



Saturday 5th February

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I wish to inform you of events that took place on Friday 4th February, both to allay any fears and prevent any misinformation that may be circulating.

Police presence at school

As part of our ongoing education programme for students linked to knife crime, we have been working with West Midlands Police and other outside organisations to ensure our students get the information they need to keep themselves and others safe. Due to the rising number of knife crime incidents occurring in Birmingham City Centre and the anti-social behaviour incidents which have been occurring in our local community recently (both in the evenings and at weekends), I approached West Midlands Police to support us in sending a very strong message to students that the possession of any weapon will not be tolerated at Arena Academy. I invited uniformed and plain-clothed police officers into school on the morning of Friday 4th February to supervise all students walking through a 'knife arch'. Senior members of Arena staff also searched the bags of all students as they entered the school. I am pleased to report that no weapons of any kind were found – although two bottles containing alcohol were found in the possession of two Year 10 students – both students have now been excluded and Parents informed. I apologise that some of you may have found the presence of the police alarming but for reasons I hope you understand, it was requested that advance notification was not given to prevent any students from discarding anything they did not want to be found in their bags. Other police officers were strategically positioned outside of school to speak to any students who were alarmed by the police presence. Other schools within the local community have also been taking part in this exercise.

I am keen on building positive relationships between the police and our students. Over the next few weeks, we are working with police officers to teach Key Stage 3 students about the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals. Key Stage 4 students will be taught about the legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems. We also have groups of students who will be taking part in virtual reality workshops to have honest and open discussions about gang culture, critical decision making, positive role models and how to avoid difficult situations. The aim is to divert young people away from crime.

Disturbance at lunchtime

During Year 7, 8 and 11 lunchtime yesterday, a small group of students were behaving in a disorderly manner in the canteen which resulted in pushing and jostling in the lunch queue. Unfortunately, a few boys decided to push each other quite aggressively, which due to the number of students in the queue resulted in some other students being pushed over and resulted in those at the back of the queue rushing forward. Due to the swift action of the staff on duty, the matter was dealt with quickly and any students who fell over were seen by qualified first aiders and Parents informed. To prevent any re-occurrence of such an incident, from Monday, Year 7 will commence their lunch earlier than the other two year groups to avoid queuing with the older students (reducing the total number of students in the canteen); followed by year 8 and year 11 in separate queues. The students who instigated the pushing and shoving have been identified through our internal cameras and will be dealt with most severely on Monday morning.

Year 11 – A Christmas Carol

Yesterday, all Year 11 watched a performance by a drama group of 'A Christmas Carol', one of their GCSE English Literature texts. The Year 11 students were a credit to the school and behaved impeccably throughout the performance. Now that the restrictions for Covid-19 have been lifted I intend to offer similar opportunities to all students. As Year 11 left school they were given a 'goody bag' of materials that can be used to support their revision.

Donations

The actions of a tiny majority of our students can tarnish the reputation of a school, but I am constantly reminded of how amazing our students are. May I thank everyone who made donations in memory of Reece Young. Over £1100 has been donated to the British Heart Foundation – a worthy cause nominated by his carer.

Covid Catch Up

The two terms when students were not in school since the start of the pandemic will have resulted in some knowledge gaps. I am pleased to announce that I have appointed three academic mentors (one each of English, Mathematics and Science) who will be working with groups of students to address these knowledge gaps. In addition, 60 Year 11 students will be receiving 15 hours of tuition on Tuesday evenings; and from March 7th this will be extended to include Years 7 -10 students. More information will be given to parents over the coming weeks.

May I thank you for all your continued support. We continue to work through difficult times due to the impact of Covid-19 and we are supporting students who have increased anxiety as a result. Staff absence due to Covid is a concern to all schools, however, to date I have not had to send home any year groups this term and we are doing our best to ensure that your child receives the best education we can deliver.

I hope that this information allays any concerns you may have had regarding events in school. Please be assured that all staff are working incredibly hard to support and educate your child. If you do have any questions, please refer them to your child's Head of Year or Year Coordinator in the first instance.

Have a good weekend,



R Mann
Headteacher