

Our Ref MB/Autumn
19th October 2018

Dear Parents

Half Term Reflections

I have now completed two weeks as the new Head of School at Burscough Priory Academy. It is a privilege to have been appointed by the Endeavour Learning Trust and entrusted with the job of leading such a fantastic school. I couldn't have hoped for a better start.

Firstly, thank you for the warm welcome and well wishes I have received from students, parents and staff during our successful Open and Information Evenings and my first weeks in role. The school is clearly a very special place and I am determined that the school builds on its legacy and continues to flourish and cement its position at the heart of Burscough. I am looking forward to working with the whole community as we strive for even greater success for all our young people. By working together, we can ensure that all students enjoy their time at school, make excellent progress and leave us with the necessary skills and attitudes to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

Myself and Mrs Gwinnett have also appreciated the many concerns and worries that have been shared with us throughout the half term. Tackling thorny issues inevitably brings us closer together and it is through this partnership with ourselves and our families that we will truly provide our children with the support and challenge they need to thrive.

Communication

One of the things we are fully committed to is improving the communication channels. Our main way of communicating currently is through Schools Comms and, to this end, we will be sending out data checking sheets to make sure we have your most up to date email and/or mobile phone numbers (for text messages). If you don't have either of these we will also need to know this so we can agree how you will be contacted. After the break our staff will also be trained in the use of our new, online platform which you will be able to access as parents and which will give you all the up to date information about your child including the homework they have been set and the rewards and behaviour points they may be receiving. Another letter regarding this, with much more detail, will come out on our return.

SLT Presence

To start each day on a positive note, we would like all students to arrive ready to learn before 8.45am. I and other members of the Senior Leadership Team will greet students at the Trevor Road entrance every morning with a friendly greeting. This initial first contact is a very important part of showing that we care for and welcome all students to the school. We will also provide an SLT presence at the end of day to ensure our students remain safe as they leave the school grounds. It will also give us a welcome opportunity to engage in informal conversations with parents and members of the community. There is work to be done about the orderliness of the exit and likewise we do have some significant lateness with students drifting in after 8.45am. By being on hand we can influence this much more immediately, but you may want to discuss this with your children, if you know that getting going in a morning is an issue, so that they don't end up in detentions due to their lateness to school.

As you already know, one of the first steps in any school improvement is the raising of expectations. It is important that we are ambitious and I know that our students will always respond positively to a challenge. So, next term we are continuing to address some areas that we believe will make a significant impact on our school culture. Your support with these changes will be greatly appreciated

Uniform

Although the standard of students' adherence to our school uniform has improved vastly, there is still work to do to ensure that all students represent the school well and wear their uniform with pride. We want to keep building on the excellent improvements we have already seen. Students wearing incorrect uniform items will be challenged either at the school entrance and throughout the day on issues such as footwear untucked shirts and skirt length (and the wearing of tights where this is identified). We appreciate your ongoing support with this, but we hope you agree that they really do look so much smarter.

Behaviour at Unstructured Times

Behaviour for learning has improved significantly at our school. It is clear that our students want to reap the many rewards of attending a successful school where they can flourish and reach their potential. It is an absolute pleasure to walk around school during lesson time and observe some incredible learning taking place in a range of environments- the school presents a wonderful atmosphere. I would now like our students to apply the same attitudes during unstructured times so we will be extending the principles of our behaviour system/policy after half term to these times. To ensure the system is understood by all, this extension has been designed to be very similar to the successful system adopted during lesson times. In addition, I have personally led positive behaviour assemblies to all year groups throughout the week. The message has been well received and I would like to thank our students for their mature approach and commitment to "getting it right". Our full Rewards and Behaviour Policy is available on our website if you would like to read it in more detail:

<https://www.burscoughprioryacademy.org/policies/policies>

Lunchtimes

Improving the lunchtime experience for our students is also an ongoing project. Over the coming months, we will be reviewing queuing systems; dining areas; lunchtime activities; the role of staff and the use of available space. I have asked for feedback from students who have raised their concerns in a mature and appropriate manner- their points will be considered throughout the process. On a positive note, new dining tables will be arriving during half term and will be available for use ASAP, which I know will make a huge difference. For those who want a quieter space we also open our library at lunch time for reading and homework.

Staffing Update

As mentioned at our Information Evenings we have been busy recruiting to fill our final few vacancies. This week we have appointed a Lead Practitioner to our Maths Faculty, Miss Coyle and another English specialist, Mrs O'Keefe, to add capacity to our newly formed team. After the break we are also interviewing for a new Science Lead Practitioner. Our new staff will start in January as schools only recruit term to term. Two of our staff have brought new children of their own into the world in the last fortnight, so our congratulations go out to Mrs Livesley and Mrs Tattersall and we welcome Mrs Carless (RE) and Mrs Hunt (MFL) in their absence to cover their maternity leave.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter and thank you in advance for your support. We are determined to do the very best for Burscough Priory Academy, and we will always have our students' best interests at heart when making any decisions. I also wanted to thank our fantastic staff who have tirelessly this half term to embrace the changes and who have pulled together as a team to ensure we deliver an education that is now firmly on its way to being the more consistently high quality provision that we all aspire to.

I hope you have an enjoyable half term and we look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Mr Martyn Berry
Head of School