best possible future. I will be reviewing our mobile phone policy over the coming weeks and will update you on any changes should these arise.

Important messages on mobile phones include:

- Please do not text, call or contact your child on their mobile phone during the school day. This distracts from lessons and learning. In an emergency, we will always support your child to contact you in a safe and supervised environment.
- Use of phones in toilets is prohibited and will be dealt with seriously as a safeguarding risk.
- Taking photos, audio clips or filming video footage on Academy site is also unacceptable and will also be dealt with seriously following our behaviour policy.



Vapes/E-Cigarettes

Last year, a small minority of students were involved in incidents related to vapes. This is not acceptable, and as a result, vapes have been added to our list of prohibited items. This means that the Academy reserves the right to search students for the possession of vapes or any type of e-cigarette, and will confiscate these as per guidance outlined by the DfE. Bringing these items onto Academy site will result in a serious sanction in-line with the Academy behaviour policy.

Attendance Expectations

Attendance at TDA has continued to be above national levels. After the Covid pandemic, attendance has been a growing challenge. I am sure you will have followed this in the national press. I expect that families work closely with us to solve and remove any barriers to good attendance. It is no coincidence that the students who had that highest attendance last year achieved the best examination results.

The Government are continuing to raise expectations of regular attendance at school. Therefore, an attendance rate of 97% is required unless the absence is due to medical circumstances or other significant reasons. 95% attendance means that your child will have missed 10 school days over the year, which is a considerable amount. Students are also expected to be punctual and may be marked absent if they arrive after registers have closed.

Please be aware that minor illnesses will not be authorised. These include headaches, tiredness, period pains, general aches and pains and minor colds. If you wish your child to have access to over the counter medications whilst at the Academy please bring these to the reception and complete the relevant form. Total absences exceeding 5 days will require medical evidence and any unauthorised absences totalling more than 3 days or 6 half days may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being requested from the Local Authority.

We always aim to support students to maintain great attendance and punctuality, and will work closely with all families to ensure that this is the case. If you believe there are other barriers to your child attending regularly, please contact our Pastoral Team.

If your child is absent, you must contact the attendance line on every day of the absence. You can report an absence in one of three ways:

- Direct Dial Telephone 08442 393393 (you will not need to go through the switchboard)
- Text 07943108675
- If you would like to talk to someone directly you can still call the office on 01623 860545

At TDA we actively discourage holidays during term time. If you are planning to take your child out of the Academy, it is essential that you request and complete a holiday form so we are aware of the reason for this absence. We will not authorise any holidays during term time and will refer any family we believe to have taken a holiday to the Local Authority to be considered for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

This year we also welcome several new staff to our team as we continue our journey to becoming a Great school by 2025. I am sure you will join me in wishing them well as they begin their career at TDA and within our Trust.

Staff Joining TDA

Miss D Stanley – Head of Year 10 and Year 11

Mr J Forster – Teacher of Science

Mr Z Tun – Teacher of Maths

Mr T McDermott – Assistant Principal

Miss R Masud – Teacher of Science



I am very excited and optimistic for the future of our Academy. Rest assured that the Senior Team and I will do whatever it takes to ensure that The Dukeries Academy not only continues to improve, but also becomes a school that our whole community can be truly proud of.

I look forward to working with you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Brett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Brett

Head of Academy

