

Principal's Bulletin – 6 February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

This week, I am writing to ask for your input on some potential developments at the Academy. Today, we are launching a formal consultation on proposed changes to the structure of the school year from September 2026.

The consultation will run from Thursday, 6 February to Monday, 23 February, and we warmly encourage parents and carers to share their views via an online consultation form. No final decisions have been made. This consultation is a genuine opportunity for families to give feedback before any next steps are considered.

What is being proposed?

There are two linked proposals under consultation:

1. Introducing a two-week October half-term break.
2. A modest extension to the school day, finishing at 3:10pm instead of 3:00pm, in order to fully protect learning time.

The school would continue to start at 8:30am, and there would be no reduction to holidays elsewhere in the year.

Why are we considering a two-week October half term?

The autumn term is the longest and most demanding part of the school year for students and staff. Based on attendance data, wellbeing trends, and feedback, we believe a longer October break could bring a number of benefits:

1. Supporting pupil wellbeing and readiness to learn

A two-week break provides a meaningful opportunity for rest and recovery part-way through the term. This can help students return to school more focused, settled, and ready to learn, particularly younger pupils and those with additional needs.

2. Improving attendance and reducing disruption

The autumn term often sees higher levels of illness and fatigue. A longer break earlier in the year may support stronger attendance across the second half of the term and reduce requests for absence during learning time.

3. Strengthening behaviour and engagement

Schools that operate a similar model report improved engagement and classroom behaviour following the October break, as students return refreshed and re-motivated.

4. Aligning with local primary schools

Our main feeder school, Heartsease Primary Academy, already operates a two-week October half-term. Aligning our term dates helps families with children in more than one school, reduces childcare pressures, and lowers the risk of absence for older siblings.

Why is a change to the school day needed?

Introducing an additional week's holiday in October means we must ensure that all statutory learning time is fully protected.

To achieve this, the proposal includes a 10-minute extension to the school day, with the day finishing at 3:10pm instead of 3:00pm.

Key points for parents and carers:

- The start time remains 8:30am.
- The school day would run 08:30–15:10.
- Learning time is fully recovered within the normal school day.
- Breaks and lunch arrangements remain organised as they are currently.

This approach ensures that curriculum coverage is not reduced and avoids adding extra sessions, twilight teaching, or hidden workload elsewhere in the year.

Our values and ethos

As a Church of England school, we are guided by values of community, care, and wisdom. These proposals are rooted in our commitment to the wellbeing, education, and flourishing of our young people, while working in close partnership with families.

How to take part in the consultation

Parents and carers are invited to share their views via [the online consultation form](#), which will remain open until Monday, 23 February.

All responses will be carefully reviewed and shared with the Trust before any decision is taken. Thank you for taking the time to engage with this important consultation and for your continued support of Open Academy.

With best wishes

Dan Bagshaw
Principal

Netball

Congratulations to the Year 8 netball team who played in a tournament on Wednesday against Ormiston Victory winning, 10-5 and Framlingham Earl, winning 13-0. The girls played exceptionally well but a special shout out to Immy and Ayana who brought their A game with their shooting.

Well done to Year 8 team who had a 60 minute game last minute on Monday night. City Academy contacted me at 8:30am that morning and we played that evening. The girls were fantastic at getting a team ready at such late notice and finished the game with a fantastic win! A massive thank you and well done to our two Year 7s Dea and Emily who played up a year for the first time this game and it was great to see them challenging themselves further. Well done girls this is great preparation for Greshams County Cup coming up after half term. Players of the match were Catt and Ella.

A big well done to our Year 9 Netball team and Year 10 Netball Team who played exceptionally well in their 3 way matches against Thorpe, Sprowston and Framingham Earl.

Year 10 started off the term with a double win against Sprowston A+B teams and a win over a competitive Framingham Earl side. The girls prove yet again how successful team work and communication produces great results. It was also lovely for Ava L to come along with us and be our number 1 cheerleader and timer. Well done girls. Player of the match was Aaliyah for fantastic defending.

Year 9 were faced with a competitive match against Thorpe's A+B team. They played their B team first winning 10-1, then faced with a challenging A team under fatigue they fought hard and won overall. The girls then played Sprowston and won their game. Two fantastic games to watch, even with missing key

players due to illness, Year 9 show their amazing talent once again. Player of the match was Bianca who had to play out of position in GA.



Miss Trail and Mrs Pearsall
Teachers

Drama

Miss Hawthorne and I had the great pleasure of accompanying Year 10 drama students to see the incredible performance of Dear England at Norwich Theatre Royal on Thursday.

Despite few in the class having much interest in football, the remarkable story of Gareth Southgate's vision for the England side and what it means to be English, had us all gripped. From laugh out loud jokes, to quiet reflection, the performance had it all, with lots of ideas that can be used in our performance work. Student behaviour was exemplary and it is a real privilege to be able to attend these trips.

As a follow up, we are really looking forward to welcoming members of the National Theatre into the Academy on Monday, where they will be giving a talk to the whole of Year 10 about the themes raised in the play as well as a bespoke drama workshop for GCSE students.

Mrs Ormosi
Teacher

Chaplain's Reflection

Just a little encouragement for you for this week. I really hope you realise how wonderful you are.

Sometimes we can lose track of our place and value in life due to the circumstances that we may face.

The Bible talks about in the book of 1 Corinthians, that everyone belongs and all are needed:

“Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

Every one of you are an amazing part of our community body. All needed, all valued and in it for a purpose. We cannot do without you.

My prayer for you all this week is that you realise how loved and priceless you are.

God bless you all.

Mark Pimlott
Chaplain



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