



DARWEN VALE HIGH SCHOOL

An Aldridge Community Academy 

October 2021

Dear parents and all members of the Vale community,

I am writing to you as the mid-point for our first term approaches. It feels amazing to be back to some sense of normality. We have seen students return to a more traditional form of education, free from bubbles, face masks and separate entrances, exits and social times. We did see a small increase in Covid rates but swiftly introduced a range of measures including enhanced cleaning, increased communication and ventilation and our rates have subsequently dropped sharply, a pleasing validation of the measures we have taken.

Our new school day is working well. Credit must go to our catering team and staff whose efforts have meant that a move to a thirty-minute lunch period has been very simple and has resulted in even better standards of student conduct supported by line ups prior to re-entry to the building.

Period 6 is now established as a mandatory part of the school day on student timetables. This is providing our Key stage 4 students with an additional 135 minutes of learning in the Core subjects and their options each week. The commitment of our students to achieve is admirable and another established facet of life at Vale is our Saturday provision. We have 4 academic mentors who provide tuition in maths, English and science every Saturday with over 50 students on average taking advantage of an offer not many state school students are given. Small group and one to one tuition is very costly and is provided for students in all year groups across the week and for key stage 4 on weekends. Support for our Key stage 4 students was evident at our fantastically attended progress evening for year 11. Parents packed into Vale to hear a presentation on how best to support students in their final year, speak to subject teachers and purchase revision materials and study guides.

The success that vale has seen in its examination results is no doubt one of the reasons for our surging popularity. Just 4 years ago there were 740 students at vale and now that number sits at not far short of 1000. If this year open evening is anything to go by our numbers will take another sharp rise in 2022. Over 400 families visited the school on 21st September for our first live open evening since 2019. It was a spectacular evening and the feedback I have received from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Due to the sheer weight of numbers I have had to run tours for additional parents on the last two consecutive Saturdays and a number of parents took me up on my offer to show anyone around Vale at any time during the school day.

I have no concerns showing parents around during the school day; culture is strong at Vale and our students are our greatest asset and ambassadors. The parents I have shown round during the school day have all commented on the positive, calm orderly learning environment as much as the stunning facilities.

Our improvements as a school have been noted in our reviewing together days. These days are a chance for the CEO of the Aldridge Trust to bring her team of education experts to really put the Vale community under the microscope. These were some of the comments that they made:

- Culture is strong in the classroom. Students are well focussed, keen to engage with their learning and want to do well. Teachers contribute well to this with well-planned and delivered lessons that come from strong curriculum
- Routines are delivered with consistency, students know what they should be doing and where they should be going. Where this is not the case, adults step in and guide the students quickly and effectively.

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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- Staff across the school are highly visible and students know how to access support if needed. As a result, student behaviour is well managed.

Other notable events and initiatives include the fantastic opportunity awarded to the whole school community and particularly the student Council, who had the chance to meet the local MP; Jake Berry. The council harnessed the questions of all members of the school community and put these to Mr Berry who fielded the enquiries and provided some really interesting views and responses. The event was reported on in the Lancashire Telegraph and Mr Berry even talked up Vale's Saturday provision in an interview on "Any Questions"

Our new House system is fast becoming part of school life. Students have been allocated Houses; Turing, Holmes, Shakespeare and Curie after the famous mathematician, athlete, playwright and scientist respectively. Students have had house assemblies and already had the opportunity to win house points in competitions including French, maths and reading. The House system is aimed to develop teamwork, esprit de corps and a greater sense of community.

Finally coming full circle, it was fabulous to spend the afternoon of Friday 8th October in a packed school Hall seeing 10 talented individuals compete for the coveted award of Vale Idol. Our annual singing competition has not taken place since 2019 when Kenzie Blakey was crowned Vale Idol. This year the prize went to the fabulously talented Phoebe Whittaker. Congratulations to the winner and indeed to all those who took part.

Important messages for parents for the second half term include some really important changes to our uniform requirements. On return in September the students looked really smart and wore the school uniform with pride, we must ensure this continues. When we return after the October half term break all students are expected to be in full winter uniform. For girls that means they must wear black tights, socks are no longer permitted. Everyone apart from Year 11 students must also wear school Jumper AND a blazer when attending school, year 11's will continue to wear the year 11 sweatshirt. Outdoor coats should be black or dark blue and must be removed when entering the school building and kept in a school locker or in a school bag during the day. Can I also take this opportunity to remind parents that trainers and boots are not permitted in school and students must wear black school shoes. The rule on facial piercings is clear and students can wear one stud in each ear but further piercings are not allowed. This includes any nose or facial piercing. Should you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact Mr Smalley in school. Thanks as always for your co-operation in this matter.

#Aim High #Work Hard #We care #Team Vale

Yours sincerely

Mr M J Little
Principal

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