

Our ref: AMc/SPh

11 January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

It is with a great sense of pride that I write to you as the new Principal of Outwood Academy Shafton. I am honoured to have been entrusted with the responsibility of taking the academy forward as its new leader and I am very much looking forward to the eventual opportunity to meet you all in person.

Many of you may already know me, as I started my career as an English teacher at Willowgarth High School in 1998. Some of you I will have even taught, though I refuse to accept that I am that old! I have been completely involved in the development of Shafton, right from the initial planning stages of the build to the very opening of the doors. The school holds a very special place for me and I have always felt a sense of belonging.

My recent position, up to my appointment has been the role of Vice Principal across the Central Region of the Trust. A position that has enabled me to gain a wider experience of the Trust's leadership in preparation for Headship. This role has created the opportunity for me to lead across four schools within the Trust, gaining invaluable knowledge and insight.

Returning to Outwood Academy Shafton feels like coming home. My history with the school means that I already know many of the students and care passionately for our young people and the community. This really is my dream job. I am determined that the school will continue to flourish and maintain its position at the heart of the community, ensuring our high expectations are maintained. With your support and dedication we will provide an outstanding education to help all students achieve their ambitions.

Throughout my career in education, I have been inspired by the development of effective teaching and learning within the classroom. Our main focus for improvement is the successful implementation of our 5 pillars of learning. This ongoing practice will enable our young people to become aware of how they learn and how they can retain, apply and articulate their knowledge. I hold myself to account every single day and believe in exceeding expectations. With the right level of challenge and support, I will encourage our students to thrive, becoming confident and knowledge rich learners.

I firmly believe that behaviour should be taught like any other curriculum subject. I will continue to install strong procedures and routines, having a constant visible presence around our academy.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mrs Ackroyd, whose infectious passion and dedication for the students, staff and community has enabled this academy to transform. She has inspired me throughout the last 5 years and I am very lucky to have her continued support and friendship.

The previous 9 months have been a source of great strain and uncertainty for many families up and down the country. If I reflect on my first week as Principal I believe there will be very few who have had a start quite like it. Let me take this opportunity to share with you just what an amazing first week we have had.

Our young people have immediately stepped up to engage in their online learning and we are so proud of their hard work as well as the care and understanding they have shown their teachers. High quality remote learning has been delivered from day 1. Staff have responded to the challenge and shown once again their absolute dedication and commitment. We have continued to provide provision in school for those families that absolutely require it, our priority is keeping all students, staff and the community safe.

Thank you for all your lovely comments on social media, this really does mean so much to us all. Proud students have been celebrated for their amazing work and we will continue to share these each week. I had the pleasure of launching my 'Proud Principal' Award, what an honour it is to have the opportunity to reward our students' hard work. In school we have developed a system for closely monitoring our young peoples' engagement with online learning, enabling us to intervene and support those that need it.

Improving mental health and wellbeing in our school remains at the forefront of our mind. This week we launch our 'Lockdown Legends' award, online yoga, mindfulness art and continue our engaging programme of form activities. Our care and commitment to you all continues and the context encourages us to be even more creative and innovative in our delivery. We have many more projects to launch over the next few weeks and we will keep you all informed.

I very much look forward to the time when I can open the door and welcome all students back into our academy. A school not full and bustling with children is a very lonely place. I truly can't wait to see each and every one of them.

I look forward to working with you all, continuing to forge those crucial strong partnerships between home and school. Together we will continue to build the outstanding culture of the school and the success of our community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Alison McQueen
Principal

