

October 2008

Dear Parent / Carer

As we approach the end of the first term of our six term year, I would like to thank you for your support through the period of opening, share with you some of the initial successes and recent developments, and also draw your attention to a number of forthcoming events.

The way that all our students have adapted to the new Academy day, new curriculum, new uniform and new routines in general has been highly commendable. Student behaviour has been very good, and overall students are presenting themselves in their new uniform and conducting themselves admirably in the Academy.

We started the academic year with a fully staffed curriculum and the three groups of staff, those transferring from Darwen Moorland High School, the smaller Academy team and the new appointees have all come together well as a strong, skilled, positive and enthusiastic Academy staff body.

Some highlights of the first term have been –

- A very well attended Open Evening on 16 September, with a high level of interest for admissions to the Academy for September 2009.
- Open days - with a number of prospective Year 7 parents visiting the Academy during the working day.
- The return of post-16 Education to Darwen with the establishment of our Sixth Form
- A wide range of Session 3 activities (table attached), with a good take up by students.
- Continued partnership between the Academy and the Local Authority with the Academy hosting the Extended Schools' Locality Co-ordinator posts to promote and develop Extended Services from Schools through the Academy and partner organisations.
- Media Studies visits to the Cornerhouse, Manchester and the National Media Museum, Bradford, Year 10 Business Studies visit to the Chocolate House, Blackburn and the Preston Football Museum and Year 11 History visit to Quarry Bank Mill, Styal.
- Sixth Form involvement in the national book launch of "Teach your granny to text and other ideas to change the world", on 2 October in London and linked public speaking training, all generated through the sponsor's links with 'we are what we do' (email: wearewhatwedo.org).
- Completion of environment improvements to the buildings, in part responding to student requests, eg. new / refurbished student toilets, decorated stairways / corridors, new Student Services facility, lockers for students, some refurbished classrooms and more extensive ICT provision to support teaching and learning.
- Academy hosting the primary schools' netball league (Thursday evenings).

- Appointment of Student Academy Council representatives and the introduction of themed 'student voice' groups, including Student Sports Council and Young Chamber.
- We particularly wanted to acknowledge the current students as the founders of the Academy. To this end, on 16 October we held celebration assemblies for students taken by myself and the sponsor, Mr Rod Aldridge. In order to 'capture' our early days, we have produced a video which has been put onto DVD and is available on request from the Academy office. I hope you enjoy watching it as it gives a feel for the excitement of the initial start of the Academy.

You will receive further information in letters from Mrs Beaumont and Mr Cane regarding our new process of termly assessment and reporting and punctuality and uniform, respectively.

Looking to the future, I have enclosed the Academy Calendar for this academic year. I would like to highlight –

- Construction work has commenced on the new Academy building. The work is due to be completed in May 2010 and we hope to induct staff and students into working in the new facilities in preparation for September 2010. I also enclose the newsletter from our construction partners, Bowmer and Kirkland, to provide further details on the construction project.
- National Enterprise week brings a national focus for us linked to our specialism of Entrepreneurship. Look out for invitations to a number of activities including our 'Pink-Passion – Party', celebrating local female entrepreneurs and businesses and supporting the 'tickled pink' breast cancer awareness charity.
- Sports multi-skills school on 27, 28 and 29 October during the end of term 1 break.
- Plans are advanced for our Parents' Forum and we intend to invite parents to our first meeting early in December 2008.
- Plans are advanced for our Academy newsletter 'The Entrepreneur' with our first edition due to be distributed in December 2008, before the end of term 2.

Finally, as the nights draw in, we will be promoting road safety with the students in assemblies. We have observed that Holden Fold can become congested between 8.35am and 8.45am and at 3.15pm. We will supervise students from all the main entrances and monitor the traffic at these times, but can I ask all parents dropping off or picking up to be extra vigilant and cautious at these times.

I trust you will have an enjoyable Autumn break and we are looking forward to our second term and in the latter part of the term preparing for the Christmas season. I would like to reassure you that despite all of the excitement and adapting to new arrangements and innovations, we will not be distracted from our core business of securing the best outcomes for our students. In particular, we will be preparing our Year 11 students for GCSEs with their mock examinations in December and our AS students for their first modules in January 2009.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN LOUGHRAN
Principal