

20th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to start by wishing you a happy new year, though to many the holidays will seem a distant memory. It has been an extremely busy start to the school year, and we are pleased to see how well-presented and keen the students are on their return.

Rebuilding project

It is good to be able to start the year with some good news. The Department for Education has approved a bid we submitted to rebuild a significant part of the school; specifically, the older buildings that include Clare Tower as well as the entire Sports Centre. This multimillion-pound project will be fully funded by the central government. This really is an exciting time to be part of the Budmouth Community and we will be updating parents and students as and when we hear any news on for example, when this project is to start. We are in the very early stages of a project that will take a number of years to complete, but when complete it will no doubt be a fantastic new facility for the children of Weymouth and the surrounding area.

Regarding the current Sports Centre however there is less good news. We have been advised it remains closed until a survey is carried out. When the report is issued we will know whether it is suitable for us to return to normal lessons in the Sports Hall. Children and teachers have been very patient and coped well with the disruption. We ask for a continuation of this patience whilst we wait for further information.

Reading for students and parents

'Reading Week' is coming to Budmouth Academy on the 6th and 10th of February 2023 in the last week of this half term. This will involve students reading an engaging piece of text, from articles to popular fiction, for 20 minutes of each lesson across all subject areas. This is an exciting initiative which we are all looking forward to as a further means to highlight the importance and joy of reading for both education and pleasure. A reading book (fiction or nonfiction) is a key part of our equipment list, but please double check your child has a reading book of their choice to bring into school for their lessons. This is a fantastic opportunity and we appreciate your support.

We also welcome the return of our parents' book club. If you are not sure what to read next or haven't read for a while and are keen to get started again, this could be for you. If you would like to join the '**Budmouth Parent Random Book Club**' and receive a random library book every half term this could be the opportunity. To join, just follow the link below, complete the sign up, and then when your book is ready for collection you will receive an email asking you to send your child to the Resources Centre to collect your book.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe4DYjWrra7Gm7Bw6HUqMT_uQ2eJ-3rBYVW6dCW0O5VQbH1FA/viewform

Uniform

Students' uniform and appearance continue to improve at school. We are proud of the way our students look and we have taken steps in recent years to make this uniform cheaper. Please remember then that you can now buy our compulsory uniform items (blazer and tie) from DEP School wear on Lynch Lane, as well as from Brigade online. Please can I remind you that hoodies are not allowed in school at any time (coats are of course, fine). Likewise, there are limits to both skirt length and the number of jewellery items that can be worn. If in doubt please check the policy here;

<https://budmouth.academies.aspirationsacademies.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/09/Uniform-Policy-2022.pdf>.

Exam attendance

Nationally Post-Covid Attendance at school has become a key issue this year. Here in the South West, attendance is lower than in many parts of the rest of England. It is of course proven that the more time spent in school, the more progress young people make and as such, holidays will not be authorised during term time. Clearly when students are very unwell we do not expect them to come to school. It would be wrong to expect otherwise.

However, during GCSE and A' level exams, failure to attend all exams in a certain subject, even due to illness, will result in an X grade (no result) being issued. Some students believe that exam boards will give estimated grades, for example if they cannot attend. This is simply not true. Students are only eligible for special consideration if they have completed 25% of the total assessment for that subject. Even then, evidence in the form of hospital records or a doctor's certificate are needed if students are not to miss out. These rules are nationwide, strict and always enforced to the letter. Unfortunately, the academy has no say in them.

It is also worth sharing with you that nationally, schools lose huge sums of money every year entering students for GCSE exams that are not then attended by students. We are no exception and we reserve the right to pass exams fees on to parents where no evidence has been provided for missing an exam legitimately. In Maths, English and Science alone there are at least 13 papers that have to be written, ordered, delivered, invigilated, collected, sent away, marked and moderated. The costs soon add up for schools who have to pay the exam boards for every paper. Key for us is that students, teachers and pupils work together to ensure that students are well prepared for exams. In particular please be aware that we have a full programme of revision and catch-up over the February half term and Easter holidays. We will send all Year 11 parents a copy soon. Encouraging the Year 11 students to work hard now will pay off in the summer.

Industrial action

You may have heard in the news that this week the National Education Union (NEU) has voted in favour of industrial action. They have published a number of different regional and national dates including a national strike on 1st February and a regional strike in the South West on 2nd March. In addition, two further strike dates have been announced for the 15th and 16th March. At the moment it is too early for me to be able to inform you how Budmouth will be affected by this. The NEU is one of a number of teaching unions and how individual schools are affected, will of course depend greatly on which specific unions their staff belong to and whether or not they decide to be part of the industrial action. In the coming days we will maintain a close dialogue with our NEU members and as soon as we are in a position to do so, I will communicate with you if our provision is affected. The government has published some guidance to schools on how best to minimise the impact of significant staff absence and we will certainly be doing our best to ensure that the school will remain open to all students who have public exams this summer, specifically those in Years 11 and 13. Thank you for your patience with this matter and I will let you know as soon as possible if there are going to be any changes to our normal provision.

Rewards

Finally, on our first day back we introduced a new rewards system called ACE (Achieving Cultural Excellence). Students and parents fed back to us last year that rewards outside of lessons, for helpful conduct or responsible behaviour, were less frequent than they could be. So many of our students turn up to the academy every single day, never complain, work hard and always do the right thing and we want to recognise this. As a result, we have introduced a new 'token system' that enables students to earn a token for their school, Hawking, Attenborough, Shelley or Turing. You may have seen this on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/BudmouthAcademy/> but for those that have not, it is very similar to the charity tube scheme used as token collection points in the supermarket. The overall winners will receive additional rewards and at the moment it is Turing School pupils who have taken an early lead.

Lots to take in then in a busy start to the year, but there so much to be positive about going forward.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Hoffmann
Principal