



THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY
ACADEMY

Academy Newsletter No 1

September 2009

Dear Parents and Carers

We are delighted to write to you at the end of this our first ever week as an Academy. The staff are unanimous in their praise of your sons and daughters: they look so smart in their new uniforms and have settled so quickly in to the new and demanding ways of the Academy. Many of the 6th Form are already in their new business attire and setting a good example to the younger students. The five **Family Units** (the central feature of the Academy) have had an immediate effect on making each student feel welcome. We know only too well that none of this would have happened without your support.

The final stages of the plans for the new £54m buildings are underway. For now we live within the predecessor surroundings. Significant alterations were completed during the summer at the West Site and the remainder are on target for completion in October.

Uniforms – Years 7 to 11

Student uniform cards have been given to students and there should be no excuse for non-compliance with the Academy's dress code, whether for Years 7-11 or those in post 16 education.

The uniform suppliers have experienced some delays in supplying the Academy with blazers. We are working hard with them to receive the remaining uniforms as soon as possible and are expecting delivery of all remaining blazers during the week commencing 14th September. We apologise to those students who have yet to receive blazers.

If any parents or students wish to purchase additional items of uniform, at cost price, these are available through the Academy and enquiries should be made at reception.

Dress code– Years 12-13

The Academy is willing to make a contribution towards the costs of Year 12 and 13 business attire. Given that there is a recognised fall between student enrolments and those continuing their learning during the initial months of the academic year, the Academy is keen to avoid paying for uniforms for students who subsequently do not continue with their education, while at the same time provide an incentive for students to complete their learning.

The Academy will, therefore, reimburse students £60 towards the cost of their business attire during November, on production of appropriate receipts. It is recommended that parents/carers retain their receipts or alternatively send these to the Academy Finance Office for later

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HEAD OFFICE, EAST SITE Minster Road • Minster-on-Sea • ME12 3JQ T: 01795 873 591 E: admissions@theisleofsheppeyacademy.org.uk
WEST SITE Jefferson Road • Sheerness • ME12 2PU T: 01795 662 474

reimbursement. Where there are issues of hardship in the immediate funding of sixth form attire then parents/carers should write to the Academy explaining their circumstances.

Buildings

We have undertaken much work during the summer months on the reconfiguration and upgrading of facilities – particularly on the West Site. This is all the more remarkable given that we were unable to begin any work until the predecessor schools had closed at the end of July. As such, the upgrading of the estate's fabric (including introducing much new ICT) has been a huge task.

As we have always said, the initial months of the Academy would not be without problems. Whilst we have managed to complete much of the work on the West Site we recognise that there is more to do.

Unfortunately, certain redevelopments have been held up due to the planning process but we hope to soon be unveiling our new temporary performing arts facilities, motor vehicles maintenance, hair and beauty facility and upgrades to the construction facilities. These are all necessary if we are to meet our commitment to providing excellent Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 facilities and we will keep you in touch with progress.

Bus Passes

We have received a number of concerns over confusion with regard to the bus pass issue, arising due to the change from the previous three tier system and the eligibility rules for free bus passes operated by Kent County Council (KCC).

Where there are specific issues concerning the entitlement to a bus pass then parents/carers are advised to contact the Academy in the first instance. The Academy will then liaise with KCC to consider eligibility in the light of the rules that apply. The Academy is currently considering the recent requests made and will be writing very shortly to those parents/carers who have outlined their circumstances.

As many parents will be aware, students are able to purchase a Kent Freedom Pass which provides for unlimited use on the bus network in Kent for just £50 per year, including routes to and from school. KCC is currently processing recent requests for freedom passes. Where a parent/carer has applied for a Freedom Pass and this has yet to arrive, they should contact KCC for a date as to when this might be expected.

Lunch

If parents/carers wish their son/daughter to have a home lunch pass they are requested to write to the Academy outlining their reasons. If approval is given, parents will be asked to supply a passport sized photograph to enable a lunch pass to be provided.

The Academy has a lunch facility on site and, with 45 minutes for lunch, it is intended that we restrict students' movements off-site during the lunch break.

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We now run our own catering service on both sites. This has already allowed us to reduce prices with an increased take-up of main meals and increase in the percentage of students using their Free School Meals vouchers.

Car Parking

For the foreseeable future the Academy is requesting that parents/carers do not drive onto the premises to pick up students during the school day. The sheer volume of cars is causing a number of problems resulting in the scheduled buses having difficulty in picking up students and also running the risk of accidents with so many students leaving the Academy at the end of the day.

Unless there are sound medical reasons why a student needs to be picked up within the Academy grounds we would like parents/carers to park outside the sites. We thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Police Officer

We are pleased to announce that PC Gardner will be working with the Academy on the East Site. She has a wealth of experience of working with young people and has been a police officer for 12 years, having started her Police Service by working within the Medway Towns as a Response Officer. Prior to joining the Police Service, PC Gardner served with the British Army, in the Royal Corp of Signals.

She will work with staff and students on a whole range of social, legal and safety issues and will become involved in Family Unit time activities where she will be able to make a positive contribution to our personal development programmes. We feel that PC Gardner will help us in making the Academy a safe and secure environment for your sons and daughters. Should you wish to contact her over any matter relating to before, during or after school, please do not hesitate to do so. She is here to help and is contactable through the main school office on (01795) 873591.

With best wishes

Dr. P Mortimer (Principal), Mr D Rahman (Executive Headteacher Academy East, Mrs. J Chester, Mr J Barritt, Mr B Corbett (Headteachers Academy East) Mr A Klee (Executive Headteacher Academy West), Mr S Davies, Mr J Russell (Headteachers Academy West)

