

7th February 2022

Outwood Academy Adwick

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Principal: Mr Andy Scruby

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach the end of this half term I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and provide some updates that relate specifically to Year 9 students.

As a parent of secondary aged children I can directly relate to the frustrations and challenges the pandemic has brought to our young people, and especially for a Year 9 child who hasn't, as of yet, had the opportunity for a regular secondary school year without some Covid related disruption. But do rest assured that we have continually adapted our curriculum delivery plans to mitigate these disruptions, some of which I will share in this letter.

Firstly, I must share our gratitude to you for how students have conducted themselves in managing the safety measures. They have maturely and without challenge or objection, followed the measures that have been implemented; face coverings, one way-systems, bubbles and ventilation challenges in colder months just to name a few. I am confident that this is because of their comprehensive understanding and moral purpose - which starts at home and will serve them well as they move forward.

As a school community we have been severely affected by Covid-19 and at the point of writing to you 59% of our Year 9 students have at some point contracted the virus and have been required to self isolate. These numbers are closely reflected across all our year groups.

Following the media coverage late last year we were expecting further Covid-19 challenges through December and going into January; although perhaps not to the extent that the latest variant brought us. In January alone we sadly saw over 200 cases of Covid-19 in our academy community, reflecting the transmission rates across our locality. Fortunately, almost all cases were low level/mild symptoms or asymptomatic cases.

With so many cases this created a significant number of people being required to self-isolate. For periods of time we had circa 26% of our staff unable to attend the academy. As an academy staff body the virus has impacted upon a range of roles; teachers, inclusion teams, catering staff and site managers just to name a few; which has in turn given us extensive operational challenges.

I absolutely share your frustration arising from when we have had to make decisions to move year groups to remote learning especially after months and years of disruption. But student and staff safety will always be our priority.

In December and January we did have to close to cohorts of students due to significant Covid-19 related absences. We made the decision to establish a weekly remote home learning rotation between Years 7, 8 and 9. The reasoning behind this was that Years 10,11,12 and 13 are now in the midst of exams with December deadlines and the January exam season. As the pandemic continues we are nationally committed to prioritising education and exams so that our young people are not disadvantaged in the future.

Prior to the pandemic I would have believed that switching a school to remote learning, beaming virtual learning into students homes, would be an impossible task; but with the dedication of our teachers, the positivity of students and the vital support of parents and carers it has become a reality. The engagement to sessions during periods of remote learning has been excellent and has significantly narrowed gaps in learning. Alongside this we have had students accessing remote learning from home whilst they are required to self-isolate, interacting with their teachers and peers in the classroom. Remote learning will never replace the quality of learning in the classroom as we are reliant on face to face relationships and personal delivery but it has made a positive alternative in challenging times.

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A list of Directors' names is open to inspection at our registered office.

Over the last two years we have continually adapted our curriculum plans to ensure that students develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across their wide breadth of studies and we have put significant investment into additional one to one delivery, small group support and strategies that build upon strong foundations. You may have also noticed our emphasis on reading and numeracy this year as whilst learning new skills we aim to build really strong foundations in core skills.

Our Praising Stars system, in tandem with our in class assessment programme, has ensured we identify any gaps in learning quickly and can respond with focused intervention, critical when students have been isolating at different points.

Most importantly, students will not see or feel significant change but our planning and delivery will provide the teaching and learning they need to meet and/or exceed their potential. But with this we have decided to adapt our qualification assessment programme for Year 9; whilst in Year 8 our now Year 9 students selected qualifications as part of their Guided Pathways that were scheduled to complete in Year 10. As part of our Covid recovery planning all qualifications will now be scheduled to complete at the end of Year 11.

This will enable additional time in school, at home and additional enrichment booster sessions to prepare and attain the very best outcomes. Our curriculum model still ensures that all students have the opportunity to complete at least 8 qualifications in line with national progress and attainment expectations in a broad and balanced curriculum that will prepare them for all future life chances.

Earlier this term we congratulated and shared the news that our Year 9 Learning Manager Miss Kelly had successfully been promoted and will - in the coming months - commence her role as Lead Learning Manager at Outwood Academy Danum.

We have quickly re-appointed to this vital role and to aid the transition process Miss McMillan is already establishing herself as our Year 9 Learning Manager and for further capacity, Miss Barnes is also providing additional learning manager expertise currently focused towards Year 9.

You may have also seen the vast array of praise and reward systems we have implemented and hopefully your children have been a part of; from purple praise in planners through to awards ceremonies and much more; it is important we build belief in the ability of every child. Our Instagram and Twitter social media shares daily updates of academy life.

As we move into this next phase of the academic year I passionately hope that we are now heading towards more freedoms, continuing to engage in interactive teaching and learning experiences, and the wealth of enrichment opportunities that we aim to deliver to students. Despite the challenges we have seen, I can confidently share that our student outcomes for this summer's exams are predicted to be the best the academy has ever seen - which younger students can take as confidence that as we move forward their future outcomes will continue the upwards trajectory.

I am sure that you may have many questions, and should you need to contact us, please do so. I also hope to welcome you into the academy very soon to witness the incredible achievements our students secure every day.

Yours sincerely



Andy Scruby
Principal