

# Victory Park Academy News

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Autumn Term 2024

## Update from the Head Teacher



Dear Parents Carers and Stakeholders,

As we approach the Christmas break, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on what has been a busy and exciting Autumn Term here at Victory Park Academy. This newsletter is packed with lots of great news, showcasing the many ways our students have been learning, growing and engaging with exciting opportunities. From academic achievements to extracurricular activities, there is much to celebrate. We hope you enjoy reading about the progress and successes of our students as they continue to develop both inside and outside the classroom. We are proud of all that has been achieved so far and would like to share some of the highlights with you.

### Key Events of the Autumn Term

#### Careers Fair – 29th November

On November 29th, we hosted our annual careers fair, which was a fantastic opportunity for our students to engage with local businesses and professionals across a variety of industries. Our Year 9, 10 and 11 students had the chance to learn about different career paths, explore apprenticeship opportunities and gain insights into what the future holds. A big thank you to all the companies and organisations who took part and to our staff for organising such a successful event.

#### President's Sports Club Trip – 3rd December

On December 3rd, our students had the chance to participate in an exciting trip to the President's Sports Club where they enjoyed a day filled with physical activities and team-building exercises. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students to bond outside the classroom and develop their sportsmanship and leadership skills in a fun and supportive environment.

### Army Visit – 4th December

On December 4th, we welcomed the army to school to work with our Year 10 and 11 students on team skills and leadership. The visit was part of our ongoing effort to expose students to a range of career options and build key life skills such as teamwork, communication and resilience. Our students had the chance to take part in team-building exercises and learn from experienced professionals.

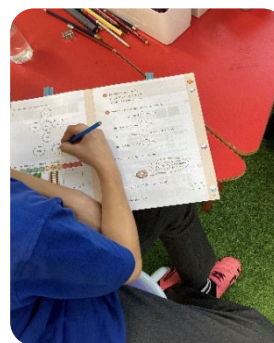
As we head into the festive season, we are excited about the upcoming events in the Spring Term. We encourage you to stay connected with the school and look out for updates and news through our website and social media channels.

On behalf of all the staff and students, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support throughout the term. Wishing you all a restful and enjoyable Christmas break.

Best wishes,

Mr E Muca (Landi)

## Donaldson Primary Class



During this half term, there has been a focus on feelings in Donaldson English lessons and students have enjoyed reading 'The Day the Crayons Quit'. They have discussed how each crayon is feeling and even written their own informal letters. During

maths, we have focused on addition and subtraction in our year 3 and 4 group and multiplication in our year 6 groups. Pupils have been working on column method and word problems as well as multiples and factors. All pupils have shown fantastic engagement in all areas of maths and are enjoying working through



their White Rose maths workbooks. During science and geography, there has been a focus on water and different states of matter. Pupils have been discussing how water can change between solid, liquid and gas and how best to do this. They have enjoyed taking part in experiments and measuring temperatures.

## **Harbour Primary Class – Early Morning Activities**



Each morning, we start with an activity based on the individual needs of the pupils. This can be practical activities to assist correct letter formation, forming sentences and handwriting or social activities to encourage friendships.

This term we have focused on letter formation and using high frequency words.

Whilst the children are engaged with this, they can have toast and drink of milk which really gets them off to a great start to their day.

## **Primary – Presidents Sporting Lunch**

We enjoyed a lovely day out at the president's sporting lunch. Pupils enjoyed meeting lots of different characters including Anna and Elsa from Frozen, a cheeky elf and Santa himself! We were pleased to hear that all our pupils were on the nice list! They danced the afternoon away and enjoyed getting their faces painted before eating a delicious Christmas dinner. Following dinner, pupils tried candy floss and popcorns and left with a gift bag full of presents! We were all extremely proud of their behaviour and how well they represented the school.



## **Primary – Reading & Phonics**

Reading and phonics continues to be a priority across the academy. Phonics in primary has been working well and children are showing fantastic progress throughout the scheme. All children are now on a coloured book and receive small group or one-to-one sessions with an adult for 20 minutes each day. Those

pupils identified on their STAR assessment as requiring urgent intervention or intervention are receiving daily reading sessions with an adult to support their reading. As we begin to reassess, we can see the progress these pupils are making. Reading for pleasure continues to be a challenge across the academy but after conducting a reading questionnaire with all pupils we are hopeful we can begin to get some more books which pupils are interested in.

## **STAG & LEAP**

As part of the curriculum, we work hard to create opportunities for all our pupils on the STAG and Leap pathways to gain important experiences outside the classroom. At Victory Park Academy, we pride ourselves in offering a tailored and enriched curriculum that engages all our students in different ways. These opportunities offer different experiences and provide our students a platform to develop curiosity, move out their comfort zone, access the community and try something new.

The pupils have participated in a number of activities: Combat Academy, horse riding, Nuclear Races, All Things Alpacas and swimming.

## **Combat Academy – STAG & LEAP**



Every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon, our Leap and Stag students have the opportunity to attend the new and improved facilities provided at Combat Academy. It is here that they can test out their combat and fitness skills in a safe, competitive environment.

The students get the chance to access the gym and learn how to train safely and use fitness equipment to develop their strength, fitness and improve their health. It is a chance for them to get into positive lifestyle choices and release any built-up tensions. They are trained by professional coaches who teach them discipline, determination and commitment.

## **Nuclear Races – Enrichment Program – STAG & LEAP**

Students are physically and mentally challenged every week by attending Nuclear Races which is an outdoor experience, regardless of the weather. Nuclear Races offers something very different to the classroom. With

over 150 individual obstacles, students get the opportunity to try something new, push themselves and enjoy the fresh air!

## Horse Riding – STAG & LEAP

Every Monday morning, our students get to experience life on the farm where they get to work with different animals. Part of the experience is the opportunity to work with horses and everyone gets the opportunity to learn to ride!



## All Things Alpaca – STAG & LEAP



This term, we have tried a new outdoor learning experience by attending an alpaca farm for 6 weeks. Students worked with a variety of animals and learnt how to look after and work with different animals of all sizes. They also got up close with a

herd of Alpacas and took them on a walk round the farm.

## English – LEAP

In English so far this school year, we have read the book Wonder. In this topic, we worked on answering a variety of questions and focused on being able to back our answers by making a point; providing evidence for that by adding a quote and then explaining why this is relevant.



We have read a number of non-fiction texts based on the pupil development aspect- healthy living (including healthy eating, smoking and vaping). We have watched the 'Supersize Me' documentary and used this as a vehicle to reinforce and consolidate KS2 grammar and punctuation skills including simple, compound and complex sentences, fronted adverbials, relative clauses and parenthesis.

## Maths – LEAP

Maths has provided the opportunity to further our understanding of place value and decimals; examining number sequences and solving problems with addition and subtraction.

In science, we have been completing a CSI investigation where we have been examining different elements that might be found in a crime scene. The students have analysed different handwriting, investigated ink through chromatography, examined fingerprints and footprints and looked at blood too.

## Geography – LEAP

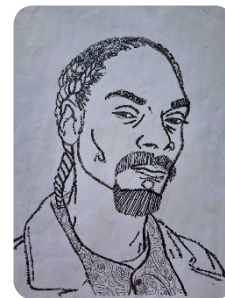


This term, in geography, we have been studying the British Isles. We have examined the varied landscapes across the British Isles; explored links between

the UK and the rest of Europe in terms of trade and transport. We have looked at the local environment and discussed ways in which it can be improved. We have learnt about Ordnance Survey maps and using grid references.

## Art – LEAP

In art this term, we have explored a variety of ways of creating portraits in order to refine our use of line. We have made micrography portraits of famous people; Roy Lichtenstein inspired self-portraits and we have collaboratively made a Chuck Close inspired pixel portrait. Since half term, we have focussed on Celtic art and calligraphy. The students have had some amazing results.



## Outdoor Learning – LEAP



The pupils have had lots of outdoor learning opportunities including attending a careers' fair at the Civic Centre, going to the beach, attending Combat, horse-riding, Nuclear Races, swimming, visiting the Alpaca farm and attending Oxygen as a rewards trip.

## Pupil Voice

Each term some of our pupils meet to discuss various topics, it is not just during this time that pupils express their ideas though and will often come up with ideas outside of our meetings. All ideas that are put forward we try our best to implement then.



This term, the focus has been discussing the classrooms and the curriculum and the extra activities we offer within the school. Classrooms being a hot topic, pupils suggested that they need a little freshen up and some organisation to help with focusing in lessons. The suggestion of having a gym on site for the pupils P.E lessons were a great hit, with students even suggesting where we would be able to put this.



Pupils have lots of exciting after school clubs on offer such as basketball, football and music club. We have a build a bike workshop starting in the new year where pupils will have the chance to build their own bike. We feel that this is something they will really enjoy and feel a great sense of pride from achieving.

Our pupil voice is an amazing way for pupils to have their say and help us make this school a better place for

## Science



This term KS3 have been looking at forensic science and how to process a scene and analyse evidence. Pupils really enjoyed taking part in a simulated crime scene. Year 10 have been carrying out scientific investigations into the solubility of substances. Using the scientific working knowledge to work safely and effectively. Year 11 have been looking at materials and their chemical properties. This term they have been testing the pH levels of various household substances and the rate of reaction due to the concentration of a solution.

## Hair & Beauty

Year 11 pupils this year, headed to Salon International at the Excel Exhibition Centre, here the pupils engaged with vendors and training providers. The day was a great success and really helped the pupils envision what the future could hold within the hair and beauty industry for themselves.



Pupils hosted a pamper afternoon for parents and careers this term in hair and beauty and it was a great HIT!! Pupils carried out treatments on family and

friends ranging from eyebrow tinting, hair washes and manicures. It was a lovely afternoon and it was great to see our year 11 girls put all their skills to the test!

## Child Development

Pupils have been looking at the employment opportunities in child development. Looking at the range of jobs and further education available once they move on from our provision. Pupils this term have taken part in mock interviews, made applications and created CV's which they can use to help find them further education or employment within the industry.

## Message from our School Mentor & Counselling



It's been a busy term at VPA, with over 120 counselling sessions taking place the students as always have been extremely engaged. The sessions can be pre booked or on the day. Students can go for a walk or sit in our lovely counselling room. Counselling is a safe way for

students to talk openly without being judged. The conversations are confidential and students are given time to be listened to. It's a fantastic place to work with young people who are so interesting and have so much to offer. Please let the school know if you would like me to speak to your child.

**Andrew Packer - School Mentor & Counsellor**

## Physical Education

This Term in P.E, we have focused on badminton. At first it may sound boring, the student's at VPA thought this also, but what they found was that the more they played, the quicker they developed. Some pupils would say they've mastered the skills to serve, smash, back hand and drop shot. We also completed the around the world challenge; now it may sound easy, but I can assure you it wasn't, with perseverance, they all succeeded. Next term, we will be tackling the dreaded NEW YEARS HEALTH AND FITNESS which everyone seems very excited about.



## SEND

It has been a busy start to the academic year and we have welcomed some new students into the academy whilst supporting some students transition back to their school. We have enjoyed working with other SENCOs during this process.



We have had the opportunity to work closely with our Educational Psychology service, to support with planning staff CPD and support the EHCNA process for many of our students. Students and staff have benefited from the strategic support and guidance received from the service.

On the 13th of December, we held our first SEND open coffee morning which gave parents and carers the opportunity to meet with staff and supporting services. It was a great information sharing platform which reassured parents and provided clear next steps for their questions around their child's educational needs.

Staff have continued to receive training and support on the use of Provisional Mapping and because of this we are seeing that strategies are being consistently delivered, targets are smarter, interventions are supporting pupil needs and pupils are making good progress.

In response to the increasing pupil needs, we have expanded and split our LEAP group. We now support 2 LEAP provisions where KS3 pupils are supported in a highly modified curriculum model with the same teacher and LSA, whilst we assess them and conduct an EHCNA.



This term we have expanded our range of interventions in response to pupil needs. We now have a successful game group/speaking and listening intervention. We also have a weekly swimming lesson that is very popular! Pupils have had regular access to our school nurse who has been on site to deliver mental health and well-being sessions. They have also had opportunities to speak with Open Road (drugs and alcohol support service) on a weekly drop-in basis. We have also enjoyed weekly trips to Nuclear Races and we

look forward to a trip to Colchester Zoo at the end of the term.

We have enjoyed working with the Speech and Language Team on a new screening platform 'VERBO' that will support staff screen pupils and identify any areas of support needed. The platform includes targets, supporting strategies and CPD opportunities for staff.

## English – Year 11

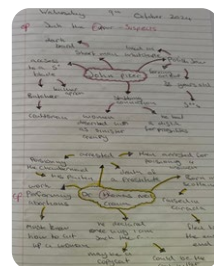
All year 11 pupils have studied and taken their Functional Skills Level 1 or level 2 exam. The purpose of the Functional Skills English Level 1 qualification is to prepare the learner for work, study and life. Pupils who achieve this qualification will demonstrate the ability to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English. Pupils will be able to apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and in real life situations. This is an additional qualification in English to GCSE.



Pupils have studied the novel, 'Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children' focusing on reading skills, in particular analysing language.

Using 'Jack the Ripper' as a topic, pupils practised their reading skills through research, selecting relevant information, understanding archaic language as well as technical language.

Pupils have also been learning about Paper 1 question 5 of the GCSE English Language exam. This is worth half the total marks of the paper. This is where they can really let their imagination run free. It is the perfect place to let their creative skills take over. Pupils have a choice of two questions to answer.

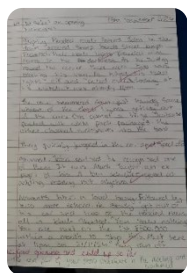


Pupils can either write a description based on an image or write a story with a title relevant to the theme of the paper, in this case, write about a discovery of a new planet.

Above is an example question in the same format that they will find in their exam. They only have to answer one of the two questions.

Skills we have learnt about include plot; narrative voice; character; dramatic vocabulary; sensory language; figurative language; dialogue and punctuation.

## English – Year 10



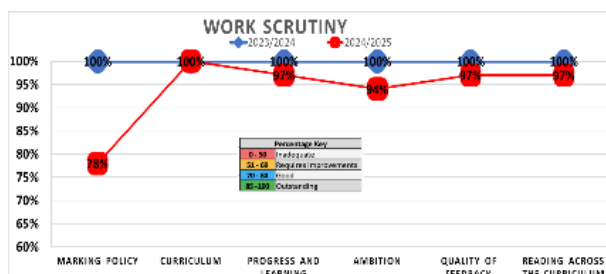
Pupils have been using 'Prisons' as a topic to practice using various English GCSE skills required for Paper 2. They have read reports; autobiographies; a range of newspaper articles, as well as internet-based summaries of the issues of prisons in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

In Autumn 2, to begin with, we focused on creative writing skills, looking at developing characters and the structure of plots, story openers; dramatic vocabulary; sensory language; figurative language; dialogue and punctuation.

This was followed by a short unit on 'A Christmas Carol', the novella by Charles Dickens. Their work involved researching and learning about Victorian London and how poverty was crippling society. It covered the themes of redemption; poverty and social responsibility; Christmas Spirit/ giving to charity and family. Pupils have learnt about the different characters and followed Scrooge's change in character which led him from being lonely and grumpy to happy and generous. Pupils learnt how to select quotations and analyse them.

## Work Scrutiny

Work scrutiny is held on a rota basis, each teacher will bring their books and as a team we work through them and share good practice. There were 34 work scrutinises which took place in Autumn 1.



Due to triangulating planning and pupils' work, subject knowledge, structured lessons and opportunities for pupil feedback and discussion has shown an increase in the standard of work being produced. New staff are supported in their teaching roles and this is reflected in the data. Pupils' knowledge is consistently, coherently

and logically sequenced so that it can develop incrementally over time. There is a progression from the simpler and/or more concrete concepts to the more complex and/or abstract ones. Pupils' work shows that they have developed their knowledge and skills over time.

Work Scrutiny	Marking Policy	Curriculum	Progress and Learning	Ambition	Quality of feedback	Reading across the Curriculum
Summer 23-24	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Autumn 1 24-25	78%	100%	97%	94%	97%	97%

Work scrutiny will continue to reflect good practice and pupil progress and comments will include how to improve and are clear for pupils to follow.

## Message from the Designated Safeguarding Lead



Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach the Christmas break, I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on some of the important safeguarding initiatives and support services we have in place at Victory Park to ensure the safety, wellbeing and development of all our students.

It has been a busy and productive term, with a continued focus on safeguarding, mental health and educating our students about important issues such as drug and alcohol misuse, hate crime and personal safety. I'd like to share with you some of the key activities and services we've been working on this term, along with a reminder of the ongoing safeguarding training and support we offer.

## Key Safeguarding Initiatives and Support Services - Open Road Weekly Drop-In Sessions

We have continued our partnership with Open Road, who offer weekly drop-in sessions for students to talk about issues related to drugs, alcohol and general wellbeing. These sessions provide a safe, confidential space where students can ask questions, share concerns and receive guidance from trained professionals. The Open Road team also leads discussions on topics such as healthy relationships, managing stress and making positive choices.





## School Nurse Drop-Ins

Our school nurse continues to visit regularly, providing a range of health and wellbeing support to our students. This includes confidential one-to-one consultations on a variety of topics, such as emotional and physical health, sexual health and lifestyle advice. We encourage students to make use of these sessions, as they provide an excellent opportunity for students to receive expert advice in a supportive environment.

## Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Compliance

We are committed to ensuring the highest standards of safeguarding in all aspects of school life. All our staff are up to date with the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance. In addition, safeguarding training takes place regularly throughout the year, with all staff receiving both core and specific training on child protection, online safety and identifying signs of abuse or neglect.

## Ongoing Safeguarding Training

Our staff undergo regular safeguarding training to ensure that they are fully equipped to identify and respond to any concerns regarding a student's safety and welfare. This includes a focus on mental health, online safety, bullying prevention and awareness of the risks related to substances such as alcohol and drugs. Training is part of our commitment to maintaining a vigilant, proactive approach to safeguarding at all times.

## Fire Brigade Hate Crime Education

In partnership with the local fire brigade, we have been running sessions to educate students on the dangers of hate crime and the importance of respect and understanding for all people, regardless of their background. These sessions are designed to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions and help students understand the legal and emotional consequences of engaging in or supporting hate-based behaviour.

## Police Visits - Building Positive Relationships



Our local police officers continue to visit the school monthly to build positive relationships with students. These visits help students feel more comfortable around law enforcement

and provide a chance to discuss issues such as safety, community responsibility and crime prevention. The police also deliver talks on personal safety, online safety and how students can access support if they ever feel unsafe or in need of help.

## Looking Ahead

As we approach the new year, we will continue to work hard to provide a safe and supportive environment for our students. In addition to the initiatives already in place, we will be running further awareness campaigns around mental health, online safety and peer support networks. We will also be continuing to offer workshops and drop-in sessions on a variety of topics to support students in making informed, positive choices for their futures.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding safeguarding or any of the services mentioned above, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me directly. We are always here to help and support you and your child. Thank you for your continued partnership in keeping our students safe and well. Wishing you all a peaceful and happy Christmas break.

**Charlotte Burch**

## Art & Design

From the beginning of the year, Key Stage 4 pupils have been working on GCSE coursework and the course demands that pupils work on a personal project that they are interested in.



The pupils have experimented with various materials such as shading pencils, charcoal, pastel, water colour paint and water colour pencils and have developed their skills. Recently, they have progressed to painting with acrylic paint on large wooden boards. They have put a lot of time, effort into their work and displayed resilience and patience.

With the help of staff, all pupils have worked hard and created some outstanding work – well done!

## Maths – Key Stage 3

From the start of the year, pupils have been working hard and have covered a range of topics including powers, prime numbers, multiplying fractions, simplifying fractions, working with negative numbers

and finding the missing values to make an equation correct.

*Try and balance this equation. If  $9 \times 7 = ?$  What would  $32 + ?$  be?*

## Occupational Studies

This term in occupational studies our pupils have been covering a broad range of topics to explore potential interests and possible career options for the future. We have been learning a variety of skills such how to build a brick wall and understanding the processes of how to tile using the tools correctly. The pupils are working towards their NCFE Level 1 and 2 qualifications and all are on track to succeed. Great work everyone and thanks for all the hard work.

## Princes Trust

Year 11's has been learning about managing money in the first half term. The aim of this unit has been to provide students with the knowledge about the importance of money in their lives and making them aware of how to save money and how to protect themselves from fraud. They are currently learning about career planning and this has led to the pupils considering their future and learning how to write a covering letter and Curriculum Vitae.

## Careers



Over the Autumn term, our year 11 pupils have been engaging with our Connexions personal adviser to help them map out their next steps post 16. All pupils are engaging well and making the most of this offer. We have also

recently just had our annual careers fair, this was a great success and we were lucky to have some excellent providers join us, including Central Academy, Southend Adult Community College and UK Border Force. All pupils across the school as well as pupils from Sutton House were invited to the fair to help show them all the possibilities open to them.

## Well-Being

Staff and pupil well being is at the heart of what we do here at Victory Park. We strive to get a balance, making time to ensure our mental health and wellbeing is taken care of. To celebrate National Mental Health Day, pupils had an afternoon of mindfulness activities including meditation, breathing techniques and

relaxation. Staff were treated to a gong bath experience aimed at helping them relax and find some peace. Staff feedback was positive and we aim to do more for our invaluable staff wellbeing as we move forward. To end the term, the Wellbeing Team have also put together a self-care package to say thank you for all their hard work. Thanks everyone.



## A Message from our Attendance Officer

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we approach the festive season, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support in ensuring your child's attendance at Victory Park Academy. Regular attendance is crucial for your child's education and we are committed to working with you to achieve the best outcomes for every student.

### Why Regular Attendance Matters

Consistent school attendance is crucial because it allows your child to:

- Fully engage in learning and make academic progress;
- Develop essential social skills by interacting with their peers and teachers;
- Build a sense of routine and responsibility, vital for future success;
- Grow in confidence within a supportive and nurturing school environment.

### Attendance Tips for the Festive Season:

- **Routine is Key:** Maintain a consistent bedtime and morning routine to help your child adjust after the holidays;
- **Plan Ahead:** Schedule any appointments outside of school hours and plan family trips during school holidays;
- **Stay Healthy:** Encourage good hygiene practices to help prevent illness during the colder months.

### Celebrating Attendance

- **Attendance Awards:** At our end-of-term assembly, we will be recognizing students with



outstanding attendance. Every student with 100% attendance will receive a certificate of recognition and entered into top performers of the school rewards draw.

Thank you for your partnership and support. We wish you a joyful and restful Christmas holiday. If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **Key Dates**

### **Last Day of Autumn Term**

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

### **Christmas Break**

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2024 to Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025

### **Bank Holiday**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025

### **Teachers Training Day**

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025

### **First Day of Spring Term**

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025