

Open Academy Newsletter – 2 May 2025

Principal's Introduction

Dear parents, carers and students.

Welcome to this week's newsletter.

You will have seen from the communication from the trust last week that I do not have that many more newsletters to write, given that I will be retiring shortly! I know some of you will already know that I started to reduce my hours last year in preparation for retirement, so it will not be that much of a surprise that my time is up.

I hope, therefore that you will forgive me this week for sharing some reflections on my career of 31 years and its relation to my time at Open.

Back in 1994 as I started in the classroom the internet was barely operational – the BBC launching its first website in 1994! I remember the internet became accessible through 'freeware discs' via modems that made bizarre noises for 30 seconds before connecting. Desktop computers were just becoming accessible and for some reason almost all were named after various fruits – I know I had an Apricot XEN+ and school had an Apples, Acorns and Tangerines! I remember acquiring some older PCs from a local business and trying to persuade the governors to find the money to buy 6 copies of Microsoft Encarta – a digital encyclopaedia which had videos and animations of science topics (I am a science teacher by training) and dreamt one day of having a computer for every student in a class. Oh my word, how things have changed...

I am pretty sure I could have asked Chat GPT to write a reflection on a 31-year teaching career and it would make a far better job than this. Nowadays, instead of trying to put a computer on every desk, we are more concerned with limiting the use of the students' own mobile devices to prevent the myriad ways that the online world can distract, harm or affect them negatively. The computing world has become far more all-consuming than I would ever have thought as a new teacher and, as I retire, now an educational fossil, it is interesting to see that we are nowhere near knowing yet how to mine the online world for all the amazing good it can do, what it can share, teach and inspire whilst ensuring that our young people understand the risks and dangers that a largely unregulated 'wild west world' the internet can be.

What has become apparent more recently thanks to the pandemic, however, is that the basic functions of a school are way beyond just the acquisition of knowledge through the internet. Online learning was no match for bringing people together – children and adults learning how we get along, how we interact, how we create, communicate and relate with one another. Real people, in the real world, solving real problems.

Throughout my career, it has been these interactions, relationships and community that have inspired, encouraged and challenged me to keep going and whilst in the people business, we will never be perfect, I am blessed to say that I enjoy spending time in the Academy today more than ever before. With so many fantastic students, amazing teachers, support staff and brilliant leaders at Open coming together with a shared purpose. I am very hopeful for the future and I wish my successor, Mr Bagshaw and our whole community all the very best for the next phase of Open's journey. I will pause that reflection for this week – more will follow! So please do enjoy the rest of this week's newsletter.

Finally, to continue the discussion started by Miss Wenlock our Vice Principal regarding AI, I did indeed ask ChatGPT to write my farewell message – it is included at the very end of this newsletter in case it is of interest. What do you think? I think I know it's time I retired!

Jon Ford
Principal

1. Exams

The exam season is in full swing. To help, I have attached an exam calendar to this bulletin. You can also see if your child has been entered into these exams by using the Arbor app. If you have any questions, please contact your year teams.

Exam Hall Guidelines for Year 11 and Year 13 Students

We kindly ask all parents to remind their Year 11 and Year 13 children of the following rules for entering and being in the exam hall:

- Students must wear the full uniform upon entry to the exam hall. Students are not permitted to wear coats in the exam hall.
- Any badges on jumpers or blazers must be removed.
- Phones, headphones, or watches should not be on or in pockets.
- Water bottles must be standard mineral water bottles (for example, those available from the canteen) with no labels on them.
- Unless they have a toilet pass, students are not allowed to leave the exam hall for a toilet break.
- Students should arrive on time; the latest arrival time for morning exams is 8.50am and for afternoon exams, it is 12.55pm. If students are unable to attend an exam, please let us know as soon as possible, but unless it's a serious medical situation, we strongly advise all students to attend.

Thank you.

Mr Fisher (Assistant Principal)

2. Duke of Edinburgh



Congratulations to the Silver DofE students who completed their volunteering by collecting rubbish from Hunstanton beach. We also visited the Sealife Centre to discover more about how pollution effects our environment.

As we were leaving a member of the public stopped and complimented the students on their behaviour and how polite they were.

Mrs Pearsall (Teacher)

3. PE

City sports is on Thursday, please make sure, if your child has brought home a letter, it is signed and returned to the PE department.

Now the weather is warmer, please make sure students, who are doing PE, have applied suncream and have a bottle of water to bring out to lessons.

PE Department

4. Year 7

One and a half done in this very short half term. We now have just 3 more weeks till our next break. The weather is heating up and the sun is out, it almost feels like summer.

The year group are continuing to be fantastic, with lots of great learning going on around the academy. Also, with the change to the start of the day with students lining up outside it is very clear how prepared they are for the start of the day compared to other students.

Teacher praise:

- Harriet F for her outstandingly amazing castle cake.
- William P for his exceptional Minecraft castle and explanatory power-point.
- Julian K for his detailed and well-developed explanation of the features of his castle.
- Orlagh H for getting stuck in for music.
- Well done for remembering the maths methods to use during starter question review time for India H, Nabeel AH, Catteleya A and Nagam A.
- Well done to Mikolaj who has given excellent verbal contributions this week on 'Animal Farm' and its allegory; the Russian Revolution - Mrs Napthen
- Some fantastic castle homeworks:



Reminders:

- Do not forget about Year 7 camp. Around 80 students out of 110 have currently signed up for this exciting opportunity. If you are still undecided and want to know more please get in contact with either the Year Team or Mrs Halliday who is organising it.
- Every Wednesday from 3.00pm we have a homework club in a computer room to help those complete any outstanding homework.

It is only with your help that each student will make the most of their time at Open. Thank you for your continued support of the learning of your son/daughter, it shows itself every day.

Mr Pickup (Head of Year 7)

Mrs Smith (Assistant Head of Year 7)

5. Year 8

It was lovely to see so many of you at parents' evening on Tuesday and see so much praise given to students from all subjects, I hope you all got the answer you needed and left happy knowing your child is in great hands at the academy. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Mrs Hindry or me.

It's been a very warm week this week in the academy and Year 8 has worked very hard throughout, despite the high temperature. We all have a reward of a bank holiday weekend hoping the warm weather continues.

Paying for food in the canteen has now switched to Arbor, so please make sure you have downloaded the app, again any queries please get in touch.

A big thank you to Mrs Hindry who I hope you had time to speak to on Tuesday. She has settled amazingly into her role as assistant head of year. Speaking on settling in, Respect tutor is now in the capable hands of Mr Corfield, I have had a lot of positive praise from his tutees, and we are all very happy with him joining the Year 8 team.

I am very excited for next Thursday as its city sports at UEA, all Year 8 have been given their letters which need returning to the PE department signed by parents/careers.

Now the weather is hot please make sure the days students are doing PE they have applied suncream and have a bottle of water to bring out to lessons.

We have been pushing equipment this week with extra checks in tutor. It seems most have a pen, but not the other essential equipment (pencil, rubber, ruler and book) please speak to you child to see what they need.

Congratulations to Destiny for the best attendance and Respect for winning the tutor challenge.

Teacher praise:

- My whole tutor for being so welcoming - Mr Corfield (Respect)
- Charlie SI for a positive behaviour - Mr Corfield
- Well done Phoebe B, Esme T, Edward, Jess H, Ellie Mae, Rose, Roxy, Sabine, Ayo, Amalie, Lilly H, Hattie, Bianca, Ben, Harrison B and Harrison P, Johnson, Jessica, Lilly-may B for doing a great job with the red folders. On more Ky V, he is doing so well.
- Jack C praise too please and Evie A, brilliant work from her - Miss Blackburn
- All of those in 8H who were present in drama on Wednesday were a pleasure to teach. Well done – Mrs Ormosi
- Year 8 have been a blessing to work with this week in English with their respect and attitude to learning setting a great example. Phoebe has been working hard on ambitious vocabulary when using dialogue. Ashanti demonstrates key communication skills and good focus in independent work. – Mrs Chester

Mr Lambert (Head of Year 8)

Mrs Hindry (Assistant Head of Year 8)

6. Year 9

Our first week back and I am delighted to say Year 9 continue their tradition of excellent attendance. It sits at well over 91% this week, which shows commitment from the vast majority of our students to their learning. This will definitely pay off in the long term and we have shared evidence of how good attendance impacts on outcomes and even potential income in the future.

A group of Year 9 students visited the UEA as part of their outreach programme, to encourage students into higher education. They designed a university from scratch and then presented this to the rest of the group, so it was very useful for developing confidence. The students represented the school brilliantly and they will have some feedback from their visit on the 7th May.



As the weather warms up it is important that students bring water in a bottle to school. Uniform is largely good, but please can I remind you that, if you are having problems with an item of uniform, you let the year team know. This allows us to avoid possible sanctions for students if there is a problem. Being in correct uniform is part of being **Ready** for school, which is one of our 3 expectations, so we take it very seriously.

Can I encourage you to download the Arbor app as it will allow you to easily keep track of your child's progress in school.

The top achievers this week are:

Corbyn, Freya, Leo, Jasmin and Angel G.

Teacher praise:

- 9O where brilliant today in their first music lesson. Also, Hannah Kubiesa – Mr Corfield
- Well done to Destiny O for consistent effort, hard-work and engagement in lessons - Mrs Napthen
- Ava shows enthusiasm and commitment to her work in English. Isaac shares thoughtful ideas about characters and themes – Miss Chester
- Katie C, Hollie G and Ruby P for brilliant work during their chromatography required practical – Mr Stephen
- Jasmin, Amy, Sav, Arda and Ben for effort in German – Mrs Blackburn
- Brilliant effort in their art assessments from all in 9E and 9H especially Talula E – Mr Walters

Mr Walters (Head of Year 9)

Mr Hawkins (Assistant Head of Year 9)

7. Year 10

Students of the week:

AJ B, Hayden T, Alfie E and Harry S.

Students with highest achievement points this week:

Zena A, Lily A, Natacha F, Kiera P, Somaya R, Annalee R, Kate S, Hannah S, Esme W, Elise W and Paige W.

Students with the highest achievement points this term:

Natacha F, Annalee R, AJ B, Rusne B, Oliver N, Nikita S, Eliza S, Luke S, Brandon S, Alfie S, Ayo T and Laeh S.

The UEA Pathways trip on Wednesday, 30 April was attended by 15 Year 10 Students. UEA were impressed with their positive attitude and conduct throughout the day. They all asked positive questions and took a keen interest into all the tasks.

Student account: During the day we had a campus tour, explored the university accommodation, where the kitchen and ensuite rooms were much bigger than I thought. I enjoyed the mini mock UCAS fair, where I got to ask questions and gather information regarding a range of subjects.

Mrs Power (Head of Year 10)

Mrs Edwards (Assistant Head of Year 10)

8. Year 11

Another Friday and another newsletter. Your time in Year 11 is coming to an end and in these last weeks, days, hours and minutes it is vital to use the time left to do all you can to make sure that when it comes to August, and you open those results, that you get what you deserve. That is up to you now!

Coming up next week... health and social care and art.

Please see me or Mrs Lamb in GO5 if you have any issues - we are here to support you. Enjoy your weekends and keep up with that revision!

Teacher praise:

- A big well done to Shevaun, Lola and Madalyn for consistently attending English Hub, keep up the hard work - Mrs Napthen
- Consistently strong effort from Rebecca, Amy, Lily Anna, Chelsea, Kayne and Ivan - Mr Walters
- Ty, Zak, Oskar, Max, Emilis, Kian, Shevaun, Bubacarr, Naz, Rio and Sardar. Well done for the excellent effort with closing gaps in learning, by practicing questions related to different topics in maths. You are gaining confidence in key areas - Mrs Marsham
- The Year 11 Music group are just amazing and working so hard especially Madison - Mr Corfield
- Troy has made continued positive contributions in English to build strong written responses. Sardar made an insightful written observation of characters - Mrs Chester
- Year 11 drama students are the best - 100% of the class have managed to complete their coursework before the May 5th deadline, meaning that all of them have now completed the course. Woo Hoo. Well done guys - Mrs Ormosi

- Can you please praise Joshua and Zoe for their brave effort and resilience in their German speaking exam - Mrs McEvoy
- Chelsea, Katy, Kyran, Alex, David, Madalyne, Luke and Leah for taking the time to revise for their German speaking - Mrs Blackburn

We have extended the opening of the leavers' hoodies shop, due to a couple of last-minute requests, but Sunday, 4 May is the last day to place an order. Any problems please email me - ruth.pearsall@open-academy.org.uk

If you wish to know about your child academically, please contact the year team or your child's teachers, and we would be happy to discuss your child's progress! It is only with your help that each student will make the most of their time at Open. Thank you so much for your support, it really makes a difference, and we are so grateful for it.

Mr Dilley (Head of Year 11)
Mrs Lamb (Assistant Head of Year 11)

9. Chaplain's Thought for the Week

One of my favourite stories from the Bible is when the disciples were out in their fishing boat when a storm arose. It goes like this:

The disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen and they were fighting heavy waves. About three o'clock in the morning, Jesus came towards them walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!", but Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here".

Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water", Jesus said to him "Yes, come".

So, Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water towards Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped.

We have a choice today what we focus on. The negative or the positive. We see it here as the story unfolds, the moment that Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focussed on the storm around him, he began to sink.

There may be lots of negatives we can have in our lives and it can range from one extreme to the other. If we focus on them too much, we can feel like we are sinking.

I want to encourage you today to focus on what is good in this world today, because there is plenty of it to enable us to be lifted.

In closing, please let these words of Jesus echo in our minds and hearts:

"Do not be afraid, take courage I am here". He is faithful, His hand is in reach and is only a prayer away."

Soul Church Hub

Please let your child know that Soul Church is open every Wednesday between 3.30pm and 6pm for midweek hangout time. There will be games and other activities taking place. A poster for info is below.



God bless.

Mark

Principal's Additional Note

As a matter of interest, this is what ChatGPT would have written...

Farewell Message from the Headteacher

Dear Students, Parents, Staff and Friends of [School Name],

As I prepare to retire at the end of this term, I find myself reflecting on a journey that began 31 years ago when I walked into my first classroom as a newly qualified science teacher. I could never have imagined then that I would one day have the privilege of leading a school filled with such energy, ambition, and heart.

Teaching has always been more than a job to me — it's been a vocation, a passion, and a source of endless joy. Over the years, I've witnessed thousands of students take their first steps into secondary school, find their voices, discover talents they never knew they had, and grow into confident young adults ready to face the world. It has been a privilege to be a small part of so many stories.

Becoming Headteacher of [School Name] was the greatest honour of my career. It's a role that has challenged and inspired me every day. Whether celebrating academic success, cheering on a school production, or simply chatting with students in the corridor, I've been reminded daily of the importance of education in shaping lives and building futures.

Of course, schools are about people — and I've been fortunate to work with an incredible team of staff whose dedication, creativity and resilience never cease to amaze me. To our parents and carers, thank you for your unwavering support and trust. And to the students — past and present — thank you for making every day worthwhile. You have taught me as much as I have ever taught you.

As I look ahead to new adventures (and, hopefully, some time in the garden and with my grandchildren!), I leave with immense pride in all that we've achieved together. [School Name] is in excellent hands, and I know the future is bright.

With heartfelt thanks and best wishes,

[Full Name] Headteacher

<https://www.open-academy.org.uk/our-academy/news/newsletters/>

Free Family Fun Day

**Why you'll love it?
Everything is free!**

Hot dogs

Crafts

Art

Music

Tombola

Sports

Inclusive activities

Emergency vehicles

And loads and loads more!

**Support, advice and info will
also be available**

Wednesday 28th May 10am - 2pm

Open Academy

Salhouse Road, Norwich NR7 9DL

**JUST TURN UP ON THE DAY
AND HAVE FUN!**