

Furness Academy
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12 September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that everyone enjoyed their summer break, and I must admit that even though it is only the second week in September it does now seem an awful long time ago. I am sure that you have enjoyed reading about the fantastic GCSE examination success stories of our students in the local media and saw their appearance live on national television on Good Morning Britain. As one year group departs, we, of course, have been delighted to welcome in 236 new Year 7 students to Furness Academy. It has already been an incredibly busy beginning to the new academic year and everyone has made an impressive start and the climate for learning is warm and purposeful.

You may recall that at this time last year we had to contend with an inspection by Ofsted on the same day that we welcomed over 1,200 visitors during our Years 5 and 6 Open Evening. I am confident and delighted that it is highly unlikely that we will see a repeat coincidence again this year, but we are eagerly expecting another huge turnout on Wednesday 19 September 2018.

We have also welcomed seven new teachers to our curriculum team:

- Miss Corinne Corteen, Teacher of Computer Science
- Miss Annaliese Sales, Teacher of Chemistry
- Mrs Kasia Sharp, Teacher of Maths
- Miss Kathy Spence, Teacher of English
- Miss Claire Sweeney, Teacher of Chemistry
- Mrs Rebecca Whyte, Teacher of English
- Miss Jenny Wildman, Assistant Headteacher and Teacher of English

I would like to draw your attention to some key information and reminders.

School Equipment

Please ensure that your child has a suitable school bag and brings with them a well-stocked pencil case including spare pens, pencils, scientific calculator and a ruler, and their student planner each day. We will be making sure that everyone has the basic equipment each morning. If you have any urgent problems please do contact us.

Homework

We know that all the academic research tells us the importance of homework to students' success at secondary school and beyond. It is, therefore, vital that students develop the good habits of studying outside of their timetabled classes. Each student will receive a homework timetable and we ask, as always, for your unwavering support here to ensure that your child is not left behind. Please do contact us if you have any concerns.

Mobile Phones

Students are allowed to bring mobile phones to school, but their use is restricted to certain times and places. An acceptable use policy was agreed in 2015-16 with the school council and it remains in place this year. Our normal confiscation procedures will be followed if students use their phones outside of the agreed policy and your co-operation and support will be much appreciated. The most effective way to get any urgent message to your child is to contact the reception on telephone 484270, option 2, and we will take care of it.

Student Entrance

Both student entrance gates are closed at 8:40am and any students arriving after this time will need to use the main reception entrance. If they are late without a good reason then they will receive a sanction in line with the attendance and punctuality policy. We made significant improvements with regard to students' punctuality last year and we would like to eventually eradicate poor punctuality altogether.



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Attendance

Good attendance of staff and students is vital at the academy if your child is going to reach their full potential. The aim is for staff and students to have 100% attendance, but we do understand that sometimes we can be ill and that some appointments or events are unavoidable in term time.

It is common sense that poor attendance will have a negative impact on a student's educational attainment, but it is difficult to quantify just by how much. We can calculate that a student who only has 80% attendance from Year 7 to Year 11 has effectively been absent for a whole school year. Similarly, a student who has 90% attendance for 5 years has effectively been absent for half a school year. Again, when we analysed this year's Year 11 results, we found a distinct drop in performance for students who had below 95% attendance. I cannot stress enough how important it is to be here all day and every day if at all possible. We are determined not to let students coast or fall behind and have high expectations of attendance (above 96%) and attitude to learning, completion of homework and hard work in general to ensure they are successful. We continue on our journey to have everything in place to deliver excellent results over the coming years and to provide a fantastic education for your children.

Road Safety

I would like to thank the vast majority of 'school run' parents and carers who do indeed exercise safe, considerate and lawful practice with regard to dropping off and picking up their children at Furness Academy. Please continue to do this in the best interests of everyone's safety.

I should be most grateful, however, if the small number of parents/carers who pull up on the double yellow lines, or even worse the zig zags leading to the pedestrian crossing, or use the academy access road to carry out 'U' turn manoeuvres, would resist the temptation to do this as it is neither safe, nor legal, and adds to the congestion problems in the immediate vicinity of the academy, thus further compromising safety. Thank for you cooperation and understanding in this matter.

Whilst we are convinced that a great school starts with inspirational and brilliant teaching and tutoring in the classroom, a school is more than just the sum of its lessons. In partnership with its parents and carers, it lays the foundations and creates the culture to enable young people to thrive and grow. We believe that this development of a young person's character should not be left to chance but be deliberately taught and planned as a journey from Year 7 through to Year 11 and beyond. We already do lots of fantastic work and a key priority for this year will be to audit and map out the whole sequence of activities throughout a student's life here so we can ensure its status is promoted and fully understood by everyone. This will be a key work stream for Miss Wildman, our newly appointed Assistant Headteacher.

With this in mind, we are keen to place greater emphasis on our school values of *Respect, Responsibility and Relationships*, and in particular to ensure that our young people become increasingly aware of how best to model and frame their behaviour to incorporate these ideals. No act of kindness is ever wasted, and as well as all the other positive things that Furness Academy is known for it would be great if it was known best of all as a kind school, as well as being one full of opportunity.

Here is to another great year!

Yours faithfully



Mr S P Laheney
Headteacher