

Open Academy Update 29 January 2021
For parents and students – please do discuss the contents with your child!

Dear Parent/Carer/Student

Welcome to the newsletter this week.

The welcome news that plans for a return to schooling look just a few weeks away, with the announcement this week from the government that **the second week in March looks like a possibility for a consideration of a return to school**, it really does feel like the end of this lockdown might just be in sight.

I can only imagine some of the challenges that many of you are facing right now, so we will continue to do all we can to support your children through our online learning offer and, where required, our critical worker childcare offer. Please remember, Mark, our Chaplain, is always there for any one of us who needs support in our community - any contact with the Academy can connect you to him.

I'm delighted to report that students' engagement with their virtual schooling is better than ever before and the vast majority of our students are engaging incredibly well with our online offer. I'm also really pleased to note such positive feedback we have been getting around our online offer. I am especially pleased that your response to the online Year 8 Parents' Evening was overwhelmingly positive.

The one concern that some of you have expressed, however, is the amount of time that we are expecting our young people to spend in front of a screen. This is a concern that I share in terms of how long we were expecting staff to spend in front of their screens too.

In this issue of the newsletter, I'm therefore delighted to announce that we have started a new initiative this week which we have titled 'Open Academy DARES'.

Directed Activities Related to Everyday Situations (DARES)

We are asking all teachers to set around a quarter of lessons from now on focused on activities that are not screen-based, but rather focused on everyday situations. Practical subjects may make it a higher proportion, whereas GCSE subjects maybe slightly less. Students still need to complete the tasks set and we will aim to ensure they are still learning. However, we are keen to encourage them away from their computer screens and devices.

To promote the initiative and to get things going, we trialled this week, the idea of **ThursDARE afternoons**. This means that we are encouraging all students to engage with activities beyond their screens and devices for periods 4 and 5 every Thursday afternoon. **Their usual subject teachers will have set them tasks to carry out in the real world and we really hope they enjoy the experience.** We will review how this is going in the run up to half term and I will be pleased to receive your feedback on this initiative.

I have updated our Virtual Learning Process Summary which will be on the website shortly - a copy of which is included with this newsletter.

The Virtual Academy Single Page Behaviour Plan

Another thing some have spoken about, is managing their children to keep them on task without causing family strife. Mr Wilkinson and I have therefore taken our Academy Single Page Behaviour Plan and tweaked it for your use at home. A copy is attached to this newsletter and I hope it will provide a helpful supportive framework for people who are interested in seeing how we go about managing the students to stay on task in lessons at the Academy. There is no expectation for you to use it, but it is offered for those who might find it helpful. We have designed it so that if you can print it off, you could display it on the wall/fridge door etc. There will also be some printed copies available for collection in the Academy foyer.

That is more than enough from me this week!

Along with our usual news sections from the Year teams, Librarian and Chaplain this week, I have asked Mr Ward to clarify and share the options process for those Year 9 students and families who will be starting to turn their thoughts to their future.

I hope you are able to stay safe and keep well. Enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

Kindest regards

Jon Ford
Principal

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1. Year 9 Options

This is the time when Year 9 start to think about how they may align their curriculum towards their interests. We will proceed with this as normal. Currently, staff working with Mr Ward are finalising the Options Booklet. This will outline the GCSEs and other vocational courses that are available for students next year.

You may be aware that the government has clarified an expectation that the majority of students will follow the EBacc (between 75% and 90%). It was a key component of the Education Policy outlined in manifestos. The EBacc is a suite of qualifications including Maths, English Language and Literature, Science, History or Geography and an approved foreign language. It will, therefore, be in exceptional educational, rather than preferential circumstances, where a student does not follow this curriculum. Further detail will be outlined in the Options Booklet.

Proposed Timeline for Options :

- Options Booklet published by 12 February online via bulletin.
- *(Year 9 Exams window w/b 8 February followed by reports 26 February).
- Options Evening Briefing 12 February – online Loom assembly.
- Virtual Year 9 Parents' Evening 2 March.
- Students begin to express preferences and send them to Mr Ward. Students can discuss with their teachers.
- All students have returned their preferences by Easter.

- Students informed which of their preferences are given according to the criteria laid out in the Options Booklet. July 2021.
- The process is designed to be a long one to give students ample time to think and to change their mind before everything gets finalised.

As you can see, a clear strategic calendar was proposed. However, it will not be possible to run exams in the exam hall as normal. We are, therefore, currently discussing the best way of assessing students fairly and accurately from home and will be in touch with parents separately regarding this issue.

We did run some low stakes computer exams for Year 9 in the Autumn term in English and Maths. We were pleased to send those reports to you before the Christmas holidays in anticipation of further disruption. We will be considering very carefully, how we use that information alongside tests and tasks that we believe we can deliver fairly over the coming few weeks.

Mr Ward

2. LEARNT

Attached is a virtual version of LEARNT, our behaviour for learning tool that reminds students of how they should be engaging with their online learning. I hope you find it helpful.

Mr Wilkinson

3. Wellbeing

Around 1 in 4 people will reveal they have a mental health problem this year. The true figure of incidents will be higher. However, shame, worry and hiding problems can be as bad as the problem itself. This is particularly true of adolescents and boys even more so. Our own Cedric Anselin appeared in the EDP this week to talk about his own struggles with depression

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/cedric-anselin-norwich-city-fc-mental-health-7078456>

More and more people are showing signs of mental health issues at a time in the UK when it is more challenging to access services generally. We are desperately trying to ensure that our community is kept as safe as possible. Next week is National Youth Mental Health Week. On Thursday, it is Time to Talk day. <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/resources/create-download-materials#/~embed/resources/collection/565> and we will be continuing to support our young people through various activities.

Some of the actions that Open Academy are taking that will hopefully help are:

- We are regularly registering the students now and at the same time asking how they are – the data is shown below on a scale of 1:5.
- The pastoral telephone calls are continuing and those calling have access to that data (at individual level) and can reference it.
- We have been worried that students may have been silently stressed at their computers so we have introduced DARES to try to reduce intense screen time.
- We want to have a wellbeing afternoon for the whole Academy and so trialled ThursDares this week. It was a great success and included activities ranging from writing stories about household objects to QVC style pitches of toasters and cacti.

Session	Average
Mon am	3.41
Mon pm	3.48
Tues am	3.39
Tues pm	3.51
Wed am	3.6
Wed pm	3.54
Thurs am	3.48

Other links to support that can be accessed for families or students are:

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/asktwice>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Loads of links and ideas for wellbeing activities: <https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/coronavirus-wellbeing-activity-ideas-for-families/>

Mental Health helpline run by Norfolk NHS:

<https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/Pages/Mental-health-helpline-goes-live.aspx>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

Mrs Wicks

4. Access to Technology

If your child does not have access to a laptop or i-pad, or if they have difficulty with internet, please let us know as we may be able to help.

Mrs Appleby

5. Year 7 News

Dear Year 7

We hope that you are all well and that you have had a good week. After our Student Voice meeting, we passed on your comments to the Principal and Leadership Team and DARES was decided to counteract all the time you spend on line.

We would like to thank all members of the Student Council who came to the meeting and put forward ideas and designed a questionnaire.

For any students still struggling to get online or with any internet problems, we still have dongles and Sim cards in school that we are happy to provide to anyone who needs them. Please let Mrs Lamb or Mrs Hewitt-Coleman know.

We have disturbed all the laptops that have been received by the government, but there are still some students who aren't accessing the work online. Please can you let us know if your child doesn't have access to a laptop or a PC.

The tutor sessions have carried on this week for the whole year group Tuesday – Friday. We would like to see all students attending where possible. The sessions are fun and informative and Mrs Lamb has learnt to draw this week. Thank you Mr Walters.

Shout outs this week go to the following students:

Mrs Roberts, English to Harrison Young and Hallie Chandler for their effort, contribution in lessons and quality of work.

Mrs Clayton, English to Megan Perriton for attendance to live lessons and consistent engagement in the lessons.

Mr Bradshaw, Maths to Keeley Youngs and Warren Middleton

Miss Ling, Reading Engagement in reading: contributing lots to the lesson and sharing ideas.

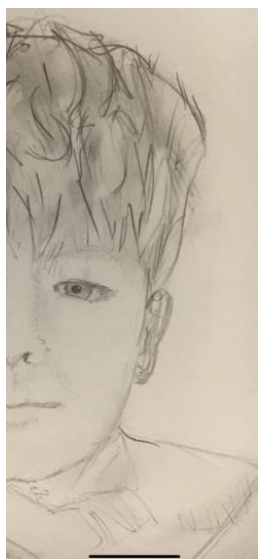
George Tozer-Smith, Steven Ellis, Lily-Mae Holmes, Roman Taylor and Larisa Marginean.

Mr Dilley to Joshua and Keeley for supporting each other and others in the live chat during a live session - really proud of them for doing that - being very supportive and doing their own work!

Here are some instruments made at home by Ella-Rose Key and Lola Blossom for Music.



Below is a half portrait completed by Zach Craske for Art.



Keep up the amazing work Year 7's – you, as always, continue to amaze us. Thank you to parents/carers for your continued support.

Mrs Hewitt- Coleman - Head of Year 7
Mrs Lamb – Assistant Head of Year 7

6. Year 8 News

We'd like to begin with a big thank you to everyone who was part of the Year 8 Parents' Evening this week. The feedback we have received so far from families has been very positive and we were glad to have the opportunity to speak directly with you about your child's progress during these difficult times.

On to shout outs for excellent work this week:

Elisha Jones – for superb engagement and attendance, from Ms Hartley
Lucy Edmondson – for fantastic work in ClassNotes in Drama, from Mr Dilley
Emily Summers and Emmy Ramabulana – for good question asking/answering in English and for excellent work completed during lesson, from Mrs Clayton
Harley Anderson, Nathan Sharp and Elisha Jones – for excellent engagement and discussion in reading classes, from Miss Ling
Keisha Smith and Lily Turner – for brilliant work in Maths, from Mr Phillips
Suzy Langley, Harisan Martin, Gemma Smith, Xylia Sparkes, Ara Rashid, Joel Walker, Scarlet Bush and Liliana Read for amazing participation in Music, from Miss Lines

Finally, to ensure that the phrase 'the pen is mightier than the laptop' stays true, we would like to run a Year 8 Handwriting Competition! The amount of work being produced on devices is astounding but using a pen cannot become a forgotten practice. Therefore, we would like to offer a £5 Amazon voucher and pride of place in February half-term's newsletter to the winner who can scribe the most beautifully handwritten version of this sonnet by William Shakespeare.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Entries should be completed using blue or black pen, photographed and sent via email to the Year 8 team by 10 February 2021. Illustrations are also welcome to accompany the sonnet!

Wishing you a wonderful weekend.

Miss Lines - Head of Year 8
Mrs Smith - Assistant Head of Year 8

7. Year 9 News

It may seem a bit early, but we are now starting to think about options for Year 10. In the next few weeks, and over the next few months, we will start preparing our Year 9s to think about what subjects they may want to study in September.

As a starting point, please ask your child to log onto Unifrog and access our fantastic 'Careers' platform **Unifrog**. The website offers students a wealth of information and guidance on future careers, courses, post 16 choices and universities. Students can set up their own profile, research their interests and save items which they want to keep for future reference. In these difficult times, when 'real life' careers events are off-limits it is a great way for students to find the motivation they need to pursue their dreams beyond the pandemic! To access Unifrog go to www.unifrog.org and sign in with your Open Academy password. Any problems, please contact Mrs Roe at rachel.roe@open-academy.org.uk.

This week, we started a new tutor programme. Every morning, each Year 9 tutor will take all Year 9's once a week. Assemblies will still be the same and students will need to join their own tutors for this every Monday morning.

The programme is as follows:

- Monday: Assembly (join your own tutor for this)
- Tuesday: Miss Luter - Healthy eating/form time ideas
- Wednesday: Mr Thurston - Newsround
- Thursday: Mrs McEvoy - Drawing activity
- Friday: Mr. Miller - Tutor Challenge

Please note that these may be subject to change.

We have introduced DARES afternoon on a Thursday and details are explained in this newsletter too. We think this will benefit everybody and if you have any photos of what you have done on a Thursday afternoon, please send them in to Mrs Roe at rachel.roe@open-academy.org.uk or 07810 515978 (please do not include any humans in your photos).



Yesterday afternoon, Mrs Roe took her dog for a longer walk through the woods. One English class were asked to go for a walk outside and then describe what they saw which is a fantastic idea. Hopefully, we can include lots of ideas, photos, writing etc in weekly newsletters.

Shout outs to the following students:

Mrs Chapman, English, to Dalia Rosca and Hannah Jordan who shared excellent spells written in iambic pentameter.

Ms Clayton to Toby Thompson, Erin O'Neill, Teyla Young and Jake Folkes for excellent group work in English.

Mr Bradshaw, Maths, to Jessica Fraser and Jude Abramson.

Mr Dilley is really impressed with Summer McCormack and Zac Duckett for their engagement and use of the live Drama lessons which has been brilliant.

Ms Marsham for excellent Expanding Brackets work in Maths.

Mrs Pearsall to Lucy Birkett for excellent asking and answering in live PE lessons.

Mr Phillips for great effort and fantastic contributions in live lessons to Jayden Muzembe and Erin O'Neill.

Mr Browne to Paige Berry for her English poetry written in her own time. Please find a couple of examples below:

A Mother's Love

*A mother's love is what a child needs,
through the child's filthy greed,
but what's there will always be,
just you wait and then you'll see.*

*fall outs and make ups are always there,
but a mother love you'll always share,
during the hard times and the good,
you'll love her as you should.*

*even though its hard sometimes,
a mother's love always shines,
can you see when you were young,
your mother's there singing you a song.*

A Father's Love

*A father's love goes far and beyond,
ever since you were young,
you may always argue and fight,
but he'll love you with all his might.*

*he'll always moan, whinge and groan,
but a father's love is always home,
when you cry, he'll be there,
to support you because he cares.*

*a father's love he'll always share,
cause a father's job is to care,
for everyone knows how hard they try,
to keep you well and alive.*

Attendance has been excellent again in live lessons this week. Students should be in the habit of attending tutor at 08.45 a.m. and checking their calendar for any live lessons. They should be following their normal

school timetable during the day and this will include some live lessons and some work set in Class Notebook. Homework is still being issued in Teams Assignments. Here is a guide to Student Notebook if your child needs it. Knowledge Organisers are also on the school website.



Student
guide_Class notebo

As always, please let us know any feedback, ideas or queries that we can help with. Have a lovely weekend and stay safe everyone.

Mr Lambert, Head of Year 9
Mrs Roe, Assistant Head of Year 9

8. Year 10 News

Hello Year 10! Another really great week of remote learning for Year 10 and it saw some even taking a remote exam – really well done to all those students who are working hard. We will have awesome weeks and we will have weeks that are less successful, but I'm so proud of the attitude of the students when they face both those types of weeks. Keep going, you are doing so well.

Tutor time will be changing a little from next week, so I wanted to let you know that the students' invitations will be coming from a different place some days. On a Monday, they will receive their calendar invitation from their Tutor Team and the other four days, the invitation will come from the Year 10 Team. This is still tutor time, it's just the invitation is being sent from a different Team. It is so important that students are attending their tutor time where possible as this sets them up for their day of learning.

We have some more amazing shout outs this week:

Charlie Thompson and Aston Norton for excellent engagement in their English lessons.

Excellent consistent engagement in D&T from Gabe Morgan, Oskar, Amelie Treacy and Jessica Ramm Mackenzie Culley- outstanding effort in Art.

Estela Gudzikaitė, Kasey Richards and Sugar Chapman for being absolute stars in Maths!

Katie Lambert-Sharpe for engagement and effort in English

A big shout out to our Year 10 Student Council who met this week to discuss areas to be included in a student questionnaire. Thank you for your participation in trying to make your school as good as it can be: Jess Ramm, Joseph Sizer, Adam Edmondson, Ella Ash, Hayden Warrior and Kaloyan Aleksiev.

Mrs Clayton – Head of Year 10
Mrs Roberts – Assistant Head of Year 10

9. Year 11 News

So, we have made it through another week and unfortunately have a few more to go.

We are still waiting for information about what evidence we will need to provide for Centre Assessed Grades (CAG's) so it is absolutely essential that your child is following their timetable, attending live lessons and completing the work set by teachers. We may have to use PPE 2 as evidence of internal assessments and therefore students must keep learning.

If your child doesn't have their timetable, is struggling with technology, mental health, or if you have any other concerns, please let myself or Mrs Middleton know. There are many options of support available that we can discuss with you.

Last Friday, I met with the Open Voice students, representatives from each form, in order to get their views on what was working and what we would do to improve the home schooling systems. It was very interesting to hear their perspective and experiences and this has been fed back to Mr Wilkinson who will

now meet with Mr Ford to discuss the students' ideas. We are always looking to improve our ways of working.

I know I mentioned this last week, but routine is a key element to maintaining and improving mental health. Please support your child in going to bed at a reasonable time (without a screen) so that they can start their school day at 08.40 with tutor time. We appreciate that home learning can involve a lot of screen time and as a staff, we are working on ways to try and improve this.

Mrs Pearsall - Head of Year 11
Mrs Middleton - Assistant Head of Year 11

10. Sixth Form News

Happy Friday everyone!

I hope you've all had a productive and purposeful week and the online learning is starting to feel slightly more 'normal'. This new routine is not the norm, so this week, I would like you to start thinking about some questions. How can you make sure you manage your time well, get all your work done, contribute to lessons and make progress?

As basic as it seems, one good way to make sure you have a productive day is to write yourself a list. I LOVE a list and really find that it helps me to plan my day and manage my workload effectively. This could be as simple as what work you need to complete today to make sure you have some focus. You could also add to this any specific goals you have. Do you want to submit all work in on time? Do you want to arrive on time to all lessons? Do you want to contribute more in live lessons? You might want to complete any additional essays/exam papers. Once you tick off these points, you will feel like you've achieved them and instantly feel more positive about your day. Why not try it?!

Registration:

You will have noticed that Mrs Ganson emails all students daily asking that they complete a registration form - once in the morning, and once in the afternoon. **It is absolutely ESSENTIAL that you are completing these twice every day.** This registration, along with attendance to your live lessons and return of assignments on TEAMS tasks, all go towards evidence that you are engaging with your learning. This may then be a contributing factor that we take into account when predicting your CAGS. As such, **PLEASE** can all students ensure that this is being completed every day.

UCAS:

Next, a huge well done (and we can all take a huge sigh of relief now!) as all the UCAS applications have now been approved and sent off. Well done Year 13. You have persevered and worked really hard to complete these. Now, we wait for the replies to start coming in!

Shout outs:

Computer Science – Lewis, Ellie and Cody. Super work on 'Compression Theory'

Computer Science – Tyler for his mastery of set theory.

IT – Solomon, amazing website created on Sols Subs.

HSC - I would like a shout out to all the HSC group. The work they are producing is outstanding.

Biology – Elliot Walpole for working so hard all of the time.

Biology – Kawski for being on time to every single lesson.

This week Harry turned 18! Hope your lockdown birthday was awesome Harry (that cake is definitely rivalling ((by rivalling I CLEARLY mean it is waaaaay better than)) mine!)



The Great OA6 Bake Off:

This week, my greatest achievement, (apart from teaching all of our lovely students) was baking and decorating my daughter's birthday cake. We share a birthday so really this was kind of my birthday cake as well....pink and smarties....what is there not to love 😊? Anyone who knows me, knows that baking is NOT my forte. So this was quite the achievement for me!



Mental Health Wellbeing

This week, we started our ThursDARES which are designed to get students away from the laptop and doing something that will improve their mental health and wellbeing. This week, Mrs Wicks tried some yoga and really enjoyed it. Have you tried anything new? Please let us know!

Finally, if you haven't seen this already, please have a read of our own wonderful Cedric Anselin's EDP article about mental health. We are proud of you Cedric!

<https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/cedric-anselin-norwich-city-fc-mental-health-7078456>

Let me finish off by giving all of our Sixth Formers (and the amazing Sixth Form staff team) a MASSIVE big up. You may not realise it, and you may get bored of me saying it, but you guys have achieved some amazing things in the weirdest year of all of our lives. Your constant positivity, eagerness to do well, and

engagement with your lessons is such a huge achievement. Keep going guys. You are doing great things 😊

Mrs Molloy
Head of Sixth Form

11. SRB News

A shout out this week for:

Jayden Alden (SRB7) for an improved attitude to his learning this week.

Roman Taylor (SRB7) for amazing engagement with his online lessons.

Leo Williams (SRB8) for engagement with Maths work.

Nathan Freeman (SRB9) for his efforts completing a Shakespeare fact file.

Mrs O'Kelly

12. Library News & Updates

Reading Resources for Remote Learning

We have compiled several resources to keep students reading at home. Please see the attached document 'Reading During Remote Learning' for more information and explore the various links with your child.

We have also attached a document with ideas about how parents and carers can support children with reading at home. If you would like any individual support, recommendations or advice regarding reading, please contact me and I will be happy to help.

Staff Read-a-Long

We are currently reading The Railway Children by E Nesbit as part of our staff read-a-long. Each day, a new chapter is released, read by a different member of staff from the Academy. A playlist of all the current chapters can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/3sU7Wpk>

NB. The Railway Children was published in 1906 and reflects the attitudes and language of the time. Certain passages do not reflect the modern values of mutual respect and tolerance that we uphold in the Academy and may cause offence to some listeners. That being said, books can be a great gateway for discussion. If you listen to the story as a family, you could use this as an opportunity to start a discussion with your child around issues of prejudice and racism.

Miss Ling
Librarian

13. Career News

- Here is next week's schedule for 'Speakers for Schools'. Please take the time to have a look at some of the inspirational talks on offer, suitable for both adults and young people. Topics this week are careers in Journalism, Finance and Nursing. Also there is an inspirational talk on 'How to Motivate yourself during the Pandemic'.
<https://www.speakersforschools.org/inspiration/vtalks/upcoming-vtalks/>
- For those of you who may have missed our Sector of the Month for January, the focus is on Agriculture, Food and Drink. In the past, many of our students have shown an interest in farming and other outdoor careers when pursuing their work experience placements so this is an important area for possible future employment. An excellent overview of this sector (which is key to our local economy) is available at <https://www.icanbea.org.uk/app/explore/industries/agriculture-food-drink-6/>
- More specifically, the following Youtube videos give an excellent insight into the opportunities which students interested in studying Biology might consider. Please share with all budding scientists! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysVUUmNDOC0>

Careers in Agriculture - Science

Does a job using science that is interesting, useful and with lots of career potential interest you? Hear these three young agri-professionals explain their work applying science to agriculture. Hazel, Alistair and Suzannah chose different routes to their jobs and now all love what they do. Join them in their daily work. You get advice on how ...

www.youtube.com

<https://agribriefing-2.foleon.com/this-is-ag/booklet/your-personality-job-match/>

Ms Davies

14. Apprenticeships

If you have a student considering next steps, they might be considering an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship involves working 80% of the time, whilst studying 20% of the time, so your student gains qualifications whilst earning a wage as an employee.

There are different levels of apprenticeship – from an intermediate apprenticeship at level 2, where your student would gain the equivalent of a GCSE, up to higher and degree apprenticeships. Your student can complete a higher or degree apprenticeship after sixth form as an alternate way of gaining a degree. They would combine studying with on the job training.

If you or your student would like to find out more, National Apprenticeship Week begins on 8 February 2021, so there is lots of information available online. There are websites which will give further information and show apprenticeship vacancies.

There is also support available within school, or I can be contacted through Ms Davies if you or your student would like to find out more.

Lucy Reynolds-McKay
Higher Education Champion, neaco

15. Leaders Printing Services

Attached is a leaflet from Leaders Printers who are offering a printing service for those students who do not have access to a printer.

16. Attendance

I hope you are all keeping well. Please remember you can continue to use the student.absence@open-academy.org.uk email to inform us of any illness of your son/daughter during this lockdown, or if they are self-isolating. Many thanks.

Mrs Ganson
Attendance Officer

17. Chaplain's Reflection

This Week's Reflection

<https://youtu.be/mcYpjp6mxhY>

I hope you are all doing well during these challenging times. This week, I want to talk about light. Light is so important to our lives and it may seem strange to say this but without light, we can't see where we are going.

We know what it's like when we enter a dark room, we can stumble, trip over stuff, walk into walls and be groping around to find the light switch. When we find it, we flick the switch, the light then comes on. Suddenly, we can see clearly and see things for what they are. This pandemic can be the same in our lives. The darkness of it can cause us to stumble, lose direction and it seems like we are always coming up against a brick wall.

When I was younger, I remember our house being full of family at Christmas time and because of this, I was relegated to a mattress on the floor in my mum and dad's room. Before going to bed, I had just been watching the Wizard of Oz and was pretty freaked out by the witch in it. Anyway, I fell asleep and woke up in the middle of the night to see the wicked witch right in front of my bed. I spent hours in total fear until dawn came. As the light began to come through the curtains, I began to see things as they really were. Basically, what had happened was, that when mum had come to bed, she had hung her dressing gown up on a Hoover. In the darkness, to me, it was the wicked witch of the west, but in the light, it was something completely different. All those hours of fear over a dressing gown hung up on a Hoover. Darkness can have a real effect on our lives.

With that story, I want to encourage you. Don't look at things through the darkness of this pandemic where everything is confusing, fearful and bleak. Look at everything through light and hope and your way and what you see will be clear. Hope is Light and light pushes away fear and makes us see clearly.

In closing today, the Bible portrays Jesus as being the light of the world. God says to us through the Bible that his words of encouragement are a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. He can switch the light on in our lives and is only a prayer away.

Have a wonderful week, you are all in my thoughts and prayers.

God bless you

Mark Pimlott
Chaplain