

WALTON LEDALE HIGH SCHOOL



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10th May 2024

Dear Parents, Carers and students,

Update regarding academisation of Walton-le-Dale High School

Further to previous communications regarding our school's journey towards academisation, we are pleased to provide you with a further update. For the past few months we have been liaising with the Local Authority to ensure that the final part of the academisation process runs as smoothly as possible, and we now believe that we are in the position of the school becoming an academy in June 2024 when we shall join Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust. Whilst this process has taken a little longer than anticipated, we are excited about embarking on a new phase in our school's history.

What does this mean for Walton-le-Dale High School?

You will be aware that, following the two most recent Ofsted inspections, our school was directed by the Department for Education to convert to academy status and join a trust. Despite the many positive elements of our school, we cannot deny that overall outcomes (GCSE results and the school's Progress 8 score) for the past few years have not been good enough.

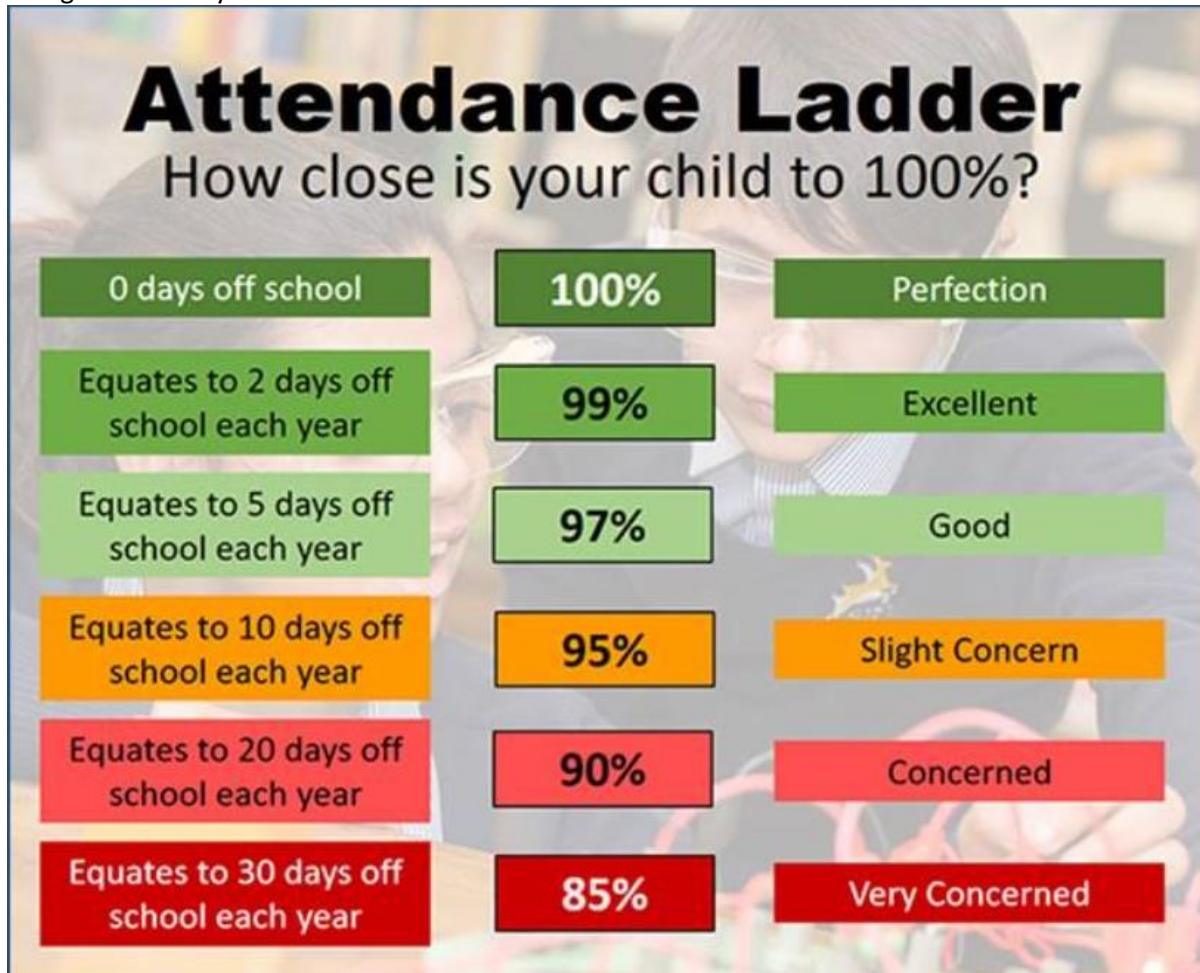
Since I arrived as Interim Headteacher last Easter, working alongside the trust and CEO Mr Mitchell, you will undoubtedly have noticed a number of changes. For many people, change to routine and usual ways of working can be unsettling, but I am delighted that the overwhelming majority of parents, carers and students have clearly understood the need for change and have supported me and my colleagues with our collective drive to improve the school. Hopefully, it goes without saying that we are on an improvement journey; the school I started at last Easter is already vastly different, and I expect that we will continue to reflect on and evaluate our overall provision, so that our school community can flourish and thrive.

Standards

We are working hard on ensuring our school is a calm, safe, and orderly environment for both students and staff. We were delighted to appoint Mrs McClelland as Associate Assistant Headteacher for Behaviour and Culture before the Easter break, and we continue to see the positive impact of her leadership of standards (behaviour and uniform). We have previously informed parents and carers of our new behaviour curriculum, and we are pleased that this focus has resulted in fewer instances of unacceptable behaviour both inside and outside of lessons. As we progress into the final term of this academic year, we shall be shining the spotlight on uniform so that all our students look smart and ready to learn. If you have any items of pre-loved uniform which you would like to donate to school, we would be grateful, in order to facilitate a uniform swap shop moving forward. We will provide further details of this in the newsletter but we hope to allow parents/carers to come into school during the summer holidays to source items of pre-loved uniform free of charge, so the more donations we receive, the more we will have available.

Attendance

We continue to work hard with our families in order to improve attendance. This is an issue of national concern too, but it goes without saying that time away from school will have a negative impact on children's learning and progress. The below infographic should help parents and carers understand the impact of absence and why it's important to ensure your child attends school as much as possible. We want all our students to have excellent or perfect attendance, as this means they are not missing lessons and are therefore able to keep on top of the content being delivered by their teachers.



Quality of Education

This is an area identified in the most recent Ofsted inspection as requiring improvement. There has been a significant amount of research undertaken by educationalists which highlights the curriculum as being the key driver to raising standards in a school. Therefore, we commissioned an external review of our curriculum in order to find out what our strengths and weaknesses were. The review was conducted in collaboration with Curriculum Leaders and Mrs Long, Deputy Headteacher, and we are now well underway with making the necessary changes. In addition to the curriculum review, we also commissioned an external review of our provision for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This was a really positive experience, with the whole learning support team committed to making further improvements and refinements to our provision. In the autumn term we will welcome the return of Miss Evans (Mrs Mullen), SENCO, who has been on maternity leave this year, but we shall ensure that Mr Gardner will remain in post as Assistant SENCO and provide additional support and leadership.

The relentless focus on teaching and learning and the provision of high quality professional development for all staff has been another fundamental area of focus for us. We are committed to ensuring our teaching and support staff are continually challenged and supported, learning from best practice in other schools, so that student experiences in the classroom are second to none. To further support us in this aim, we have appointed Miss Christian, Curriculum Leader for English, to the post of Associate Assistant Headteacher for Teaching & Learning. Miss Christian will work alongside Mrs Long in providing ongoing training and development, as well as being part of the trust's School Improvement Group, which will look at training needs for all schools in the trust. This is another

exciting development, as we will be able to utilise the expertise in and across the trust from both primary and secondary schools. It is especially important that we collaborate with our primary colleagues in order to gain further understanding of the rigour of the primary curriculum and the levels of achievement pupils make before starting high school. This will ensure our curriculum offer in Key Stage 3 is fit for purpose and does not repeat what has already been taught at primary school.

Working with the trust

As we approach June, we have been working much more closely with the trust's Central Team and benefiting from their expertise in Finance, Premises Management, Health & Safety, and HR. We were delighted to be informed a few weeks ago that the trust was successful in securing funding for our school - over £634,000 has been granted and allocated towards upgrading the school's heating system, with work to commence this summer. The trust was also successful in securing funding for two other schools in the trust - Parklands High School and Gillibrand Primary School - to the tune of over £600,000. Further applications for funding for Walton le Dale will be submitted during the next window, which will be in the autumn term, as we require further works on the school roof. In addition to the heating, our school will also benefit from working with the trust by having:

- New perimeter fencing and security gates to further safeguard our students
- Replacement of all wooden windows and external doors throughout the school
- A new kitchen area and servery installed in the external dining area
- Refurbishment of student and staff toilets
- New lighting on our school MUGA (all weather pitch)
- Refurbishment and upgrade of the Food Technology classroom

Parent Panel

1. Thank you to those parents and carers who were able to join us at our recent Parent Panel before the Easter break. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to get feedback regarding our Behaviour Curriculum and forms of communication. As a result of the feedback received, we have updated our Parent Bulletin. Our next Parent Panel is scheduled for **11th July at 5:30pm**, and we have asked Mr Mitchell, CEO of Aspirational Futures Multi Academy Trust, to join us. We are particularly interested to hear your feedback on all forms of communication; the parent bulletin, parents evenings and school reports. If you are interested in being part of this, please [complete this form](#).

Walton-le-Dale THE BIG LISTEN

As part of our improvement strategy, we would like to seek your feedback regarding our school. We will aim to hold this during the final half-term of this academic year and will be in touch very soon via the newsletter with further details.

Thank you for your continued support, it is very much appreciated.

Kind regards



Mr V Arden
Headteacher