



DARWEN VALE HIGH SCHOOL

An Aldridge Community Academy



December 2019

Dear parents/carers

We are approaching the end of the first term of the academic year 2019/20 and as always it has been action packed, tremendously successful and littered with the success of our young people.

We continued our steep climb on the journey of improvement by celebrating our best ever examination results as a school. In 2019 we achieved a remarkable and unprecedented increase in our results across the board this summer. Our Progress 8 figure increased significantly and, whilst it is well below where we want it to be, there are not many schools that will be able to point to a **0.47 improvement in P8**. Similarly, we are very pleased with the improvements in Maths, and as a result the alignment of Maths and English. **Maths results improved by over 20% at Grade 5** and the proportion of students gaining a grade 4 and 5 in **both English and Maths improved by nearly 20%**. All of our headline measures for English and Maths are either better than or at least in line with national averages. We will be inspected this academic year and we are confident that the school will improve its Ofsted grading.

It is very much looking like these improvements will be reflected in our intake next year with demand for places much higher than last year.

Whilst much of the success in student achievement can be attributed to the hard work of the year 11 cohort, we also need to acknowledge the improvements that the staff have made in teaching and learning. We have been concentrating on a number of new strategies to improve student learning including positive recognition when students are doing the “right thing”, proactive monitoring of student work and questioning strategies that focus on rewarding high quality answers and ensuring that all students participate fully in the lesson.

This focus on students being at “100%”, as we call it, will be crucial if Vale is to take the next steps forward and become a “good” and subsequently “outstanding school”. We are meticulous in identifying how students should move around the building at changeovers with a real emphasis on not wasting a second of learning time. Our staff are at their doors to greet the students with an activity that they can be getting on with right away. 100% is a phrase your child will be familiar with by now and in simple terms we need them to be totally engaged in the lesson. What might this look like in lessons? *The teacher calls: “I’m looking for 100%. That means students place writing equipment down, they make eye contact with the teacher, sit up straight and wait in silence for the instruction that is given.”*

- When the teacher is talking to a student or the group as a whole then no other voice should be heard. This is equally true if another student is talking to the group, which usually would come through the answering of a question.
- 100% should go further than just delivering instructions, listening and answering questions. 100% should also reflect maximum effort and exemplary attitudes to learning in every aspect of school work.

In terms of attitudes and behaviour, this approach has made a huge difference to conduct in and around the building. Can I take this opportunity to thank parents for your support in endeavouring to ensure our young people demonstrate great attitudes to learning. This has been particularly noticeable with excellent parental support for our changes to the uniform policy. The students look so much smarter particularly the girls in their tights and this has been commented upon by a number of external visitors to the school. Parental support for our ban on mobile

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

Registered Address: 3rd Floor, 8 City Road, London, EC1Y 2AA

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phones has also been greatly appreciated and in addition to the positive effect this has had on learning and a reduction in cyber bullying, it is also nice to see students talking to each other at breaks and lunch times.

In amongst all these positives I do need to make a plea to support us in raising the standards of attendance at Vale. Our attendance is simply not good enough and, whilst our results are in line with or above national average, in most areas our attendance is well below. Statistics show that students with attendance below 95% achieve significantly worse than their peers.

The term has been action packed and reflecting back on the range of activities is really pleasing.

Our Year 7 have settled in well and the “meet the form tutor” evening was a massive success. Many of them went on our recent visit to Lille in France to visit the Christmas markets.

We have seen huge sporting success with a particular mention for our year 8 boy’s athletics team who won the town event and the year 10 boys football team who won the league recently.

Students in year 9 have already had their parents evening and we are planning for their options process now.

Students from all year groups have participated in Vale Idol and our Christmas cabaret shows. Furthermore, we have celebrated the achievements of our wonderful young people on several occasions with the highlights being the Sports awards evening, the Key Stage 3 awards evening and the Key Stage 4 awards evening.

Year 11 have worked tremendously hard – attending our period 6 and sitting their Mock examinations. I expect to see the parents of our Year 11 students on 9th January for the parents evening when we will share the detailed question level analysis for all subjects. This will show students and parents exactly what they did well on and where they need to revise following those mock exams.

So finally the run in to Christmas will see

- Vale students perform at St Peters Church on 18/12/19 as part of the Darwen Cluster celebration.
- Christmas dinner for all staff and students on Thursday 19/12/19. It is also Christmas jumper day and whilst we expect students to be in full uniform they may wear a Christmas jumper!
- Non uniform day on the 20/12/19 and our final rewards assemblies – students should bring a tin of non-perishable food. All proceeds will go to foodbank.

School will close to students at 12.30pm on Friday 20th December and will reopen at the usual time of 8.45am on the 6th January. Please note that after Christmas, lockers will be available for all students at a cost of £3 for the padlock to ensure security. Students should pay monies to student services in school and a locker will be allocated.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and hope that you all enjoy a restful break.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Little
Principal

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