



7th November 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

There are several items of important information which we need to share with you. Please therefore take the time to read this letter which you will also find on our website if you need to refer to it again in the future.

Acting Principal

I am delighted to advise you that Ms Newman, Senior Vice Principal, has been appointed Acting Principal at William Parker and will be in charge of the Academy on a day to day basis. This is good news for the Academy and ensures that the year ahead is settled and focused. Ms Newman will continue to be supported by myself as Executive Principal for the foreseeable future. I know Ms Newman has enjoyed meeting some parents already and looks forward to meeting many more of you at some of the forthcoming events in the Academy diary.

Attendance

There are a large number of students who have 100% attendance to date this year which is excellent. We do want to thank parents who support strong attendance in this way. Unfortunately, there is also a minority of students whose attendance is far too low and the Academy has amended its protocols to address this issue. The government says that anyone whose attendance is below 90% is a persistent absentee from school – any school in the country. At William Parker, we expect all students to have strong attendance and excellent punctuality and there is a good reason for this – there is clear national data to show that there is a direct link between absence from school and GCSE outcomes – ie the more time a student has off school, the worse their GCSE grades are.

We are therefore advising you as parents, that if your son's attendance dips below 95%, we shall be writing to you, meeting with you and setting targets with you to ensure that this improves. For any absence which continues to be unacceptably low, parents should be aware that we shall be working with the local authority and the courts officer to seek to resolve these situations.

Our policy which reflects all of these protocols will shortly be on our website for parents to access in full, please do feel free to read it in full.

Website

We are currently in the process of updating our website. Whilst this will take a little time to achieve fully, please do make good use of this facility – our aim is that you will be able to find all policies, letters, updates and news on this site so that it is a really useful resource to you. Should you have any recommendations or requests of things which could be included on it, please do let us know.

Behaviour

We have done a lot of work on behaviour in the early weeks of this academic year. The overwhelming majority of students understand and respect the expectations of the Academy's senior leadership team and comply readily with these. We are very clear that parents send their children to school to be safe, to learn and to be happy in their school environment and we are equally clear that any behaviour which impacts on this is unacceptable to us. This is a clear commitment from the leaders of the school. We will shortly be introducing a set of Parker Manners – our clear and positive rules and expectations for daily behaviour from all students; you will find these on the Academy website in the coming few weeks and we would ask that you read these and ensure that your son knows that you expect him to comply with them. These expectations will be non-negotiable and universal – we will expect all members of our community to uphold them.

Should you be a parent whose son is coming home distressed or upset about any behaviours taking place at school, we genuinely want you to get in touch with us please as Ms Newman is completely committed to addressing any and all concerns that parents or students have – we are very serious about this.

Ms Newman will ensure that a member of staff takes your comments seriously, addresses them and responds to you in a timely manner.

Forthcoming events

There are several notable forthcoming events in the lead-up to Christmas:

Remembrance Day service:	This is for students and will take place on 11 th November with a number of external visitors and facilitators.
Christmas concert:	A joint concert will take place between all four Ark Hastings schools on Tuesday 13 th December at Blacklands Church – please see our website for further information and it would be great to have you join us there!
Awards Evening:	Our annual Awards Evening will take place on Thursday 15 th December for invited students and their guests – invites will be in the post in the next couple of weeks.

Year 11 Intervention

It was encouraging to see a significant number of year 11 students coming to the additional sessions scheduled over half-term. We need to reiterate to parents of boys in year 11 that the work done in these sessions will not be repeated at any other time so students choosing not to attend will most definitely be disadvantaged over those who come in for additional support.

It is also critical to note that no student can afford the luxury of thinking it is acceptable not to attend school at the beginning or end of terms – every day counts and it is imperative that students are in school for every single day between now and 21st December and then back on the very first day of term after Christmas.

All term dates are on the Academy website and we fully expect every student to be present on all occasions.

Contact details

It is critical that the Academy holds up to date contact details for all students. If you have not updated these in some time, please contact the Academy office and ensure that we are fully aware of all your details and those of your emergency contacts; we can only contact you if we have these.

Free School Meals

We would like to encourage you to be sure to apply for free school meals if you believe you are entitled to them. In some schools, parents are reluctant to apply because they think it will be embarrassing for their son to be receiving free meals. However, the great news is that whenever a student has free school meals, the Academy is able to receive extra funding which means that we can spend more to support students in doing well – and particularly to support those students who are having the free school meals. We would really like to encourage you, therefore, to contact the Academy office if you think you may be eligible for these and we will advise you further. There really is no stigma to having free school meals and the benefits are considerable.

Thank you for taking the time to read all of the above information. We are very keen to work with parents to ensure that Ark William Parker becomes an outstanding school for its local community and we are always open to hearing constructive ideas and comments from parents who want to help us achieve this – please do feel free to send your thoughts and comments in to us. We look forward to sharing more of our ideas and plans with you in the coming months.

Yours sincerely



Jane Fletcher
REGIONAL DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL