



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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'Excellence for All'

22nd July 2024

End of Term Letter

Dear Parent/Carer

Now we have come to the end of a busy term I'd like to formally thank you as always for your continued support over this academic year. We are hopeful of achieving another good set of examination grades this year as we all know the work that both our students and staff have put in over the past year.

It has been a turbulent year for our school in terms of how our school is funded from the Department for Education. We sadly get nearly £400 per pupil less than the next lowest funded school in South Tyneside and £1,200 less per pupil than the highest funded secondary school in the borough. You can imagine the difference that makes to our school in comparison to all of the other secondary schools in the borough. An extra £400 per pupil would equate to an extra £400,000 a year coming into our school. Despite receiving the lowest level of per pupil funding in the country our students manage to achieve the highest progress and attainment grades within the borough, which demonstrates what we are able to do with very little funding. The funding for our school is based on a formula that is centred around student post codes and this unfairly penalises our school. We have the same bills and costs as all of the other schools have to face, along with unfunded teacher and support staff pay awards and increased utility bills.

I have spoken to our local MP, (Emma Lewell-Buck) with regards to this situation and I will be writing to Bridget Phillipson MP, the new Secretary of State for Education and MP for Houghton and Sunderland South. I will share more information with parents and carers in due course regarding this matter.

On Thursday 27th June, the Music Department held another excellent 'Summer Showcase' performance. With an audience of over 150 we created a relaxed atmosphere with the round tables trying to create a cabaret feel. The excellent PTA served refreshments and sold raffle tickets. I would particularly like to thank Mr and Mrs Beech, Mrs Grey and our new helper Mrs Cain. The programme consisted of large ensembles and smaller groups and duets. The Orchestra opened the evening with three Beatles numbers. Choir numbers are still increasing and they sang a range of different styles, starting with songs we have performed throughout the year in whole school worship assemblies such as 'Amazing Grace' and 'Make me a Channel of your peace'. Later in the evening we sang more popular items such as 'How far I'll go' from Moana and 'Bridge over troubled water'. The small Chamber Choir sang slightly more challenging arrangements of 'For the Beauty of the Earth' and a medley from the musical 'Hairspray'. There were also many smaller performances from soloists, duets and groups ranging from year 7 students right through to Year 10 GCSE music students. We ended the evening with the Orchestra performing a medley of 'Disney Favourites' joined by the choir at the end for a finale of 'Beauty and the Beast'. Although the numbers of players in the orchestra is low, we are still 'holding on' and the sound that they make is relatively good considering their size. All of the numbers were introduced by the students as the evening is solely about them and their fantastic efforts.

Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



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On Friday 28th June we held our annual Democracy Day event which was perfectly placed a week before the General Election. Mr Crawford and Mrs Maughan oversaw the Head Boy and Head Girl elections, where students engaged in a range of activities and lessons relating to these themes. Year 10 students were able to question local decision makers, in a “Life as a Councillor” Q&A session, and Year 12 students enjoyed a General Election hustings event. Students engaged in lessons on local government, crime prevention and the events of the General Election, with students coming away more informed and politically aware – and also knowing how they can make change as active citizens.

Due to popular demand from the Student Council we returned, this year, to Head Girl and Head Boy elections, rather than Principal Students as we have had in the previous two years. The Student Body also requested a more rigorous process for shortlisting this year. A total of 22 students, initially, stood for election and 12 were shortlisted. This was a daunting task for all involved, particularly as, for the first time ever, each potential candidate had to face a gruelling interview with myself, Miss Smith and Mr Shaw, who then shortlisted our 12 candidates based on their responses. This was not an easy decision to make and all potential candidates should be congratulated for their efforts. The calibre of all 22 candidates this year was exceptionally high. Our Head Girl and Head Boy are Susie Ralston and Ingram Cook, with Vanessa Wooler and Andrew Stonehouse as the Deputy Head Girl and Boy. Across the candidate speeches were ideas regarding widening the boundaries for access to the Village at lunchtime, as well as many ideas as to how we can raise money for Charity and the Academy itself, with a huge focus on the purchase of more comfortable seats for the science labs and decent quality glue sticks! The students really did consider what their representatives were saying, and they have chosen the right people to represent them during 2024 and 2025. Although only the Year 10 votes counted, this year, the Year 9 students also voted for our candidates after they had watched the speeches. Interestingly, their voting mirrored that of the Year 10 students, indicating that our students have voted for what matters to them and proving that our elections are more than just a popularity contest.

This year’s National School Sports week was another huge success with more students than ever taking part in new activities and sports. Students took part in padel tennis, gymnastics, parkour, golf, kayaking, paddle boarding and climbing. Thank you to Mrs Rush for organising a great week and all of the external providers who are brilliant with our students.

Our under 19’s football team made history this season winning the county cup for the first ever time. A Finn Bishop first half hattrick along with a goal from year 11 student Zed Hanley was enough to see off a very good Durham Johnston team. The boys had an excellent season where they finished runners up in the league and the league cup. Special mention also to our Year 9 football team who reached the county cup final after an excellent run beating 2 football Academy schools on the way. The year 7 football team also finished runner up in both the league and the cup.

Netball teams continue to go from strength to strength with all of our year groups taking part in South Tyneside competitions and for the first time ever two of our groups reached the national finals. Our under 19 team reached the nationals for a third consecutive year which is a tremendous achievement along with her sisters in sport final in 2022. This is a real special team that have been great role models for all of our student teams. Our under 14 team was also tremendously successful in reaching the national finals for the first time and we are confident that it won’t be the last.

In July, we held our annual sports award evening and it was a great success. Special thanks to South Tyneside Jets and South Tyneside gymnastics for performing on the night. It was a fantastic night that celebrated the talent and the gifts that many of our students have and the hard work and commitment they’re putting into their chosen sports. Our annual sports day was held on the last Thursday of term and is one of the highlights of our school calendar.

I particularly want to thank the PE department and the team of student helpers who organised a fantastic sports day for everyone. It's a brilliant day which highlights how positive and supportive our school community really is. This year it was a particularly close result with Lindisfarne house narrowly beating Bamburgh house by just one single point! It's definitely an event that brings the whole of the school community together and I was so impressed by the house captains and their sporting conduct despite the in-house rivalry.

During the penultimate week of term, we held our Year group celebration afternoons for Years 7 to 10. These events are held to celebrate the achievements of students who have made excellent progress and have shown exemplary effort and commitment to their studies in a particular subject. We continue to promote and develop public speaking skills in our young people as it helps support confidence and gives students a sense of achievement and strengthens resilience. Each year I have noticed further improvement in the confidence and ability of students who are becoming increasingly confident in articulating themselves in front of adults and their peers. This is a fantastic skill and demonstrates maturity and conviction. Well done to all those students who spoke so well this week and we look forward to more students taking part in worship assemblies and taking the lead in student voice activities.

Arrangements for the new term

The first day of the autumn term for students will be **Wednesday 4th September 2024**. Our new **Year 7 students**, along with **designated** Prefects and **Year 12 Sixth Form students**, should arrive **at 8:45am**. The scholars' service will be available for Years 7 and 12 only. All other students, including Prefects not involved in induction are expected in school at **10:15am**.

Academy Uniform

Just a reminder upon our recent correspondence regarding the Academy uniform minor changes regarding school skirts. As stated we are no longer allowing 'pencil skirts' to be worn in Year 10 and 11. That said, students will still also have the option of wearing formal, black school trousers as an alternative, if they wish.

To summarise:

- Year 10 and Year 11 students will no longer have an 'option' of the type of skirts they are allowed to wear. The only skirt allowed will be the knee length black pleated school skirt (purchased from Initial Images in Rekendyke Industrial Estate, South Shields)
- Students can still choose to wear formal, black school trousers instead of a skirt
- There will be no amendment to the upper half of the uniform. Shirts, ties, jumpers or cardigans (with the school logo) remain the same

Please click on the link below for our most up to date uniform policy commencing from September 2024.

[24-05-13-Uniform-Policy-from-September-2024.pdf \(whitburncofeacademy.org\)](#)

Changes to the school day

From September 2024 the Department for Education has stated that all mainstream schools need to adhere to ensuring that student hours in school should be a minimum of 32.5 hours a week. In light of this we have amended our school day to now finish at 3.30pm. This has now reverted back to our Pre-Covid finishing time. Scholars bus companies are aware of this change and it allows valuable time at the start of the day for Tutor period to be extended.

The School Day (from September 2024)

8:45am All students can enter the building

8:55am Registration You should line up outside of your tutor room

8:55am – 9:00am Your attendance will be registered by your form tutor.

At **9:01am** you will be registered as **late and will be given 1 hours detention on the same day**

9:24am End of registration/assembly - You leave the assembly or tidy away in Registration and tutors conduct a uniform and equipment inspection

9:25am Lesson 1 - You and staff move to the first lesson of the day. You will also be registered at the start of every lesson. This will help us ensure all of you are safely in your lessons at all times.

Lesson Times:

Lesson 1	9:25am – 10:25am
Lesson 2	10:25am – 11:25am
Break	11:25am – 11:40am
Lesson 3	11:40am – 12:40pm
Lunch	12:40pm – 1:30pm
Lesson 4	1:30pm – 2:30pm
Lesson 5	2:30pm – 3:30pm

It's a great privilege to continue to lead our fantastic school with our conscientious and talented students and our dedicated staff team. My staff are committed, hardworking and will always go the extra mile when it comes to supporting our students. The amount of voluntary time that many of our staff give throughout the year needs to be acknowledged and appreciated. I would also like to thank you all for your support and continuing to work with the school in order to make sure we get the best outcomes for our children. I look forward to seeing you all at some point during the next academic year. Please have a peaceful and restful summer break and I look forward to seeing all students returning refreshed and fully prepared for the new term ahead.

Yours faithfully



J E Crowe
Principal