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ACADEMY

Striving for **Excellence**
Empowering Achievement
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Another Friday has arrived, bringing to a close what has been a very cold but incredibly productive week for our students and staff.

My standout memory, and certainly my proudest principal moment of the week, was our Remembrance Day commemorations on Wednesday. For a large school to pause during a busy day and observe a moment of reflection, gratitude and remembrance is always incredibly powerful. What made the occasion even more special was the significant role our students played.

A huge well done to Ralph Best for leading the playing of the *Last Post* and *Reveille* so beautifully. Our talented Year 10 student leaders also delivered a moving remembrance service for staff, sharing reflections, poetry and memories that highlighted the importance of remembering those who have served and sacrificed. Thank you to Mrs Adams for her leadership of our Personal Development curriculum, the organisation of our assemblies and the planning of the day's events. The academy also looked fantastic, with impressive displays throughout school. A special thank you goes to Donna Jebson and our Art team for their tremendous work.

If you have not already done so, please take a moment to visit our Facebook page and view the videos from the day, along with the many other celebrations, achievements and opportunities that make Aston Academy such a special place.

https://www.facebook.com/astonacademy.ACET/

Staying with the theme of proud moments, I am particularly excited about our Year 11 Mock Interview Day taking place next week. We will be welcoming a number of business leaders into the academy to conduct one-to-one mock interviews with our students.

This provides a fantastic opportunity for our young people to discuss employability, practise interview techniques and experience a realistic interview environment. While I am sure many will be feeling nervous, I hope the experience also gives them confidence and reinforces the message that combining strong academic achievement with excellent personal and employability skills opens the door to a very bright future.

Like our Remembrance Day activities, this event represents just one part of the wider Personal Development and PSHE programme we provide for all students. If you would like to learn more about our careers education and guidance programme, please visit the link below:

Aston Academy Careers Information

I have also included a link to the Sway presentation that we shared with our Year 11 parents this week, which provides information about Year 11 careers support and next-step activities.

I think it may be of interest to parents of our younger students, as it offers an insight into some of the many ways we support our students in securing the courses, qualifications and career pathways that are right for them. It also demonstrates how we work to ensure every young person is well prepared for their transition beyond Aston Academy.

https://sway.cloud.microsoft/EbKDnbXwFbNjlMUb?ref=Link&loc=play

Please also look out for future communications regarding our Apprenticeship Week, which will take place during the week beginning Monday 2 February. Through opportunities such as mock interviews, work experience in Years 8, 10 and 12, and personalised careers guidance for every Key Stage 4 student, we aim to ensure that all young people leave Aston Academy fully prepared to pursue their ambitions and compete for the very best opportunities available to them.

On Sunday, we will be running one of our largest rewards trips to date, taking more than 100 students to watch Sheffield Steelers take on Coventry Blaze at the Utilita Arena Sheffield. We are delighted to be able to provide experiences such as this, helping students create lasting memories while recognising their hard work and positive contributions to school life. Events of this scale are only possible because of the dedication of staff who generously volunteer their own time to support our students. They do not receive additional payment for doing so; they simply want to provide opportunities that enrich young people's lives. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every member of staff attending. It is another example of the care, commitment and generosity that exists throughout our academy and another proud principal moment for me this week.

My week began with a 'Team Around the Academy' meeting on Monday. These meetings are an important part of the support provided by our trust and bring together colleagues from areas including premises, finance, IT, HR and safeguarding.

The meetings allow us to discuss how support is being provided to Aston Academy, identify priorities and plan for future developments. Ultimately, this helps ensure that students and staff receive the very best provision possible. As an example, we were able to discuss issues that had arisen with our Class Charts app, and I am pleased to report that student timetables are now fully visible for parents. By bringing the right people together, issues can be resolved more effectively and improvements implemented more quickly.

A reminder that Friday (27 November) is a Disaggregated Day, meaning the school will be closed to both students and staff.

Schools utilise disaggregated days for a variety of reasons, and we have carefully positioned these throughout the academic calendar to support both operational requirements and wellbeing. These days allow essential maintenance and improvement work to take place, but they also provide an important opportunity for staff and students to pause and recharge.
The period between half term and Christmas is often recognised as one of the most demanding parts of the school year. Darker mornings and evenings, colder weather and seasonal illnesses can all contribute to increased levels of fatigue. We hope that an extended weekend provides students with a welcome opportunity to rest and refresh before the final three weeks of term.

We believe this time is equally important for staff, helping them return energised and ready to continue providing the highest quality support and education for your children.
Taking a break isn't stepping away from progress; it's creating the space to return with fresh energy, clearer thinking and renewed purpose. A well-earned break refreshes the mind, restores the spirit and helps us return ready to achieve even more.
Have a wonderful weekend when it arrives.
The combination of home, school and student will make a difference.

Best regards,

James Graham

Principal

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