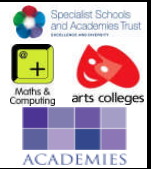




Park Hall Academy

Principal's End of Year Letter



Wednesday 20th July, 2011

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s) & Students,



As I write this letter the students are actively engaged in our end of term learning enrichment activities. This builds on another fantastic term in a year of massive improvement which culminated in our recent OFSTED and School Improvement Partner Reports grading many areas of our practice and provision as good or outstanding. We are all obviously delighted at receiving these positive judgements and it recognises the hard work and dedication that staff and students have put in to making Park Hall an even better place for our young people. We have now firmly crossed our fingers and hope that this positive view is again reflected in the summer examination results!

This good news and the superb end of term activities is a lovely end to my second full year as Principal at Park Hall. It has been a truly amazing year which I have thoroughly enjoyed. It has been full of hard work and continues to be a magical learning experience for me as I continue to get to know the Park Hall community. This has been tremendously enjoyable, as has seeing the Academy further improve – which we look forward to continuing next year. The latest edition of the Park Hall Chronicle accompanying this letter should give you a flavour of some of the amazing events and successes we have had over the term!

With all this in mind, my thoughts have already begun to turn to September and making sure that Park Hall offers an even better start to life for its students. We are continuing to develop a Shared Values and Rights and Responsibilities Statement for students, staff and parent(s)/carer(s). It is clear that we all share some core values of wanting the best possible education for our students. Putting it simply, this means our students turning up on time, being good and nice and working hard - as well as having fun in their learning. We hope that you will be able to contribute to this by completing our annual parent/ carer survey which we will send home with students on Friday 30th September. This external survey is your chance to help us improve Park Hall Academy and your views are really important to us in shaping our further improvement. Please encourage your child to hand in your completed questionnaire to reception so we can send off your responses to Kirkland Rowell, an independent education market research company, who will collate the responses.

Additionally, if you would like to play a bigger part in determining Park Hall's future, we will be distributing nomination and ballot forms for our Parent/Carer's Council in September –any support that you can offer will be gratefully appreciated! In order to help provide for better communication with parents, our present Parents/Carers Councillors have been piloting our Park Hall Academy Parent Portal called INSIGHT. This is a new piece of web-based software that allows you to have 24 hour online access to current Academy data about your child which is read straight from the Academy's information database. Park Hall Academy recognises the need for parents and carers to have timely, accurate and relevant information delivered on request at times to suit you. By having online access 24/7 to the portal, you can use the information to reflect on your child's experiences and progress. Key information on the portal includes attendance data, progress reports, public examination entries, timetables and much more. The Parent Portal is not a substitute for parent consultation evenings, academic mentoring etc. but we hope that it will complement the existing contact the school has with parents/carers. We are hoping to 'go live' to all parents and carers in September and will write to you about next term. In the meantime, we would be grateful if you could let us know how best to contact you electronically by providing us with your email address if you haven't already done so!

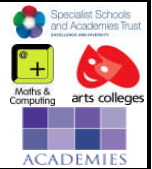
In order to encourage this as well as continuing to improve the quality of learning and teaching next year, along with the other North Solihull Secondary Schools we will be looking to support students to continue to develop good attendance and punctuality. **We have agreed that the minimum attendance figure for every student should be 94% during the next academic year.** This is because we know that if attendance falls below this figure (equivalent to half a day off per week), then student attainment and progress worsens in the vast majority of cases. Additionally, if students were to take this attendance pattern into their adult lives and work, we know that their employers would not take kindly to it! To promote this, we will write to the parent(s)/carers of all children, who fail to reach this modest benchmark, twice during the year. All secondary schools in North Solihull have set the same minimum standards for 2011-12. We have also agreed on a coordinated approach towards attendance. The main features involve the following:

- Students who have **15 unauthorised absences (sessions, not days) in a 12 week period will be referred to the Education Welfare Service,** and the Education Welfare Officer will make contact with the families.



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- We will support the **issuing of a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter to the parent(s)/carer(s) of students who have 20 unauthorised absences in a 12 week period.**
- We will support the serving of a **Fixed Penalty Fine to the parent(s)/carer(s) of students who have a further 5 unauthorised absences within an agreed period.**
- Holidays in term-time must be authorised by the Academy. If they aren't, they will count as unauthorised absences. **A 2-week holiday that is unauthorised, counts as 20 sessions and will trigger a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter.** When deciding whether to authorise a holiday, along with all schools in North Solihull, we will use the official 'holiday calculator.' This allocates points on the basis of when the holiday is planned for; the student's attendance level; how close the proposed holiday is to end of Key Stage 3 or end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE) examinations; and whether holiday leave has already been taken in the current academic year. If a request has more than the baseline points then it will not be authorised. As such, we strongly urge parent(s)/carer(s) who are considering taking a holiday during term time to discuss this with us and complete the official holiday request forms before booking it.
- We will continue to hold formal 'late gates' and consequent sanctions to encourage students to turn up to the Academy on time.

You will also be aware that we have consulted widely on our Academy Uniform. We now have a uniform that marries the 'old with the new' and reflects the high standards of Park Hall whilst recognising that we have started a new journey as the Academy. Please see the separate document in this mailing about uniform for more details of this, but in the meantime I would like to remind you about the Academy's expectations towards uniform for the next academic year.

- The Academy ties have been designed to be worn with the traditional shirt and blazer recognising each student's allegiance to the House that they belong to. We spent a long time discussing ideas with all parties and now have a KS3 and KS4 tie that each student should wear with pride.
- Students should wear **black shoes** (not boots, trainers or 'casual' footwear) with the Academy uniform. Parent(s)/Carer(s) who intend to buy new footwear over the holidays should ensure that it conforms with this expectation
- We expect that all students will wear the new PE kit in all their PE lessons.
- We understand that many students wish to vary their appearance in the school holidays and we support this individuality. However, we do ask that they respect the uniform code upon their return. Hairstyles must not be extreme in style or colour (including shaved patterns). Colour must be of a natural tone. Braiding must not carry heavy beading. **Any piercings carried out throughout the holiday should be done at an early enough stage to be removed before the first day back. This includes all piercings other than a single pair of either sleepers or studs worn in the earlobe.**

We therefore expect each student to wear the uniform correctly and we ask that parent(s)/ carer(s) support us in this expectation. Students should be aware of the consequences of not wearing their uniform correctly. Next year will see a particular focus on this area as we are proud to be members of Park Hall Academy and as such, we expect our students to reflect the same level of pride. **Upon our return in September, any breaches of the uniform code may result in students giving up their social time, spending time in internal exclusion or being sent home to change.**

We know that the vast majority of parent(s)/carer(s) and students ensure that the basics of good attendance, punctuality and uniform are maintained and we hope that you can support us in making sure that this is the case for everyone. If you are experiencing problems in meeting these targets and expectations, then please contact your Head of House. They are there to help and if they cannot solve the problem with you, they will be able to put you in touch with someone who can!

As this letter goes to press, we are looking forward to the end of term Sport and Activity Day and hearing more about our Year 10s on their work experience programme. We hope that it will continue to be a fantastic last week of what has proven to be a superb year at Park Hall. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the staff, the students and our parent(s)/carer(s) for their continued support in making Park Hall an ever better school and wish everyone a restful and enjoyable holiday period – we all deserve it! We look forward to seeing everyone again in September and remind you that students should return on Tuesday 6th September (Year 7 & 12 at 8.50am and Years 8 to 11 and 13 at 11.30am) to begin what we hope will be another great Park Hall year.

Yours sincerely

Tony Morrison, Principal