



The Sutton Academy

Together Students Achieve

Principal: Mr P Willerton

6 February 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

As we rapidly come to the end of a short but successful half-term at the academy, thank you once again for all your support. It has been a busy five weeks with Years 11 & 13 Mock Results Days, Year 11 Partnership Evening, Year 9 Options Evening, Year 11 Geography Field Trip, Years 10 & 11 trips to watch Macbeth, a Year 10 trip to Cambridge University and finishing with a three-day Dance show!

Oversubscribed:

Thank you to those Parents/Carers who have forwarded on the recent St Helens Star article on The Sutton Academy being the most oversubscribed secondary school in the borough. The early signs are that we will be oversubscribed again in September 2024. This academic year is the first year where we have been oversubscribed in all five year groups (Years 7 to 11) in our history. There is no doubt that this has created challenges for us which we are addressing; such as implementing certain one-way systems around site and investing significantly in the academy building to ensure it can cope with the extra capacity. In recent years we have built new classrooms, catering areas and the current project underway is the building of a purpose-built Art block. This investment is to support the current number of students, and is not part of an expansion project by the academy. We are proud that so many parents/carers trust their child's education with us, as we continue to work on offering them the education they deserve.

"You said, we did":

Every half-term we send out year group specific newsletters which gives details about your child's half-term, what they have been doing at the academy and the extra-curricular opportunities available to them. We also send out a parent/carer voice activity every half-term with a particular focus. Last half-term the focus was around student aspirations, we received some useful feedback particularly around providing parents/carers with what the route to university looks like for their child. With this in mind, we plan to run a talk for parents next half-term, which will explain the pathway to university and some of the key information around this; such as how student finance works.

Vaping:

Many of you will have seen the recent news over the concerns of young people using Vapes. The concern is raised by the marketing of Vapes directly targeting young people, despite the law clearly saying they should not have access to them. Vapes are banned at the academy and we have recently fitted Vape alarms into toilets to ensure they are not used, but we are aware that a small number of parents actually buy Vapes for their child, assuming they will not cause harm. This is not the case. Please follow this [LINK](#) which gives parents/carers further information on the harms and dangers of using Vapes.



Attendance matters:

I appreciate that there will be times when a student is just too unwell or unable to attend the academy, but attendance really does matter. When students' attend, they have more opportunities to mix with their peers; this avoids gaps in their learning, and in the long term it makes a significant impact on the grades that our students achieve.

I have shared previously last year's Year 11 cohort as an example; the students with attendance above 95% went on to achieve progress scores, which placed them in the top 15% nationally. The students with attendance below 90% achieved progress scores far below this.

Once again, a plea to send your child into the academy at every opportunity.

Up and coming drug awareness assemblies:

Many parents/carers may already be aware, but in the community, there is concern from schools and other agencies within St Helens, of a growing issue with 'county lines' and the use of drugs as part of that criminal activity. All parents and carers are aware of the zero-tolerance stance we have at the academy - if any drugs or weapons are brought onto site this will automatically result in a permanent exclusion. This stance, which is stronger than some other schools, is to ensure staff and students can attend site and be kept safe. We would be naïve though if we were not aware of what our students can be exposed to in the community, and we have a duty to educate them against these dangers.

Next term, all year groups will attend a one-hour assembly, ran by the police, which will be around the education of 'county lines'. It will involve a talk by the police themselves, a former victim of 'county lines' who will share their story, and possibly a trained sniffer dog will be present in the assembly. If there is any content which you are concerned may cause upset to your child or if your child may be scared of the dog, please contact us.

Standards (a regular reminder):

We firmly believe that students' education should not be hampered by a lack of equipment. Below is a list of equipment that is non-negotiable so that students can access their learning.

- A bag that can at least hold a PE kit, exercise books and equipment. Any bag that cannot hold these items is not a suitable bag.
- Pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, pencil sharpener.
- A reading book.
- A green pen. (Provided by the academy)
- A mini whiteboard and pen. (Provided by the academy)
- PE kit on the days they have PE. (Student will be expected to borrow kit if they forget their own.)



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To ensure that staff can focus on students' learning and wellbeing, can we please make sure that students return back with the **correct** shoes and uniform. Students are not permitted to wear false nails, nail varnish, fake eye lashes or dye their hair an unnatural colour. Further information can be found on the uniform section of the academy website.

Thank you again for your continued support. I hope that everyone enjoys the well-earned rest, and I look forward to welcoming all students back on Monday 19 February.

Yours faithfully

P Willerton
Principal



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