



HIGH STANDARDS, HIGH ASPIRATIONS, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

7th February 2025

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to February and the start of the (slightly) lighter mornings and afternoons. We hope all of our students and families have had a good start to 2025. We are also conscious that we haven't written since the Christmas break; we hope all of our families had a good festive period with plenty of rest and relaxation though we appreciate this may seem like a distant memory now.

As notified to families in December Mr Shaw has started his new role within the Cabot Learning Federation and Mr Bridgeman is currently acting in a Head of School role. Across the next term an advert will go out to a national field to recruit the permanent successor Principal with a view to that person starting in role in September 2025. To ensure smooth day to day operation of the Academy during the coming months we advertised for an acting Vice Principal position. We interviewed 6 candidates across a number of days and the candidates undertook a number of tasks, panels and interviews including student and staff led panels. We are very pleased to confirm that our own Ms Natasha Williams was successful and appointed to the post. Natasha has been a member of the BMA community for over 20 years including 10 years as Assistant Principal. Natasha therefore brings a wealth of experience and local knowledge to the post and will provide robust support and challenge to Mr Bridgeman over the coming months.

One aspect of Academy culture that is of concern currently is attendance and punctuality. We know that this is the prime season for coughs and colds but we are noticing a higher amount of absence than we would like and we are asking for support of our families in ensuring that students attend whenever they are able to. We know that all of us get ill at times but we are asking for robust reflection on when students are too unwell to attend versus being slightly under the weather. In addition we have seen a growth in students arriving late to the Academy. Given the majority of our students live within walking or short commute distance this is a concern and one we ask for your support in addressing. Arriving late may not seem like the biggest concern to some students but it causes significant lost learning and interruption to lessons as staff try to compensate for those who have missed initial explanations or learning points. As we have written to highlight previously, the law around school punctuality changed last summer and students arriving after 9am in the morning are classed as "late after registers closed." This is a Government coding which means they are recorded as missing half a day of school. Not only does this significantly affect their attendance record but it also means the local authority have the power to issue penalty fines of £100 per parent once a student reaches a threshold of attendance (around 6 lates over a two term period). So far, we have held off on referring lates to the local authority for processing but this is now something we are having to act upon. We therefore thank you in advance for supporting students in arriving punctually to the Academy and on as many days as they are able to. Ultimately there is a significant evidence bank that supports, as you would expect, a direct correlation between attendance to school and outcomes at the end of Year 11 which are crucial in giving students choice in the next stage of their life journey.

It is hard to believe we have one week left of this term but we wish all of our families a healthy final week and a restful half term break when it comes.

Yours sincerely

Cameron Shaw
Principal

Kris Bridgeman
Head of School

