



May 2010

Dear Parent/ Carer

I write to update you on a number of recent activities and opportunities.

1 New facilities

The new facilities are due to be ready for the Academy on 5 July. From 5 July to 23 July, our intention is to transfer resources to the new facilities, although there will still be minor completion works and commissioning of equipment taking place at that time. As has been indicated in the previously published calendar, the final day of term for students is Tuesday 20 July. If it is feasible, we will arrange visits for students, their parents and the wider community during July and we will notify you of this in due course. We will be giving students their A Level and GCSE results from the new facilities on 19 August and 24 August respectively.

2 Darwen Creates

Darwen Creates is a business incubation centre which is being based within the new academy building, designed to provide the facilities and support to help people start a business. If you are thinking about starting a business and would like some more information, then contact our Darwen Creates team on 01254 819567 or darwencreates@daca.uk.com.

3 Turn your ideas into action

On Wednesday 31 March as part of the Darwen Creates project we held an event called 'Turning Ideas into Action'. The day saw students and their parents working together in teams to generate business ideas and develop them into a business proposal. At the end of the day the teams presented their ideas to the group, with prizes awarded for creativity, problem solving and teamwork. It was a great success with excellent feedback received from both students and parents. If you are interested in benefiting from the developing Academy specialism of Entrepreneurship, please do contact us, or if you are able to, come along to events such as these in future.

4 Inspiring Communities

In partnership with Blackburn with Darwen and Community Voluntary Service, the Academy is leading a campaign under the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Inspiring Communities programme.

After a successful start to the Inspiring Communities project we are launching the 'Stand Out in Darwen' campaign. The aim of the campaign is to invite the community of Darwen to support our young people in their efforts to fulfil all their future career aspirations. To get the campaign off to a good start a number of Darwen based young entrepreneurs have kindly supported the campaign and will be featured in a poster and radio campaign across Darwen. If you would like to get involved please visit www.standoutindarwen.com.

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5 Ofsted monitoring visit

All academies in their second year undergo a monitoring visit, conducted by Ofsted HMI. Our visit took place on 15 and 16 March and Ofsted published their letter to me summarising their findings on Friday 30 April.

Their prime judgement is that the Academy has made satisfactory progress towards raising standards. The visit also raised some concerns which we have been, and continue to address, and these are articulated in the following priorities for improvement:

- Raise standards, particularly in English, Mathematics and Science and in the Sixth Form.
- Develop students' basic and independent learning skills to equip them for their futures in and beyond the Academy.
- Adopt a systematic approach to improving the quality of teaching, paying particular attention to:
 - lesson planning that secures progression and meets individual needs
 - the development of students' literacy, oracy and independent study skills
 - assessment strategies that promote learning.
- Improve guidance for students about appropriate sixth-form courses and pathways, refine systems for gauging their progress and establish ways of providing students with relevant additional support.
- Sharpen strategic leadership at all levels to establish an effective cycle of pinpointing priorities, planning for improvement, monitoring rigorously and using the outcomes to drive further improvement.

The letter also highlights a number of instances where good progress is in evidence. The full letter is available on our website www.daca.uk.com/ofsted-section-8, or a paper copy is available on request from our main office.

6 Public Examinations

We are now entering the main and final examination season of the academic year. If you have a child in any of the years from Year 9 to Year 13, they will be taking important assessments over coming weeks. Please provide your full support during this period, in particular in encouraging revision at home and, where possible, in providing quiet space without distractions for your child to revise. This can also be a stressful period for students and should you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN LOUGHRAN
Principal