

8 December 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

It is starting to 'look a lot like Christmas' here at the academy as festive decorations and twinkling lights are appearing. We are all looking forward to the Christmas Concert on Tuesday and Christmas Lunch and Christmas Jumper Day the week after. Students have been planning their hampers for the House Christmas competition which I am judging on Monday. Not only do the winning tutor groups add to the house points competition, but they are also able to help the wider community and spend time thinking about those in more challenging situations. I have been so impressed by the students' desire to help their community.

It was great to meet parents/carers last night for the workshop on Understanding the Teenage Brain, where we talked about how the teen years are often described as the 'new 0-3' as the teenage brain develops, and that the learning potential is immense. We focused on all the wonderful aspects of these changes and also spent time considering the challenges faced by young people as they start to navigate their peer groups and create a social identity. We touched briefly on mental health support for young people, something we are intending to focus more on in a workshop later this year. Several parents/carers asked if I could upload the information so please find it [here](#). We had one parent come for the school tour, but it is a busy time of year so we hope more of you can join one of our future tours. We will be doing tours every Friday until the end of January from 9.20am to 10.20am. If you would like to come and see what life is like at Longsands Academy, please sign up [here](#).

This week we have slightly changed our approach to morning welcome. We have put Years 7-8 and Years 9-10 respectively together to receive the morning messages. We start with whole school messages from members of the senior team, followed by year group specific celebrations and shout outs. The Heads of Year are starting to develop a healthy competition between year groups, which is lovely to see.

Thank you to all the parents/carers who have spoken to staff and contacted the school in support of our drive on punctuality. It was really heartening to see that the number of students who arrived late to the school has improved throughout the week. I would like to reassure those parents/carers who have expressed concerns about our approach to dealing with lateness at school. The late registration room is not a punitive measure but rather an opportunity to set students up for the day by checking that they have the equipment they need. We are also able to loan/address any incomplete or incorrect uniform such as ties, blazers, etc and share all the key information from morning welcome that they would miss through arriving late. We believe it is important that tutor time is not being constantly disturbed by students who arrive late and so we feel that this is a good way to address this. If students have a reason for being late to school, we ask that parents/carers contact the school via absence@astrea-longsands.org, or call Reception. Only students without a valid reason for being late will receive a detention. Just to clarify, the gates will close at 8.35am, so any student who arrives after this time will need to come into school via the Longsands Road entrance. I would like to remind parents/carers that we currently run a breakfast club which is open from 8.00am in the New Hall and is open to all students. We are looking to extend this provision and create additional homework support for students as well. If students wish to attend the breakfast club they should enter via the Longsands Road entrance.

Next week it is celebration week at Longsands. We are holding our inaugural honour roll breakfast, where students and their parents/carers have been invited into school to have breakfast and celebrate their nominations for excellent work and attitude. I am truly looking forward to this event. House assemblies are also taking place, where each of the Heads of House celebrate all the fantastic achievements of the students in their house. These assemblies are really special as students from Years 7-13 all get together and take time to focus on their successes over the last term. There is a lot of good competition (including from the Assistant Principals and Heads of Houses) for the house **League Cups** which are given to each year group and for the **House Cup** which is won by the house with the most overall house points! Mr Laud is hoping that **Seacole** retains the House Cup this half term, but Mr Hood (**Turing**) and Miss Saunders (**Darwin**) are hoping to snatch it from him, but with Mrs Lloyd's amazing contribution to the Children in Need bake off perhaps **Hawking** will take the prize. All eyes, however, are on Mr Smy because he calculates the house points and if **Austen** wins, I am sure there will be demands for a recount! As I said previously, acknowledging the hard work, excellent attitudes, attendance, and punctuality of students as well as the acts of service both at Longsands and in the wider community is really important to us as an academy. I look forward to sharing with you the outcome of the House Cup next week.

Finally, I have recorded a video newsletter so that I can visually share some of the changes taking place in the academy. The video can be found [here](#). I won't reveal how many takes there were – but it was double figures! Not being of the selfie, vlogging generation – this is quite out of my comfort zone, but I hope you find it interesting and useful. As ever, all feedback is welcome.

I hope you all have a lovely weekend.

Best wishes.



Dr C Cusick
Principal