

The *Open* Way

COURAGE IN EVERY STEP, FAITH IN EVERY JOURNEY

“Take courage”

MATTHEW 14:27

Friday 15 May 2026

Dear Families

It has been a week marked by quiet, everyday courage at Open Academy — courage that is not always loud or visible, but which sits at the heart of who we are and who we are becoming as a school community.

Our Fortnightly Theme: Courage

Mrs Wenlock and I have been leading assemblies this fortnight on the theme of courage, which sits at the very centre of our school vision: Courage in Every Step, Faith in Every Journey. We have asked students to consider that courage is not always the loud, dramatic act we see in films. More often, it is quiet and personal — speaking up when a friend is being treated badly, admitting when we are struggling, asking for help, or making the choice to log off and protect our own wellbeing.

Our scripture for the assembly came from *Psalms 34:18*: “*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.*” The message we shared with students is a simple but important one — you do not have to be ‘fine’ to be worthy of care, attention or strength. There is real value in vulnerability, and asking for support is itself an act of courage. This sits alongside the story of Peter stepping out of the boat in Matthew 14, which anchors our wider school vision: faith and courage are not the absence of fear, but the willingness to take the next step even when the water feels uncertain.

We also spoke to students about the everyday choices that build courage: choosing not to join in with online negativity, checking in on a friend, putting a phone away in order to sleep properly. These small acts reflect our values of Respect and Perseverance, and they make a real difference to the culture of our school.

Year 11: Courage in Action

Nowhere has this theme been more visible than in our Year 11 students, whose written GCSE examinations have begun in the hall this week. Walking through the exam hall, it is impossible not to feel enormous pride in this cohort. They have arrived prepared, focused and composed — embodying our value of Perseverance after months of hard work, revision sessions and after-school commitment.

Exam season demands a particular kind of courage: the courage to keep going when it is tiring, the courage to manage nerves, and the courage to give your very best when it matters most. Our Year 11s are doing exactly that, and they deserve every encouragement from us at home and at school. Please continue to support them with early nights, calm mornings and a kind word — and please do remind them that whatever the outcome, the effort itself is something to be proud of.

Trust Safeguarding Audit — A Very Positive Report

This week we welcomed colleagues from the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust into school to conduct our safeguarding audit. I am pleased to share that the report was a very positive one, recognising the strength of our safeguarding systems, the diligence of our pastoral and safeguarding teams, and the care with which we look after every child in our community.

What I was most proud of, however, was something the visitors raised entirely unprompted. During their observations at break and lunchtimes, they commented specifically on how mature, calm and respectful our students were around the site. This is exactly the kind of feedback that matters most — not the planned moments, but the everyday culture of the school. It reflects the consistent work students and staff are doing together to make Open a place where every child can feel safe, settled and ready to learn. It is a credit to our young people and to you as their families.

As we shared in assembly this week, safety is everyone's responsibility. We are deeply grateful to our safeguarding team, pastoral staff, tutors and teachers, but we also rely on our students to speak up when something does not feel right. The audit was a clear sign that this culture is taking hold.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the final week before May half-term, Year 11 examinations continue, and we are looking forward to the launch of our phone pouch system after the break. In the meantime, please do continue to talk with your children about the courage theme — particularly the three challenges we set them in assembly: the courage to check in on a friend, the courage to speak up when something is building up, and the courage to switch off from screens and be present in real life.

Thank you, as always, for the partnership you offer us. The progress we are making as a school is only possible because of the trust and support of our families.

Have a restful weekend.

Mr D Bagshaw
Principal

Parent Coffee Morning

It was wonderful to see so many parents and carers attend our parent coffee morning this week. The event provided a valuable opportunity for families to speak with Open Academy staff alongside a range of outside agencies, helping to strengthen the support and guidance available to our students and families.

We would like to thank everyone who attended and contributed to such a positive and welcoming atmosphere. The strong turnout highlighted the importance of working together as a community to support our young people.

Due to the success of the event, we will be hosting more parent coffee mornings in the future, so please keep an eye out for upcoming dates and details.

Mrs Halliday
Associate Assistant Principal

Online Safety

Week 1: Social Media Safety

Key message: Social media is a big part of young people's lives - understanding how it works helps keep them safe.

Focus platforms: TikTok | Snapchat | Instagram

What parents should know:

- Many apps have age restrictions (usually 13+)
- Public profiles can be viewed by strangers
- Direct messaging can allow contact from unknown people

Top tips:

- Set accounts to **private**
- Regularly review followers
- Talk about what is appropriate to share

Conversation starter:

“Can you show me how your privacy settings work?”

Mr Davis

Safeguarding Lead

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Congratulations to all the Silver DofE students who successfully completed their practice expedition last week, they worked well together in their groups and they should be very proud of how they looked after each other to complete their routes.

We are very much looking forward to taking them for the assessed expedition at the beginning of June to the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Mrs Pearsall

Teacher

City Sports

Well done to all the students who attended the City Sports Event on Thursday at the UEA. There were some very challenging weather conditions, but students conducted themselves in a very professional manner and we are proud of their efforts and achievements.

Mrs Pearsall and Mr Lambert

Teachers

Year 11

Shout out to:

Lilly Allen for great effort recently, especially in her speaking exam – Mrs McEvoy

Chaplain's Reflection

In this day and age, it is hard not to worry about things. We worry about our past, present, and future and it robs us of our strength and hope.

This poem describes it well and it is called Borrowed Tomorrow - Author Unknown

Worry is tomorrow trying to live in today.

It steals my hours and spends them early, on things that may never come due.

I try to call them back, but they return only as peace when I stop paying attention.

A bit of a challenge for you. Try to share at least one worry with someone this week, it will lift and encourage you.

It happened to me last week. I was worried about a couple of things, and I spoke to a colleague about them. They encouraged me and I left the conversation a different person feeling so much lighter. It really works and it's so powerful.

Jesus said these words to comfort us about worry.

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds.

They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

The Bible also says, “Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you.”

He is only a prayer away. God bless you all.

Mark Pimlott
Chaplain



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND