

12 February 2010

Dear Parent,

Please find enclosed the term time and holiday pattern for the academic year 2010-2011. I would like to thank the vast majority of parents for avoiding booking holidays in term times. In simple terms, if students are in school, they will achieve higher standards. For the avoidance of doubt, it would only be in the most exceptional of circumstances that I would consider approving any term time holiday absence.

2010-2011 will be the Academy's first year in the new facilities on Sudell Road. It is anticipated that we will have access to the facilities from the start of July 2010 and that we will be fully operational for the start of the new academic year. It is also intended that we will run open days for current and prospective parents of Academy students in advance of the formal opening.

As we approach the end of term 3, you will be receiving our third update on progress of the year in a PEP (Praising Entrepreneurs Programme). Can I ask you to review this with your child and discuss their progress with them. We place a great emphasis on promoting a positive attitude and this is reflected in the effort grades on the report.

With regard to progress in general, some of you may have noted recent reporting that the Academy had suffered a 'blow' with regards last year's examination results. It is important to emphasise that in all but the one measure that includes Mathematics and English GCSE, the Academy improved on student outcomes in its first year when compared with previous achievements.

By the following measures, the Academy has already achieved improved results:

Key Stage 4:

- 5+ A*-C - increased
- 5+ A*-G - increased
- 1+ A*-G – increased
- GCSE equivalence Average Points Score Uncapped - increased
- GCSE equivalence Contextual Value Added – increased

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Key Stage 3:

- Maths L5+ - increased
- English L5+ - increased
- Science L5+ - increased

Attendance and behaviour:

- Student Attendance - increased
- Student Persistent absentees - reduced
- Fixed term exclusions – reduced to zero reflecting positive student attitude and behaviour
- Permanent exclusions – reduced to zero reflecting positive student attitude and behaviour

I would like parents to be confident that we expect continued improvements, in particular in the standards achieved in GCSE Mathematics and English.

When we consider wider initiatives such as the new entrepreneurship specialism, additional investment brought in to Darwen by the Academy since it opened (£1.3M), the return of a Sixth Form with a promising set of A/S Level results, I trust you will agree with me these are exciting times for all associated with the Academy.

Our specialism continues to provide great motivation for our students. In week commencing 1st February, we had three guest entrepreneurs visit the Academy to speak to students in assemblies. Lee Blake who runs 50fifty clothing, Fraser Doherty of SuperJam and Andy Pickles from U-explore (and ex-Jive Bunny!) all spoke about their businesses, how they got started and what they had to overcome to turn their ideas into a reality. They also helped to launch the Make Your Mark with a Tenner competition which challenges students to make a profit and make a difference using their entrepreneurial ideas during March. Please encourage your child to consider getting involved in the Make Your Mark campaign.

We value greatly parent contributions to the development of the Academy. I would like to thank the parents who were able to join us for our last Parents Forum in January when we focused on a number of ways we can support students in their health and well being. Our next Parent Forum is scheduled for 5 May and more parents are always welcome.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN LOUGHRAN
Principal