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Striving for **Excellence**
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Dear parent/carer,

Another busy week comes to an end. You will be well aware that secondary school children across Rotherham have experienced considerable distraction due to the latest social media trend impacting schools nationwide – ‘red v blue’. The content of these posts is not only extremely dangerous but also deeply upsetting and worrying. It is yet another reminder of some of the dangers that social media, AI and fake news can pose to our young people.

I am even more reassured this week by our decision to volunteer to work with Rotherham Council and Jake Richards MP, collating information from our Y10 students on their thoughts and use of social media and the potential harm it can cause. We hope this will support the Government in creating tighter rules and restrictions around social media content and access.

I am very thankful to our wonderful staff who have reassured and educated the children regarding the social media posts. I am pleased that our safeguarding routines, and our close working relationship with the local authority, have ensured that school has been kept up to date and equipped to share information with all stakeholders and the police when necessary.

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of all adults. Regarding dangerous social media posts, our advice to students has been to ‘avoid giving them oxygen.’ In other words, the less they are shared, inflamed or reposted, the quicker they fade away. Our students know how to stay safe online, they know how to keep each other safe, and I have been very proud of their response. Please be reassured as parents/carers that if we ever felt an issue could harm the wellbeing of our school community, or if it were necessary to enter a lockdown, we would communicate this without delay. Thank you for working together with us to reassure our children. I am looking forward to getting back to focusing on progress, opportunity and, most of all, belonging – something that the fools behind these posts clearly do not value.

Even with these distractions, there have been many things to be proud of this week.

Last week it was our Y11 students completing trial exams, and this week it has been the turn of Y9. The Y9 cohort have been excellent and have shown real maturity and resilience as they tackled SSAs under exam conditions. Below is a guide to when further SSAs will take place (not including Y11 or Y13). We will always send correspondence to parents/carers prior to these dates.

Assessment Schedule

- Year 7 – w/c 27 April & 5 May: English, Maths and Science
- Year 8 – Half Term 6: English, Maths and Science
- Year 9 – Completed this week
- Year 10 – w/c 22 & 29 June: English, Maths, Science
- Year 12 – w/c 22 & 29 June: all subjects

We have enjoyed a wide range of reading opportunities this week in celebration of World Book Day. Faculties have planned and delivered engaging activities designed to promote reading for pleasure. Alongside this, the academy has hosted Reading Week, with students exploring a variety of fiction genres. Some students also took part in an exciting online Q&A session with the author of *The Bletchley Riddle*. To conclude our celebratory week of reading, four students will represent the school on Monday in the National Literacy Quiz – we wish them lots of luck!

Looking ahead, Year 8 and Year 9 students will complete their second NGRT reading test over the next three weeks. Our next Reading Week will take place in May and will feature a selection of mental-health-themed fiction and non-fiction extracts to align with the World Mental Health calendar.

This week has also been National Careers Week. We have held several activities to promote discussion around future career aspirations and to get students thinking about possible pathways when they leave us at the end of Year 11. We have had assemblies focusing on post-16 options, raising awareness of the labour market and local colleges/sixth forms. On Tuesday we welcomed a representative from Rotherham College (RNN Group) to run a stall in student reception. This was supported by our wonderful career’s adviser, Mr Shaw, and was very well attended, with many students asking about courses, entry requirements and the suitability of options for their future goals. Another stall took place today.

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Our Year 8 students have also been completing careers-related work in lessons, focusing on how each subject links to the world of work and the potential careers each subject can lead to. This week forms part of a broader careers programme throughout each year, preparing students for their next steps and a successful future. Below are some useful links to interactive websites to support careers conversations at home.

- National Careers Week Virtual Fair: [VCF Lobby - NCW 2026 Virtual Careers Fair](#)
- NHS [NHS Careers - NCW 2026 Virtual Careers Fair](#)
- BBC Bitesize Careers Quiz [National Careers Week 2026 | What's on offer on Bitesize Careers? - BBC Bitesize](#)
- National Careers Service - Explore Careers [Explore careers | National Careers Service](#)
- Springpod FREE Virtual Work Experience <https://www.springpod.com/virtual-work-experience/search>

It has been a packed week, but there is still plenty of opportunity for our students to thrive. March is always a busy time for Aston Academy Science. On Tuesday we held 'Mars Day', with students accessing livestreamed sessions from the European and UK Space Agencies. Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 have had the opportunity to learn more during lunch or tutor time, hearing about a range of space-related careers and the latest developments in the search for life on Mars. Throughout the week we have also run a science-themed book competition to celebrate World Book Day, where students tried to guess the Science teachers' favourite books (and pick up some great recommendations!).

British Science Week runs from 6–15 March, with the theme 'Curiosity', supported by assemblies and tutor-time activities. On Monday 9 March, some of our most promising female scientists will attend a Women in STEM event at Sheffield Hallam University, and on 18 March the Science faculty will take 120 Y9 students to Magna for the exciting interactive 'Get Up to Speed' STEM careers showcase, in conjunction with the Design and Technology faculty.

On Wednesday we welcomed back our 50 Y10 students who attended the Maths conference at Disneyland Paris. What an amazing few days they had! Thank you to the staff who gave up their time (and sleep!) to support the trip. School is about lifelong experiences, and I am sure these children created many lasting memories. I was also delighted to receive the email below following their return:

"Our manager has just returned from driving our coach to Disneyland Paris with a group from your school and has asked me to email to let you know what a good group they were to take away. The staff and children were polite and kept the coach spotless throughout the trip – this isn't usually our experience with school groups, so was a welcome surprise!"

Just another example of the wonderful young people we are fortunate to work with every day at Aston Academy.

Finally, a reminder for anyone dropping off or collecting children by car: please ensure access is kept clear for our school buses to enter and leave on time. Your support with this is greatly appreciated.

After a week when the world has given us plenty to worry about, in our community and further afield, it is often the peace and guidance found in a book that can reassure and remind us of the good in people.

So, I will finish my Friday update with a quote from *The Bletchley Riddle*, the book our students have been exploring during Reading Week:

"Who knows what the future holds, but we shall endure it together."

Have a wonderful weekend.

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

Best regards,



Mr J Graham
Principal

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