



10<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

At 11am this morning Armthorpe Academy community came together to show our respects, both to those who have lost their lives in conflict, but also to those who are currently serving in military forces. Forty five days in and this was without doubt my proudest moment to date as Headteacher at the Academy, the respectful way in which our students behaved is testament both to themselves but also to you their families.

As we enter my second-half term as Headteacher, unsurprisingly it brings continued change and improvements here at Armthorpe Academy. The vast majority of these changes have come about due to the valuable feedback received from yourselves, from the students, and from the staff. I want to thank you again for your openness and honesty about your thoughts and opinions on how we could change or introduce systems and processes to the school to try and make it better for your children and for our community.

Without question the biggest single problem identified by all three groups is the behaviour of some students at the Academy and then how it is managed. You will be aware that last Friday we had a staff training day. The predominant focus of the morning session looked at our systems and structures around behaviour, how we ensure we create a culture of celebration and achievement for all, whilst ensuring that the small minority of students who continue to disrupt learning and stop great teaching happening are dealt with fairly but firmly. This afternoon students have all attended assemblies where we have clarified our position on lateness and truancy.

To summarise the following points have been shared:

- Our collective cut off time for being late to a lesson is 5 minutes, any student arriving later than this without a pass or signed note in their planner is considered late and will be marked so accordingly.
- If a student receives three of these late marks in a week a consequence will be issued.
- These late marks reset to zero every week.
- If a student is still not in their timetabled lesson after 10 minutes they are considered to be missing and potentially truanting.
- We recognise there will be times where there are legitimate reasons for being late to lesson, however we do expect the child to have a note explaining where they have been.
- Staff will be reminded of the expectation that if they are keeping students back, they must put a note in the planners.
- If a student is found to be truanting, instead of being escorted to their timetabled lesson they will spend some time in our withdrawal room with the intent of returning them to the next lesson at the start of the next session.
- This will mean some students who are found to be truanting will remain in this withdrawal space for some of their unstructured times, and potentially for later lessons (double lessons etc).
- Students arriving in the morning between 8:30am and 8:40am without justifiable reason will be issued a 15 minute after school detention for the following session.
- Students arriving in the morning after 8:40am without justifiable reason will be issued a 30 minute after school detention for the following detention session.
- If a student is arriving after 8:40am three times or more in one week they will spend a day in our supervised learning provision.

The purpose of clarifying this with students', parents and staff is to ensure we all understand the expectations around being on time to lessons and in the same sense, being on time to school in the morning. Good punctuality is a crucial employability skill, being on time is something that all good employers look for and therefore it is imperative that we get our students into good working habits at a young age.

I am also now able to let you know that as of Monday the 13th November we are operating a soft launch of the 'Innovate Centre'. This centre is housed in our junior block and was previously referred to as the learning zone. The purpose of the Innovate Centre is to support students who are struggling in our mainstream setting, it is intended to help reduce

suspensions, improve attendance, and most importantly provide an appropriate curriculum and education for those students who are not yet able to access the main campus.

The centre is still in the process of being refurbished, this will include a new entrance to the centre (off Mere Lane), a full redecoration inside the building and a full refurbishment of furniture, IT and resources within the three rooms. The students who are timetabled to be in the innovate centre will follow one of two schedules.

\* Schedule 1 - A four-week full-time referral to the centre.

\* Schedule 2 - Upon successful completion of schedule one, students will move to a blended timetable where they will be able to re-enter the main campus and attend lessons where both they and their subject teachers deem it appropriate.

I hope you can see that the actions detailed above signify a robust and swift response to the feedback you have given me about behaviour in the Academy. The solutions above will not solve all of our problems but I believe passionately they are a big step in the right direction. The next big challenge for the Academy is the culture and behaviour of our students on our corridors and around the school site. I will be again asking all parties associated with Armthorpe to contribute towards what they believe the five golden rules of our corridor culture should be. You will again find a link below to a very short survey where I am asking you to list a few suggestions as to what you think these rules should be. Thank you in advance for your contributions, they really do help shape our practice here.

Survey link: <https://forms.office.com/e/wAKwizjtfK>

The second biggest area mentioned by parents and students is that of our dining provision, I am pleased to inform you that this week we recruited a new catering manager who is now working alongside the trust catering manager to ensure our children get a better experience at break and lunch. We have already replaced the sandwich offer, replacing made on-site sandwiches with those provided by an external company. This has improved the range and quality of cold food provided to students. I am working closely with the new catering manager looking at how we can open more food service areas around the school, meaning more children are able to access more food more of the time. I am also looking at how I can add additional eating areas for children so that the canteen is not seen as being the only place in which children can sit and eat together.

Other catering options being considered include a move back to plates and proper cutlery, the opening of an on-site 'chicken shack', a new paved area with canopy for outdoor eating. More on these to follow...

Linked to this, I will be working with my senior team and the trust to look at the timings of our school day to see if there are opportunities to extend the unstructured times our students currently have, allowing them more time to purchase food and to eat and socialise. Obviously, this cannot happen overnight and takes careful consideration and communication with all parties, I do however feel it important to let you know that I am having these conversations as this was also something mentioned by several parents.

There were of course other points raised by parents, students, and staff and I hope in the upcoming weeks I can talk to you in more detail about the progress we are making on all of these areas.

On a final note, I am hoping to set up a parents forum, specifically a group of parents who meet with myself regularly to talk about all things Armthorpe, the single focus of this group is 'how we can improve the Academy and its standing within our community'. If you feel this is something that you would like to be part of, please drop me an e-mail at [david.bisley@consilium-at.com](mailto:david.bisley@consilium-at.com) I would love to have our first meeting sometime in the next few weeks.

As always if you'd like to get in touch to discuss anything related to the Academy please do feel free to drop me an e-mail, it's been a pleasure getting to meet so many of you over the last eight weeks.

Warm regards

David Bisley  
Headteacher