

13 December 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

Yet again, it has been a half term packed full of enriching opportunities for St Aldhelm’s pupils.

The second half of the Autumn term began with our assemblies of Remembrance, led by the Rev Peter Homden. These provided all pupils with an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices that others made in previous generations to enable us to live in the democracy we so value today. Our focus on remembrance ended with the entire academy observing a two minute silence, followed by the sounding of The Last Post, played by a solitary bugler, echoing throughout the academy’s walls - a fitting tribute and one of which all our pupils were very respectful.

For Years 10 and 11, our Annual Careers Fair was an opportunity for pupils to meet prospective employers and further and higher education providers. This was, without doubt, our best Careers Fair ever and we had an extensive range of employers in attendance. I am very grateful to Mrs Lambert and Parkstone Rotary Club for organising this event and I know the feedback from pupils was extremely positive.

Among further events of particular significance this half term, Year 8 learnt about the devastating effects of heath fires, led by the Urban Heath Partnership. Anti-bullying week promoted the fact that, despite our differences, we all deserve to be treated equally and to feel secure and valued in our community. For both students and parents/carers of Year 11, an evening focussed on essential skills for effective revision was very well received. With Year 11 completing their first set of Pre-Public Examinations in the run up to Christmas, I very much hope that those revision strategies will be put to good use!

Election ‘fever’ has also been prevalent at St Aldhelm’s Academy this half term, with the successful appointment of our new Academy Council. Pupils had to submit an expression of interest and present a speech to their peers in assembly setting out why they should be elected as representatives. Following the presentations, pupils voted and a count up of the voting slips revealed the winners – all very democratic! Well done especially to pupils who were elected; I am sure they will make their voices heard at the academy and represent the views of their peers effectively. The successful candidates are: Cameron Moore, Gabor Szilagyi, Grace Hanslip, Phoebe Lockett, Kieran Lilley, Michael Quick, Ritesh Mathakumaran and Mia Williams.

Feedback to inform and support the development of the academy is always valued and it was really helpful to meet with parents of Year 7 pupils in November and hear their thoughts about the transition process from primary and their experiences of Term 1 at St Aldhelm’s Academy. We will be running further evenings over each term and look forward to extending this opportunity to other year groups over the coming months.

During this half term, Year 9 have had the opportunity to engage in several unusual opportunities: a science workshop run by Bournemouth University challenged pupils to complete a forensic analysis; a multi-faith day afforded close interaction with representatives of different faiths which included a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Humanist and a Hindu. All pupils were very respectful and attentive, asking some very insightful questions.

St Aldhelm’s Academy has always encouraged an ethos of business and enterprise and this continues. Business Studies and Technology pupils have been working hard on our Christmas decorations business and, for the first time this year, we are running a ‘pop up’ shop in the Sovereign Centre at Boscombe, selling the decorations pupils have manufactured. Business was brisk on our opening day and pupils have benefitted hugely from understanding the wider implications of setting up an enterprise such as this. All profits will go to the Wessex Cancer Trust and I am particularly grateful to Mr Biles for his time and energy in ensuring that everything was manufactured on time and that the shop was able to open.

China is on the minds of a number of pupils currently as they have been selected to participate as members of the Global Youth Ambassador Project. This is being led by Mrs Timms and Miss Sultana and will involve pupils from China visiting the academy in the Spring Term and our pupils subsequently visiting China later this year. There has been no cost to our pupils who have signed up for this scheme and I am really looking forward to hearing their feedback upon returning from China.

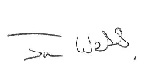
Performing Arts continues to be a real strength of the academy and I know everyone is looking forward to our Christmas production, ‘The Gift of Christmas’, being presented on Thursday 19th December. There are still a few tickets available if you would like to attend what promises to be a fantastic evening of entertainment. Pupils have also had the opportunity to attend productions at theatres across Bournemouth, Poole and Southampton, with different year groups watching ‘An Inspector Calls’, ‘The Chalk Circle’ and Shakespeare’s ‘A Winter’s Tale’. I am truly grateful to all of my staff who have given freely of their time to take pupils to these events, which form a really important enhancement to the curriculum. It was also a real pleasure to watch our choir perform with other schools in front of over 2000 members of the audience at the Poole Lighthouse for the Poole Schools’ Music Association Christmas Concert. Our very own Jessica Marques performed the solo piece this year and was an absolute credit to herself and the academy, as were all members of the choir. A very big thank to all of the performing arts team for their commitment in supporting pupils in this important area of the curriculum.

We say thank you and good bye to two teachers who are moving to new appointments at the end of this term. Mrs Pastor is returning to Spain and Mrs Archer is moving to Swanage. Both have been valued and committed members of staff and I wish them the very best for the future. We have successfully recruited subject specialists for both of these positions to begin in January and look forward to welcoming Mr Thomarel to teach Spanish and Miss Coleman to teach English.

Rewards are very much in the spotlight over the coming week. All pupils who achieved a positive attitude to learning score on their most recent reports will be attending a rewards trip to go ice skating. Additionally, pupils who have achieved 100 STARS or more this term will be spending the afternoon of the 19th December in the theatre discovering whether they have been successful in a raffle for some great prizes. These have all been donated by local businesses, for which I am most grateful; I know pupils will be excited by this! Finally, on the last day of term, all year groups will attend their termly Rewards Assembly, which recognises pupils who have worked hard and shown commitment to their studies. It will also include the presentation of ‘colours’ badges which pupils can wear on the lapel of their blazers. These are designed to recognise the effort as well as the quality of the work that pupils put into the performing arts and sports at St Aldhelm’s Academy.

Finally, all that remains for me to say is a huge thank you to all members of staff, parents and pupils for your commitment and support in our relentless focus on developing the academy and ensuring its success. I really do appreciate it. Have a fantastic Christmas and I look forward to welcoming all pupils back on Wednesday 8th January 2020.

Yours sincerely



Jon Webb

Principal