

11 February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you following 5 weeks of the most recent national lockdown and the academy being open only to the children of key workers and those identified as being vulnerable. I have enjoyed spending time every day with these students watching them access their learning and talking to them about their experiences. They really have lived up to the group name of "Stars" - they have been a credit to their families and demonstrated the key characteristics of resilience and determination that we treasure in our students.

For those learning at home we have been delighted with your levels of engagement and attendance. We have worked hard, with you, to resolve barriers to accessing lessons and have been delighted with how well you have adapted. We recognise it has been tough but the resilience, determination, ability to problem solve and speed of adaptation to this new world of working has been very impressive.

I delivered an assembly recently with the theme of "pride" and wanted to make you all aware of the immense pride I take in leading Outwood Academy Newbold. The staff who work with your children every day are kind and caring with an incredible insight into the ways that young people learn. They are focused on ensuring that your children are able to progress despite the limitations that on-line learning provides. More importantly, I get the absolute privilege of watching your children engage in lessons every day. They are amazing. I take great pleasure in listening to the questions they ask, reading the work they produce and admiring the way that they encourage and support each other.

Since I last wrote to you the educational landscape has changed. We are still expecting to have some, if not all, students return to us on Monday 8th March but rest assured, we are ready to respond with whatever form of re-opening schools have when the government announces it. I will write to you as soon as we know the details of what arrangements will be in place for ensuring a safe and successful return to education. With regards to the awarding of grades in GCSE, A-Level and vocational qualifications. We engaged fully with the Ofqual consultation and have ensured that our views have been heard. Again, we are ready and prepared to ensure that your children are awarded the grades that they deserve based on the work that they have produced, their attitude to learning and the progress that we know students can make in the final months of their studies.

The Praising Stars report that has been issued this week is different to previous reports for students in Year 7 - 9. This is because we have decided to focus on the effort grades that students have shown since Christmas rather than trying to make judgements on the quality of a student's work. It would be unfair to compare students who have very different means of accessing their learning. If you are writing an essay in English on a tablet compared to a laptop there are technical restraints to overcome before the work can even be attempted. We understand this and therefore we have not made an attainment comment. In the exam years we believe that attainment judgements need to be made as we know from last year that maintaining our professional predictions is an important part of ensuring we can respond appropriately to whatever is asked of us.

I look forward to welcoming all of our students back into the academy at the earliest possible opportunity so that we can continue their school journey. Enjoy a well deserved break this February half term, thank you for all your support for home learning, without you, this would be even harder. Stay safe and take care.

Yours sincerely,



**Rob Southern**  
Head of School

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