

3 April 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

I am delighted to have been appointed Principal today and I am looking forward to meeting parents/carers and the local community in the next few months. As Libby Nicholas' letter stated today, I have been appointed as I have a track record of securing excellent outcomes for pupils at GCSE and A-Levels in a comprehensive school setting where impeccable standards of behaviour were maintained every day. I am aware that over the last week or so there has been some concern in the parent body about the pace of change towards more pupils studying a Modern Foreign Language and that a petition has been launched around this issue.

The petition is factually incorrect in areas. The school leadership over the past two terms, rightly, has made the decision to strongly encourage, but not coerce, pupils to consider the EBacc. This is the right route for the majority of our pupils in light of government and Ofsted targets and the fact it is incredibly helpful in terms of university entry and employment. Many schools have already made these changes since 2014 and the pace of change is significantly increasing. It is important that our pupils are not disenfranchised by having a qualifications profile that is out of step going forward with the national profile. The EBacc in no way prevents a pupil from choosing an arts subject alongside other subjects. In fact we have two classes studying GCSE Art, two classes studying GCSE photography, a class studying GCSE Music and furthermore we have three classes studying GCSE PE in the next academic year, and we run a range of extra-curricular clubs. Whilst GCSE Drama is not running in the next academic year this is only due to the low-level of interest and we will review the situation for the following academic year.

At Astrea, everything we do is focused on our commitment of an education that inspires beyond measure. That is no different at Longsands, and we place huge importance on music and the arts.

It is clear that some parents are concerned about the communication from the school and I am looking forward to meeting many parents and carers at 6.30 pm on Wednesday, 24 April to outline my key priorities for the school. Furthermore, there will be parent information evenings every term going forward where we will keep parents informed of the developments across the school.

With best wishes



Hywel Jones
Principal