

Aston Academy

Aughton Road, Swallownest

Sheffield S26 4SF

t: 0114 287 2171

e: info@astonacademy.org

w: astonacademy.org

Principal: James Graham BSc (Hons), PGCE

CEO: Rebecca Scutt BSc (Hons), PGCE

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome to another Friday, December just around the corner and for most of our students the countdown to Christmas begins.

On Monday this week it was wonderful to welcome our Y7 parents and carers into the academy to allow them to meet with their child's group tutor and receive an update from Mr Kilgannon and Miss Carroll on academy life for Y7. We hope that our guests found the evening welcoming, useful and informative. The feedback has been very positive, and we are certainly extremely proud of our Y7 cohort and their first term at secondary school. Our daily routines are very different in Y7 to the rest of the school. Our teaching and learning techniques used in the classroom, transitions between lessons, student lineups, equipment packs and learning pathways are just some of the things we have launched with Y7. Evenings such as Monday allow parents/carers to give feedback on how these are working and the impact it has on their child's experiences of school. I am very reassured by the feedback; what comes through very clearly is that Y7 parents/carers agree that their child feels safe and known within the academy. It is this feeling of belonging that fosters positive experiences for our students and as a result, Y7 are flourishing. Equally important on evenings such as Monday is the input from our parent/carers about things we can re-look at and tweak. The Y7 team have done a great job with feeding these back to the necessary teams and leaders. I am sure things are already being actioned.

The communication between home and school is such a crucial link in ensuring children achieve and thrive. After Christmas I will be inviting parents to a parent forum where we can discuss and share views on a wide range of academy life. Please look out for more information in January.

Keeping within the theme of feedback and critical partners, this week the academy was busy hosting enquiry visits. The first of these involved a day with our very talented Science faculty, led by Miss Spiewak (Head of Science). The review of Science included a full day visiting lessons, looking at learning, checking books and speaking to/listening to students and Science staff talk about the subject and the learning. If we are to continue our improvement as a school the willingness of our staff to participate fully in busy days such as this are going to be a key to our success. Below are just a couple of findings from the enquiry team. Congratulations Science team and students.

- Strong climate for learning is supported by well-embedded routines across all lessons.
- Tasks are suitably challenging for all students.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge in their subject specialism.
- Y11 students are well supported; they know how to revise and appreciate the revision booklets and Seneca.

Yesterday we continued the theme of critical partners by inviting the police, Rotherham MASH (representing social care/early help) and Lindsay Wootton-Ashforth, who is the Education Safeguarding Lead for Rotherham local authority. They spent an afternoon with me and Mrs Barquero thoroughly going through all our safeguarding procedures. This included answering questions, talking through case studies, demonstrating our safeguarding routines and sharing how we work together to help keep children and families safe. This is a new initiative by Rotherham LA to ensure safeguarding is robust in all educational settings. I am very proud that Aston Academy volunteered to be the first Rotherham secondary school to welcome a visit. I am ever more proud to report that the team described our provision as *exemplary*. I look forward to sharing parts of the report with you when we receive the write-up. Our mission statement contains the sentence 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility' and our review yesterday confirmed how true this is at Aston Academy.

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A further safeguarding check we will complete next Friday will be a lockdown practice drill. Regular practice helps students and staff become familiar with one of the strategies we could use if we are concerned about the safety of our school community. During the practice we will take time to speak to all the students to remind them how we can safeguard each other and avoid any behaviours that may result in risk, harm or injury. I will send you more information on Friday, next week, and I am sure that your child will be able to tell you all about it.

Next week we look forward to another reading week. The theme is 'cultural celebrations'. There is a mixture of fiction and non-fiction extracts for staff and students to enjoy at the beginning of each lesson. The cultural celebrations are:

- Diwali
- Eid
- Christmas
- Hanukkah
- Chinese New Year

As well as lesson activities we will be sharing a recommended reading list containing 3 books for each cultural celebration. Copies of which will be available in the library.

Nelson Mandela said, "*Be a lifelong student, read as many books as possible*". He noted that "*when we read we are able to travel to many places, meet many people and understand the world*". I can't think of a better reason why we should value reading and its benefits at Aston Academy.

Have a wonderful weekend, when it arrives.

The combination of home, school and student will make a difference.

Best regards,



Mr J Graham
Principal

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