

Principal's Bulletin – 27 February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you and your families had a restful and enjoyable half-term break. It has been a positive start back this week, with students returning focused and ready to learn. Thank you, as always, for your continued support in ensuring students are punctual, well-prepared and in full uniform — it makes a real difference to the tone and standards of the Academy.

Year 11 – Final PPEs Begin

Our Year 11 students have returned to begin their final PPE examinations ahead of the GCSE series in May. These examinations provide students — and staff — with the clearest diagnostic picture yet of strengths and gaps before the real exams begin. A few practical reminders to support effective revision at home:

- Plan revision in short, focused blocks, followed by a short break.
- Prioritise active revision — self-quizzing, practice questions and past papers are far more effective than simply rereading notes.
- Use retrieval practice daily — students should be testing what they remember, not what they recognise.
- Create calm, phone-free revision spaces at home wherever possible.
- Sleep, routine and attendance remain critical — performance declines quickly when students are tired or absent.

We are proud of the way Year 11 are approaching this final stretch. With discipline, routine and consistent effort, they can approach May with confidence.

Year 9 Options and Parents' Evening – Tuesday 4pm

A reminder that our Year 9 Options Evening and Parents' Evening takes place next Tuesday from 4.00pm. This is an important moment in your child's educational journey. You will have the opportunity to meet subject leaders and teachers to discuss current progress. Mr Fisher will be leading presentations throughout the evening in the lecture theatre to explore Key Stage 4 courses and explain how the options process works. Dr Davies will also be on hand to answer questions about pathways and future progression. Choosing options is a significant decision and we strongly encourage all Year 9 families to attend. Further details have been shared via email — please contact the school office if you require any additional information.

Extended October Half Term Consultation

Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute to the consultation regarding a potential two-week October half term. Headline feedback indicates:

- A clear majority of respondents were supportive of the proposal.
- Many families highlighted benefits around childcare alignment with primary settings.
- There was strong recognition of the potential impact on student wellbeing and winter illness reduction.
- A small number of concerns were raised around holiday patterns and work commitments, which we will carefully consider.

The next stage is for the full feedback to be reviewed in detail by the Senior Leadership Team and the Trust. A final decision will only be taken after this analysis and careful consideration of operational and educational implications. We will, of course, communicate the outcome clearly once that process is complete.

Thank you for engaging thoughtfully with this important strategic discussion.

Towards a Distraction-Free School

As part of our ongoing commitment to high standards and strong classroom focus, we are continuing to review how we can further reduce distractions during the school day.

One area under consideration is the way mobile phones — particularly social media use — can create anxiety, disrupt concentration and spill into lesson time. Increasingly, schools nationally are strengthening expectations in this area to ensure young people can focus fully on learning, free from digital pressures. Our aim is simple:

When students are in school, their attention should be on learning

We are exploring practical and proportionate approaches that would support this ambition. We will keep you fully informed as plans develop and ensure any changes are implemented clearly but want families to understand the direction of travel.

Thank you again for your partnership. The strength of The Open Academy lies in the alignment between school and home — high expectations, consistent routines and a shared commitment to young people's success.

With best wishes for the weekend

Dan Bagshaw
Principal

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Principal

Year 7



Well done to the Year 7 girls who played against Sprowston in their first cricket match in the U13 league. They narrowly lost but played very well against a year 8 team - Mrs Pearsall

Year 8

A reminder that the HPV vaccination session for students in Year 8, who have consented, will take place on Wednesday, 4 March. It is important for students to eat breakfast on the day and to wear a short-sleeved top.

Year 9

I would like to strongly encourage all parents and students to attend our Parents' and Options Evening on Monday, 3 March.

I apologise for the difficulties some families experienced when booking appointments on Arbor; we appreciate your patience and understanding. Please be assured that if you have not been able to book an appointment, you are very welcome to attend on the evening and speak to staff through drop-in conversations with teachers.

In addition, there will be an important options presentation taking place at 4:30pm and again at 5:30pm, and I urge both parents and students to attend one of these sessions. This evening is a vital opportunity to discuss progress, ask questions, and gain a clear understanding of the options process so that students can make informed decisions about their next steps. Your attendance and support at this stage is crucial, and we look forward to welcoming as many families as possible.

Mr Lambert
Teacher and Head of Year 9

National Careers Week

Next week in the Academy we are supporting National Careers Week. In particular, we are thinking about the future pathways open to students and the skills they need to succeed. A useful resource is our live careers newsletter which provides lots of information and guidance about planning for life beyond the Academy and can be found on the front page of the website under Careers Education.

Please take the time to explore its varied contents and share with your young person.

<https://padlet.com/carolinedavies3/open-academy-careers-newsletter-1ztsr3hkr8syd7ew>

Dr Davies
Careers Leader and Adviser

Chaplain's Reflection

I just want to encourage you this week, starting with a story from the Bible. Everywhere Jesus went, large crowds followed him. On this particular occasion, 5000 were there. After listening to what Jesus had to say, the crowd were hungry.

Faced with a huge crowd and extremely limited resources, Jesus's disciples saw only what they lacked. But Jesus focused on what was already in their hands. Five loaves and two fish. A packed lunch brought to the gathering by a child and through that small offering, something incredible happened, everyone was fed with baskets of food left over.

As we are out in the big wide world, it can be easy to notice what feels insufficient: not enough time, energy, capacity, or even patience.

Yet this story gently reminds us that what we bring to our community. Our personalities, compassion, experience, humour, and care which are more than enough to begin with.

When we offer what we have, however small it may seem, it can be multiplied in ways we may never fully see.

In our community, small acts matter enormously: a word of encouragement to a neighbour, a moment of extra patience with people we find difficult, a smile at adversity, or a quiet check-in with someone who seems unsettled or discouraged.

These are our “loaves and fish.” They may not feel dramatic, but collectively they create an environment where our community can flourish.

As we step into this next week, may we remember that we are not alone. We are part of a community body, all needed to share the load and the joy.

May we trust and be encouraged that the small, faithful things we do each day have lasting impact — often far beyond what we can measure.

God bless you all and all that you do.

Mark Pimlott
Chaplain

