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Aston
ACADEMY

Striving for **Excellence**
Empowering Achievement
Shaping **Learning**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope all our children and families had a wonderful half-term break. It has been fantastic to welcome our students back to school this week. We have another busy half term ahead, filled with many exciting events and opportunities, including our Christmas rewards and festive celebrations.
Key dates this half term include:

- Remembrance activities on Wednesday 11th November
- Year 11 Transition Event - Monday 16 November
- Year 7 Meet the Tutors Evening - Monday 23 November
- Snowflake Fayre and Christmas Jumper Day - Friday 4 December
- Year 11 Consultation Evening - Monday 7 December

Whilst these are just some of the highlights, they reflect our commitment to providing enriching opportunities for students whilst ensuring there are regular opportunities to welcome parents and carers into school. When home, school and students work together, we can make a real difference.

I would like to offer special praise to our Year 11 students, staff and pastoral team for their tremendous efforts, resilience and commitment during the first week of the Year 11 trial examinations. It has been a really positive start and another excellent example of home, school and student working together. A huge thank you must also go to our Year 11 parents and carers for their support. I am sure many of you have been helping to motivate some anxious and tired teenagers throughout the examination period.

I am delighted to share that we raised an amazing £1,040 at our Y7 and Y8 Halloween Disco in support of Sheffield Children's Hospital. A huge thank you to all the staff who gave up their time to help make the event such a success.
We are now incredibly close to surpassing the £40,000 mark for the Snowflake Appeal. This is an outstanding achievement, and special recognition must go to Mr

Sutcliffe, Miss Ward, Miss Cocking, the PE team and the many other staff who have supported this work. All Snowflake activities raise funds for Sheffield Children's Hospital, a cause that is very close to our hearts at Aston Academy and one that provides exceptional care for many young people.

Our Christmas Snowflake Fayre will take place on Friday 4 December. Please keep an eye out for further details. In particular, if you have contacts within local businesses, or know of organisations that may be willing to donate raffle prizes, we would be incredibly grateful for any support.

Next week is National Anti-Bullying Week. To recognise this important event, assemblies for Years 7 to 10 have focused on understanding what bullying is, how to recognise it, what students should do if they witness bullying, and how to seek support if they find themselves experiencing it.

Bullying is a serious issue and one that we take extremely seriously. We know it can happen anywhere and at any time, and that it can have a significant impact on those affected. With the rise of social media, cyberbullying has become an increasingly important concern. Where bullying was once largely confined to the playground, it can now occur online at any time of the day or night.

The Department for Education defines bullying as:

***"Behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally."* (DfE, 2017)**

It is important to understand that bullying is different from occasional disagreements or friendship issues, although students may sometimes describe these situations as bullying. Young people do occasionally fall out with friends or make poor choices in what they say. Whilst these incidents may not meet the definition of bullying, they will still be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly and addressed appropriately.

Before half term, we took the opportunity to speak with students through assemblies about bonfires, fireworks and staying safe during the darker autumn evenings. We were also pleased to welcome officers from South Yorkshire Police, who delivered sessions to our Year 9 students.
The presentations covered:

- Firework safety
- Bonfire safety
- Avoiding anti-social behaviour
- Managing peer pressure

I am sure many families will also be discussing these topics at home as students attend bonfire and firework celebrations over the coming days. The following

resource contains some useful advice for teenagers which may help support these conversations:
Dark night & Bonfire/Firework Safety

Next week, one of the most significant events in our school calendar will be our Remembrance Day commemorations, including a one-minute silence at 11.11am and a range of Poppy Appeal activities throughout the day. We will also be hosting a special Remembrance presentation led by our outstanding Year 10 Student Leaders for Aston Academy staff.

It is important to us that students understand the significance of Remembrance Day, both within our local community and across the wider nation. This week, all students have attended Remembrance assemblies to reflect on the importance of the Poppy and the sacrifices made by so many in service to others.
As we approach Remembrance Day, I am reminded of the following reflection:

> ***"On Remembrance Day, we pause to reflect on the sacrifices made by others so that future generations could thrive. In education, we honour that legacy by helping young people learn from the past, equipping them with the knowledge, compassion and courage to create a better tomorrow."***

On Sunday 6th November, Diwali will be celebrated in the UK and around the world, with the five-day festival period running from Friday to Tuesday. Diwali is one of the most recognised and celebrated festivals in Hinduism, but it is also celebrated in Sikhism and Jainism.
The word Diwali literally means 'rows of lighted lamps' and remembers the return of Prince Rama to Ayodhya after 14 years in exile and his victory over the demon king Ravana who kidnapped his wife, Sita. The festival symbolises the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. It is a time for coming together with loved ones, showing kindness to others, and reflecting on the values that unite us all.

We are proud to celebrate the diversity of our community and the richness that different cultures and traditions bring to our lives. Shubh Deepavali! May the divine light of Diwali illuminate your hearts, your homes, and your future.
The combination of home, school and student will always make a difference.
Have a wonderful weekend.

Best regards,

James Graham
Principal
Aston Academy