

## Aston Academy

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**Principal:** James Graham BSc (Hons), PGCE

**CEO:** Rebecca Scutt BSc (Hons), PGCE

30 January 2026

Dear parent/carer,

I hope you have had a successful week. It has been a particularly wet and cold week, which always makes things a little more challenging for children as well as parents/carers who are drying shoes and coats every evening. It is during the cold and dull January days that our routines are most important to the students, supporting them to be safe, organised and demonstrate resilience.

I have frequently mentioned in my Friday letters the lengths we are going to as an academy to ensure that we can identify areas to improve but more importantly seek out the best possible feedback on how to advance these areas, by seeking the best practices currently in education or the knowledge and expertise of certain groups and individuals. Therefore, when Jake Richards MP contacted last week to ask if Aston Academy would like to work in collaboration with himself and his team, we naturally jumped at this chance. Specifically, Jake Richards MP wanted to seek our input and collaboration on the global topic of social media and mobile phones for teenagers.

This week school received a letter from the Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, about mobile phones, you will likely be aware of the recent coverage in the media. The letter refers to "strengthened" guidance that all schools should be phone-free environments throughout the entire school day, including lessons, time between lessons, breaktimes, and lunchtime. For Aston Academy this policy is already in place and all our students are expected to adhere to our 'not heard, not seen policy on phones.

The Education Secretary also emphasises the importance of parental support for these policies, describing the guidance as "a clear national reset on mobile phone use in schools."

To explore further the impact of social media and mobile phone use on teenagers Jake Richards MP is going to run an online safety forum with a group of our Y10 students. Students will spend an hour with the MP to discuss the challenges they face online. The programme will likely run for the remainder of the school year, engaging students at Aston Academy for their input, experiences and voice.

We are so proud that Aston Academy has been chosen as the host Rotherham school for KS4 student voice. It is a wonderful opportunity for the school and our students to work directly with our local MP. It will also help the academy to review our current provisions, better understand the impacts of social media/mobile phone use and inform further support or policy. Collaborations, looking outwards and seeking the best possible advice is how we will continue to improve. I will make sure to keep you updated on these developments.

Speaking of collaborations and seeking the best possible feedback - you, our parent/carers, are certainly one of the most valuable sources of feedback. You may have noticed this week we sent communications home about our parent forum afternoon on Tuesday 10th February between 3.30pm and 5pm.

Our Parent Forum event will run as a drop in event - you may want to stay for 10mins and chat to a specific member of our leadership team or stay longer to speak to several of our academy leaders. Please feel free to drop in for as much time as you would like to during the session. A parent forum is not designed to discuss a specific complaint relating to your child but instead an opportunity to have conversations with leaders perhaps to better understand some of our routines, methods in the classroom or policies. We will have refreshments available and quiet places if you would like to sit down and have a chat. please check the letter sent earlier in the week for more details and an online forum that allows you to quickly input your question or areas to discuss. Effective collaboration between parents and home frequently means that children's experiences of school are much better. If you are available, it would be great to see you there.



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A huge well done to our maths assistant faculty leader Mr Balcombe who organised 100 Y9 and Y10 students to complete the UKMT Intermediate Mathematics Challenge. They have qualified for the competition by excelling in Mathematics at Aston Academy and now get to put their skills to the test, competing against students nationally. We know a number of students have been doing additional revision and are really striving to achieve a bronze, silver or gold award and we will be eagerly anticipating the results of the Challenge. Well-done to team maths and all the students involved. I hope to be sharing some good news when the results come in.

This week I have had two hugely proud Principal moments. The first came with the amazing news that our hard working and talented Y13 students Charley Kerry and Sophie Birks have been offered places to study at Cambridge University. Sophie hopes to study English while Charley's place is for History. We are so proud of these students, and they fully deserve this opportunity. It is another reminder to our school and community that Aston Academy students can compete against any peer in the country. Well, done to Charley and Sophie!

My second proud Principal moment was definitely the Y11 mock interviews on Wednesday. We welcomed over 20 volunteers into the academy from a range of sectors who led the mock job interviews with each Y11 student. Students faced a range of interview style questions; the answers were graded by the interviewer and feedback collated so our Y11 students will have gained valuable interview experience and practice. We are very proud of each one of them as this really took some of our students out of their comfort zone. These employability skills along with the academic successes they will achieve means that our Y11s have a very bright future.

Next week I am very much looking forward to welcoming our Y9 parents and carers for the launch of the GCSE options process. This is always a very exciting time for our Y9 students, and we look forward to helping them make big decisions about the subjects that they will study and perhaps pursue as a career. Our options evening is on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, we have two identical presentations, one at 5.30pm and the second at 6.45pm.

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

Have a wonderful weekend.

Best regards,



**Mr J Graham**  
**Principal**

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