



15th May 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

My apologies for not writing for a couple of weeks; we are currently remarkably busy preparing Year 11 for GCSE exams that start on Monday.

Year 11

As you are aware the exam timetable has been published. Morning exams will start at 9:00am. Students need to be in school for 8:30am as usual. The canteen will be exclusively accessible for Year 11 from 8:00am onwards, when toast will be available free of charge from the servery. This routine worked well for the mocks so we see no reason to change. Afternoon exams will start at 1:30pm. This is to ensure Year 11 are not disturbed by students on second lunch until 1:20pm. This does mean that exams will go on beyond the school day at 2:45pm. There are few afternoon exams, but please ensure if your child picks up siblings from primary schools alternative arrangements are made. I have spoken to the students at length about COVID. If your child is not well enough to sit an exam, we can make special dispensation, but it is unclear yet the impact this will have. If in doubt, please email me directly or call the school office to speak to me so we can make appropriate arrangements.

The students are well prepared. They have been a credit to themselves and the school over the last 12 months. We are confident that the students who have worked hard will achieve their goals. However, regardless of what happens on results day, we are extremely proud of the young adults Year 11 have become. The main job for both us and parents/carers is to keep the students calm over the next six weeks. Please ensure your child is eating well at home, drinking plenty of water and getting at least 8 hours sleep. Research shows last minute cramming is ineffective, so please do not let them stay up with books until after midnight.

Year 10

Thank you to Year 10 parents who attended parents' evening last week. I can now confirm that Year 10 exams will start the week beginning 27th June. We have learned much from our work with Year 11 this year, particularly from listening to student voice. Year 10 will sit at least one exam in each subject to help them build and understand the resilience and preparation required. We have already spoken and modelled to students at length about how they can revise and what preparation should look like at home. Revision cards interleaved with frequent low stakes testing are by far the most effective method of revision. It is pleasing to see many students have already starting making and using learning cards. As parents, you can support by ensuring your child has a quiet space to revise for an hour a night at home. Test them on what is written on revision cards. You do not need to be an expert! Just support and encourage by listening. Students should also be spending a minimum of two hours a week practising Maths skills using Hegarty at home. Again this is a proven effective method of success. A full exam timetable with dates will be given to Year 10 students just before half term.

Uniform

I know some parents have been waiting for blazers with the new badge to arrive before purchasing latest items for students who have currently grown out of uniform. I can confirm the new blazers are now in stock. The link below provides details:

<https://www.schoolwearsolutions.com/product-category/our-schools/armthorpe-academy/>

Just a reminder that it is only compulsory for students in the new Year 7 intake to purchase blazers with the new badge. You will note blazers with the old badge are being sold at a discounted price should you want to take advantage of this for students currently in Years 7 to 10.

Whilst discussing uniform, some trainers are creeping back in as school shoes wear. Again, just a reminder that trainers are not allowed in school. We have spare shoes students can borrow. If this is not an option you want to utilise, then please ensure your child has shoes.

Communicate with Kindness Tracker

Recent student voice activities have found that some students are feeling unhappy and upset by the manner in which their peers are speaking to them in and out of school. We have also noticed unkind language is increasing, but this is not an issue that is isolated to school, a cultural issue that we must work on improving together as a school community.

Once again, we spoke to students at length last week about how important it is that they treat one another with respect, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or personal characteristics. We have spoken to our students a lot this year about the use of derogatory language and what constitutes peer on peer abuse. To eradicate the use of unkind words, homophobic language and inappropriate cultural racism, we have been quite specific with the students this week about what is not acceptable in society. For example, it is not acceptable to:

- call someone with ginger hair “ginge”
- call someone who wears glasses “specy”
- to call an object or action gay – for example “that bag is gay”
- to tell someone who was not born in England to “go back to their own country”

Our students rarely make these comments in the presence of an adult, but they are making these comments to one another both verbally and using social media. We have invested a lot of time educating our students, so now is the time to implement a policy with staged consequences.

Our first school value is respect; to communicate with kindness (CWK). The students have been told their names are all blank on the CWK tracker. They will remain blank unless they make unkind comments to members of our school community. We need your support with this, as we are not prepared to tolerate a small minority of students making others feel uncomfortable. We are a school family. The only way we can instigate action though is if we know. Students can report incidents in several ways:

- by speaking to any member of staff they feel comfortable with,
- by emailing their Head of Year or a member of the leadership team,
- by confidentially posting in ‘Communicate with Kindness’ boxes placed around the school,
- by reporting online through the Sharp reporting system on the school website.

If students are found to be using unkind language and not communicating with kindness, on the first occasion students will be spoken to by a member of the pastoral team, issued a detention within the school day and be expected to apologise. If there is a second incident of derogatory language or unkind words, our staged response means that you will be informed as a parent/carer from this point onwards as a repeat offence indicates there could be a pattern of behaviour that we need to address working together.

Please be assured that this is the next step in cultural evolution of the school. In keeping with our school ethos, it is about respecting individuality and doing the right thing when no-one is watching. Thank you in anticipation for supporting us. Our young people will flourish in both their life at Armthorpe and beyond if we continue to develop their morals and wider cultural understanding. Whilst no school will ever completely eradicate derogatory language and unkind words, we will be doing our utmost to ensure these situations are minimised.

School Leadership

Finally, I have been made aware of some rumours circulating the community that I will be leaving Armthorpe next year. The rumours are not true! I will be working more across the trust and as such we will be adding more capacity to the leadership team. However, I can assure you I will still be leading the school on the next stage of our journey to continue to develop the Academy to allow our young people to thrive. We are currently fully staffed for September with some fabulous new additions of which I will inform you of nearer the time. Exciting times ahead ...

As always, please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions.

Kind regards



Claire Robbins
Headteacher