



# DARWEN VALE HIGH SCHOOL

An Aldridge Community Academy 

April 2019

Dear Parents / Carers,

We are approaching the end of our second term in the academic year 2018/19. It has been action packed again.

We are pleased with the progress Darwen Vale is making on our journey to be graded “good” by Ofsted in our next inspection. Our own self-evaluation of our strengths and areas for improvement is honest, rigorous and reflective. In January the multi academy trust informed us that we would experience our Aldridge review on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January. This is similar to an inspection. It was led by an experienced HMI (Her majesty’s inspector) Scott Harrison. The evidence base for the review included observation of 34 lessons, interviews with senior and middle leaders, interviews with students and observation of their conduct around the school and scrutiny of documentation relating to self-evaluation and development planning, provision and outcomes. The report was very detailed but highlights included the following:

- There have been step changes in the school since the previous review and Ofsted inspection.
- Staff morale is high and demonstrates the impact of the ‘can do’ culture promoted by school leaders.
- Middle leaders are making a difference in core subjects and some others.
- Teaching has improved significantly.

When I wrote to you in December I described how we had raised the bar this year in terms of our expectations for student conduct. It is about a mind-set, students who are dressed smartly, conduct themselves well and display a positive attitude to learning will learn more both academically and socially, and will, as a consequence be better prepared and qualified for further education or employment. Thank you for your support with this. Class charts is our vehicle for rewarding students, issuing sanctions and setting homework. It really is vital that you are accessing the website and keeping up to date with your child’s progress. If you haven’t got the app yet or have any problems, please contact school and speak to Mr Smalley or Mr Broderick.

Attendance is improved from last year but is still not good enough. Our whole school attendance figure stands at 93.1 %. There is some really good information on the NHS website on the kinds of medical conditions that the NHS recommends that it is fine to send your child to school with. These include; cold sores, common cold, coughs, sore throat, conjunctivitis, hand foot or mouth, lice, nits and ringworm. Your child is unlikely to achieve their potential if they do not have really good attendance – 97% plus.

Our year 11 students continue to work tremendously hard. We have over 95% attendance to our period 5. This will continue next year for our current year 10. After Easter our Year 11 students will enter the exam period. For the period from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May to Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June Year 11 lunch will be from 12.05 – 12.35pm. Year 11 students have been in on Saturdays, over half terms and a full two-week programme is taking place over Easter. We want to ensure that they are as well prepared as they can be for the GCSE examinations. We have had superb attendance at all our parent’s evenings with none less than 70% attendance. I do believe that attendance at parents evening should be 100%. If you cannot attend parents evening please contact school and we will make alternative arrangements.

Students have had opportunities to enrich their school diet with trips and in school events:

Year 11 were treated to a live performance of Romeo and Juliet by a professional theatre company. Year 10 students have attended a science day at the University of Manchester extracting DNA from frogs to determine

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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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species and learning about conservation. Year 9 rugby girls have been in devastating form, winning the Lancashire emerging schools festival at Preston Grasshoppers. Year 8 Students have been at Manchester University for Science week fair finding out about Science careers and taking part in interactive sessions. Another group of 8s spent time at Leeds University learning about degree level philosophy!

Year 7 students accompanied Miss Scott to an evening with Ben Fogle listening to him describe his adventures rowing a cross the Atlantic and climbing Everest.

On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April Mr Smalley will be taking students from years 7 – 11 to Poland. They will visit Auschwitz and the Schindler museum amongst other activities.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March our wonderfully talented students staged the school production of “We will rock you”. Students from years 7 to 11 demonstrated their growing confidence in the performing arts. Thanks should go to Miss Jones, Miss Savva and Mrs Bramley for ensuring that the acting, singing and dancing was of the highest quality. Putting on a show of this length and complexity is a real challenge and the students should be complimented for learning lots of lines and songs and performing these on three separate occasions including a show for our partner primary schools.

This work that we undertake with our Primary partners is in part the reason for the growing demand for places at Vale. Our biggest year group is Year 7 with close to 200 students. We already know that 209 places have been allocated to year 6 students for September. Given previous admission trends we anticipate that the new Year 7 in September will have well over 210 students.

Other notable events include a visit from the Mayor Pat McFall who toured the school and met with a number of Vale students. She was very impressed with the progress that the school is making and commented that there was an “incredibly calm and purposeful environment around the school”.

What an effort from our circuit trainers! From September to Easter under the close supervision of Vale’s own Sergeant Major (Mr Hartley) students from years 9 – 11 have trained every Friday evening in the sports Hall. I’ve even done a few sessions myself! This has formed the main strategy for Mr Hartley’s fundraising for Derian House. Mr Hartley leads on charities at Vale and his team have raised over £30,000 for Derian House to date. The work culminated on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March with a full day of circuit training for staff and students. As you can imagine this is tremendously demanding and they were cheered on by the whole school in the final 15 minutes. Well done!

**School will close to students at 3.15pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April and will reopen at the usual time of 8.45am on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April.**

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

Yours faithfully

Matthew Little  
Principal

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