Waltham Toll Bar Academy

Ref: JHM/NM

16 October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we reach the end of my first half term as Principal of Waltham Toll Bar Academy, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on what has been a truly fantastic start to the academic year.

It has been an absolute privilege to join the Toll Bar community and lead such a special academy. Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to visit lessons, attend events, speak with students, staff and families, and immerse myself in academy life. Without question, my biggest takeaway has been the incredible young people who attend our academy.

Every day I have been inspired by the kindness, ambition, resilience and character of our students. Whether in the classroom, on the sports field, on the stage, or representing the academy in the wider community, I have witnessed an extraordinary range of talents and achievements. The breadth of opportunities our students embrace and the pride they take in their academy is exceptional. Quite simply, it has reinforced my belief that Waltham Toll Bar Academy truly is the best school in our area.

Enrichment Opportunities

Our enrichment programme continues to go from strength to strength, providing students with memorable experiences that develop confidence, resilience and character beyond the classroom.

In September, 12 of our Year 11 students successfully completed their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award Expedition in the Peak District. Facing both breathtaking scenery and challenging weather conditions, the students demonstrated exceptional determination, teamwork and perseverance throughout the expedition. We are incredibly proud of their achievement. Building on this success, Miss C. Seal, our Duke of Edinburgh Manager, has launched the Bronze Award to our Year 9 students. Many have already begun signing up and selecting activities for the Skills, Volunteering and Physical sections of the award, embarking on a journey that will help them develop valuable life skills and experiences.

Following half-term, a group of Year 9 students will depart for their week-long Outward Bound residential visit to Ullswater. This promises to be an unforgettable experience, with activities including the traditional Outward Bound ‘Jog and Dip’ into Ullswater, canoeing, kayaking, gorge scrambling, hiking, cliff jumping and outdoor cook-outs. These experiences challenge students to step outside their comfort zones, build resilience and develop strong friendships that often last well beyond the trip itself.

Looking ahead, we have also launched our Year 7 residential to YMCA Lakeside on Windermere for June 2027. The response has been fantastic, with places filling quickly, demonstrating the enthusiasm of our students and families to embrace these wider opportunities.

Our commitment to enrichment extends beyond outdoor education. Students have enjoyed a range of cultural and educational visits this term, including trips to the Leicester Curve Theatre and a performance of Blood Brothers at Grimsby Auditorium as part of our Performing Arts provision. Meanwhile, our History students had the opportunity to visit the British Museum, where they experienced first-hand the remarkable and iconic Bayeux Tapestry, bringing their learning to life in a truly memorable way.

These opportunities are a vital part of life at Waltham Toll Bar Academy. They broaden horizons, create lifelong memories and help our young people develop the confidence, independence and ambition that will serve them well in the future.

Celebrating Student Success

A key priority at Waltham Toll Bar Academy this year has been ensuring that we recognise, celebrate and reward the achievements of our students. We firmly believe that success comes in many forms, whether that is academic excellence, outstanding effort, excellent attendance, positive behaviour, leadership, contribution to academy life or consistently demonstrating our academy values.

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Principal: Joe Hermiston

I am delighted to share that, in just the first half term, over half a million reward points have already been awarded to students across the academy. This incredible total reflects the positive culture that exists throughout Toll Bar and the commitment shown by our students to be the very best versions of themselves.

Students have enthusiastically embraced our rewards programme and have already begun converting their points into a wide variety of rewards, gifts and prize draw entries. It has been fantastic to see so many students being recognised and celebrated for their hard work, dedication and achievements.

Rewarding success is about more than recognising outcomes; it is about valuing effort, encouraging aspiration and ensuring every student feels proud of their accomplishments. The enthusiasm students have shown towards the rewards system demonstrates just how important it is to celebrate the positive contributions that make our academy community so special.

Sporting Success

Sport continues to be a significant strength of the academy, and this half term has already provided many reasons to celebrate.

Our students have enjoyed excellent success in football, with both the Year 9 and Year 10 girls' teams winning their respective 6-a-side tournaments, demonstrating outstanding teamwork, skill and determination.

We have also begun our campaigns in the Grimsby and District Cup competitions, experiencing a mixture of results, but with many exciting opportunities still ahead as these were only the opening rounds. Similarly, our teams have started their journeys in the English Schools' Football Association (ESFA) Cup competitions. Whilst results have been mixed, students have represented the academy with pride, resilience and a positive attitude, gaining valuable experience against strong opposition.

We are particularly proud of our students competing in Boccia, where two academy teams have successfully progressed through the Grimsby and District rounds to qualify for the County Finals. This is a fantastic achievement and reflects the commitment and talent of the students involved.

Perhaps most encouraging of all has been the exceptional engagement in sport across the academy. We have seen record numbers of students attending after-school sporting enrichment clubs, with young people embracing opportunities to participate, develop new skills, improve their fitness and represent the academy. The enthusiasm and commitment shown by our students highlight the strong sporting culture that continues to thrive at Waltham Toll Bar Academy.

Looking Ahead

While there is much to celebrate already this year, I know that this is only the beginning. We have an exciting year ahead, filled with opportunities for students to learn, grow and achieve.

I am incredibly proud to be part of Waltham Toll Bar Academy and excited about what we can accomplish together. Thank you for the warm welcome I have received since joining the academy. I look forward to continuing to work with our students, staff, parents and the wider community to ensure every young person thrives and succeeds.

Most importantly, thank you to our students. The talent, character, ambition and positivity that I have seen in my first half term have been remarkable. You are the reason this academy is so special, and I look forward to celebrating many more successes with you throughout the year.

I wish all students, families and staff a restful and enjoyable half-term break.

Yours sincerely,



Mr J W Hermiston
Principal