



DARWEN VALE HIGH SCHOOL

An Aldridge Community Academy 

11 February 2022

Dear parent/carers,

As we approach the February half term break I write to share some of the Vale successes from this half term and remind parents and students of our expectations for next term.

We have enjoyed some fantastic sporting successes since Christmas with our emerging girl's netball teams starting to really develop under the leadership of Miss Stanley and our parent Governor Katie Parker. Boys football – particularly the highly talented year 10 team have also been crushing all opposition. We hosted the year 5 and 6 Primary athletics and our partner primary schools were truly grateful for the use of our amazing facilities and the leadership and organisational skills of our PE staff and Key Stage 4 PE students.

We hosted Jake Berry in term 1 and our school council were able to grill him on topics ranging from traffic calming measures on the A666 to the state of secondary education. A great opportunity for our young people to learn about the democratic process. It seemed only fair that we should get a view from the other side of the floor. So, we were delighted to welcome Bridgett Phillipson (Shadow Education secretary) to Vale in January to meet the council and find out all about the careers work being done at Vale in conjunction with Herbert Parkinson. Ms Phillipson said....

“It was wonderful to visit Darwen Vale High School to hear pupils’ ideas on improving the education system and supporting children’s wellbeing.

It was also great to answer pupils’ questions about my work as an MP, and to hear their interest in the career opportunities available to them.

Labour wants every child to leave education ready for work and ready for life, and the students of Darwen Vale have given us lots of ideas on how to achieve that”

I also wish to communicate a number of changes we are making to our in-school routines and reiterate some of our expectations. The reason for this is to ensure that you are fully apprised of the rationale for these changes should your child discuss them with you, and to ensure that you can plan for them.

Morning routines: we cannot allow students into the school building before 8.45am (Unless in breakfast club) as we do not have the staff capacity to supervise. We do operate a free breakfast club – open to all from 8:15am – 8:40am – that is currently attended by around 100 students. At 8.40am these students have to leave the building and line up in the appropriate year group zones with all other students. Morning line ups are proven to support a strong student culture. Please ensure that your child has an appropriate coat or umbrella if the weather is inclement as we do not have the staff capacity to allow students into the building before 8.45am unsupervised. Any students who do take up the offer of a free breakfast need to remain in the canteen only, they are not allowed in any other are of school at this time.

Breaks and lunches: we have revised our queuing system with the aim of reducing congestion at key points within the canteen. More importantly for parents to know is that a one-way system is now in operation and zoning within our dining areas. Any student wishing to buy and eat food from our school restaurant is expected to queue and eat in the canteen. They are expected to remain in the canteen, or if they wish to, exit through the pupil entrance into the peace garden to get to the amphitheatre, 3G pitch or MUGA. They will not be able to move freely between the heart steps and boulevard area and school canteen. The movement between these areas caused too much congestion. Students bringing a packed lunch will be expected to eat on the heart steps or in the boulevard. This area will also be for students buying sandwiches.

Darwen Vale High School, Blackburn Road, Darwen, BB3 0AL | Tel: 01254 223000 |

Darwen Vale High School is a member of the Aldridge Education family of schools.

Aldridge Education is registered in England & Wales number 05670663

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At the end of lunch students will exit the dining areas upwards to floor one using both stairwells along the heart steps. This is usually a one-way system but for that period after lunch students will be expected to go up both sets of these stairs. Students needing to come downstairs after lunch will use the two stairwells at either side of the building

Finally, at the end of lunch student will be dismissed table by table by a member of senior staff. This will restrict movement and ensure that all tables can be checked for litter at the ends of breaks and lunches.

After half term we will be introducing a refinement to our protocols for the end of the school day. Students will be dismissed class by class by subject leads and heads of Year. This will be to ensure a calm and safe and congestion free exit from the building.

We delivered assemblies in our final week on the importance of student culture and our expectations. Can I thank parents in advance for your support in these matters. All students will be expected to be in full uniform with school shoes at all times. Students may be sent home if they are not. Piercings are restricted to one stud in each ear – nose piercings or any others are not allowed so please do not allow your child to have these done during the half term. They will not be allowed in school with them. Our expectations extend to fake lashes, nails and make up. Again, please do not allow your child to have these as they will not be allowed in school. Any students who need to use the toilets during lesson time will need a toilet pass and medical evidence will need to be provided. Energy drinks and family sized packs of crisps and sweets are banned and will be confiscated. Mobile phones and earpods are banned in school and will be confiscated.

May I also take the time to discuss with you the importance of good attendance and its impact on sustained high academic success. There are proven links between having attendance above 95% and achieving target grades, each 5% drop below 95% can result in dropping one grade below their target grade. We fully appreciate the impact COVID may have had on your child's attendance, however as the pandemic subsides we expect every effort will be made in ensuring students attend school. Over the past year we have issued approximately 100 fixed penalty notices for persistent absence resulting in £60 fines, of this number 30 were unpaid which leading to prosecution with 100% success rate.

We do appreciate that children do fall ill during term time and I would like to remind you of the importance of reporting that absence. Should you need to report an absence you should phone the school before 8:45am and leave a message with the reason for absence. This will be classed as an authorised absence. Should your child fall below 90% all absences regardless of notification will be classed as persistent and no longer authorised. I encourage you to look at the attendance section of our school website which contains recommended days absent for common illnesses supplied by the NHS.

Furthermore, please support and emphasise the importance of good timekeeping. Students who arrive late after 9.15am will be marked unauthorised. 10 unauthorised absences in a half term will result in parents receiving a fixed penalty notice. All students who are late will have detention that same day.

May I wish you a restful half term break.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Little
Principal

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