

Our ref: DSH/MGR

22nd December 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this letter finds you well and that your preparations for Christmas are well underway. We break up for the Christmas holiday on Friday 22 December 2023.

Since the academy Christmas trees went up, we've enjoyed an array of festive-themed events. It was wonderful to see so many parents and carers joining us for the Expressive Arts Christmas production of 'The Nativity!' where we were entertained by some extremely talented students.

On Thursday, we had the academy Christmas Dinner, and we shared the results of the Christmas tree advent calendar. For those students who have completed 100% attendance, a special visitor has been to the academy to give out treats!

It has been a busy, but brilliant term with many highlights across all year groups. I hope that you have been following our academy Twitter or X account @OutwoodPortland, with almost daily updates on the fantastic achievements of our students and their learning experiences.

All year groups continue to make fabulous progress with their own priorities. Year 7 have settled into the academy earning their bronze awards in the ACE programme, and are now ready to complete their silver accreditation next term. Year 9 students are beginning the process of selecting their Key Stage 4 Guided Pathways subjects, the GCSEs and vocational pathways they will study from next September and our Year 10 students have made a fantastic start to their GCSE and BTEC qualifications.

We have been extremely proud of how Year 11 completed their mock exams and their ongoing commitment to GCSE preparation and revision. With just 71 days from January until the summer examinations they are working very hard in their lessons and engaging in additional study and revision associated with exceptional outcomes. We are predicting record numbers of students choosing Post-16 next year and some very exciting career pathways.

Post-16 students are also working extremely hard, with Year 13 fast approaching their exams and applications for university.

In this final week before the Christmas break, we have hosted our Praising Stars release day. This has become a highlight in the calendar. Each half-term students receive their Praising Stars report certificates celebrating their effort and predictions and are rightfully rewarded. I hope that you are able to share these celebrations at home as they bring to you their certificates or your access via the new Outwood portal on your mobile devices.

We now had a record-breaking number of students nominated as Classroom Champions, for being kind, resilient or proud whilst in classrooms. The amount of praise given out this term has been record-breaking too! We have celebrated the weekly star readers that have achieved 100% on their Accelerated Reader quizzes and our reading Superstars who have been achieving their reading target each week. Following the launch of our House Programme for all years we have had two house celebrations for our winners Americas.

We are always proud of our students, your children, but at several points this term there have been points where their maturity and character has really shone through. In November we paid our respects as part of remembrance, it is such a moving event to witness the whole academy community stop, fall silent, and pay their respects. With students in military and service uniforms participating in parades.

I was super proud that some of our students have had their first experience of university this half term through separate trips to Oxford and Nottingham University. It has been wonderful to talk to students who articulate high aspirations to pursue their next stages of academic studies.

Our career cafes have gone from strength to strength this term with the academy welcoming a vast array of educational providers, businesses and training providers. We pride ourselves in giving all our students the opportunity to get first-hand experience in meeting, engaging and speaking to our careers based visitors.

One highlight of the term was our Pride club delivering assemblies to the whole school. The students developed and delivered the assembly entirely independently and we were blown away by their professionalism.

We held our very first SEND Networking and Information Forum this term. Parents enjoyed a presentation from a representative from the Communication and Interaction Team from Nottinghamshire County Council and a representative from the Key Working Service (for Learning Disability and Autism). Following this there was the amazing opportunity for parents to talk with the representatives, staff from Outwood Academy Portland and most importantly each other. We look forward to holding the next SEND Networking and Information Forum next term.

Students have also contributed to charities both in and out of the academy, supporting Teenage Cancer trust, our house charity.

Education and learning has extended outside of the classroom. We have seen a big uplift in the numbers of students attending enrichment activities beyond 2.30pm. Students have successfully competed in sporting fixtures and we have many future superstars and champions in a range of sports, some already competing at international levels. Please see our newsletter on our website for more details about the exciting things that have happened this term.

I expect next term will be as equally busy and rewarding as last term and I look forward to again welcoming parents and carers into the academy to share the progress of students. This last term we welcomed many of you through our celebration events, transition & exam preparation evenings and

the parents evening. Next term we'll be hosting the Year 9 Guided Pathways Evening on Tuesday 9th January and parents' evening on Thursday 18th January.

The Christmas break for many is a time to relax and spend time with family and friends, but we also want to ensure everyone has access to support services should anyone have concerns for a young person. You can access support via our academy website at <https://mentalwellbeing.outwood.com/>

We return to the academy on Monday 8th January 2024 and our new year's resolution is to be early to school. A reminder that the school gates open at 7.50am, the movement to lesson bell will sound at 8.20am and the school gates will close promptly at 8.25am.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a happy new year from us all at the academy

Yours sincerely



Danielle Sheehan
Principal