

MMC/GHR

28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

I would like to start this week's letter by saying a fond farewell to one of the Academy's longest serving members of staff, Associate Assistant Principal, Head of Sixth Form and Geography Teacher, Mrs Townsend, who leaves us today after serving our school and community for over 15 years.

Mrs Townsend has worked tirelessly whilst at Sir Thomas and can leave knowing that she has made a real difference to the lives of many young people. She will leave us to work for the DFE and I am sure she will embrace the challenge and be successful in her new career.

Mrs Townsend leaves an ever growing Sixth Form in the capable hands of Mr Dobson, who will move into the position of Director of Post 16 with immediate effect.

### Events/Enrichment

#### Golden Ticket Event

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April, we celebrated the achievements of over 200 students with inflatables in the hall for our Golden Ticket event. These students have sustained a high level of investment and attendance over the course of two half terms and it was wonderful to be able to reward them with this well-deserved award. Further to this, some of the golden ticket students opted to be treated to a baking session with Mrs Dunstan and Mrs Brooke, which involved baking chocolate chip cookies. Details of the final summer event will be released next week.

#### *The Great Gatsby Speakeasy*

At the start of this half-term, our Year 8 cohort embarked upon an investigation into life during the 1920s to help with their study of Fitzgerald's classic, *The Great Gatsby*. Students attended our very own 'STWA Speakeasy' in which they had to research and discover key contextual information about America during the 1920s. Students worked autonomously in groups to navigate their way around the Speakeasy, ensuring that they could complete their detective worksheet. Upon completing the Speakeasy, students used their knowledge to create a newspaper report about how society secretly thrived during this period. This event was a pivotal experience for our students as it helped to bring this classic novel to life and provided students with an immersive and interactive experience to help gather and consolidate their knowledge

#### St. George's Park Trip

This week saw some of our Year 9 and Year 10 students visit St. George's Park, which includes the training facilities for England football teams, including the men's team, the Lionesses, and junior squads. It was an outstanding day, which included a tour of the full facility (indoor and outdoor pitches, the hotel, and the trophies) and a training session with coaches from the Football Association. It was great to be able to give the football loving students of STWA a chance to participate in this exceptional learning experience and this is something we will look forward to running again soon.

## Bridging Project

On Tuesday morning, our Bridging Project commenced. This project welcomes Year 6 pupils from our feeder primary schools into the academy. This is the first of five sessions where our future students can experience what it is like to be a pupil at Sir Thomas Wharton Academy. During their first session, Year 6 pupils took part in a fantastic English lesson with Miss Allen and explored what it means to be aspirational through poetry by Benjamin Zephaniah.

Following this session, students can look forward to a Science extravaganza with Miss Bott, a vibrant Drama lesson with Miss Preston, an immersive Art lesson with Mr Gidney and experience Computer Science with Miss Cook. It is important to us as an academy to create a seamless transition into secondary education that enables our young people to thrive by taking part in exceptional learning experiences.

## No More Marking

On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will complete the second round of testing for the No More Marking assessments. This assessment is an unaided writing task in response to a stimulus and will generate a writing age for each student. Students already have a writing age from the first round of testing that occurred in September. The testing that commences next week will measure how much progress students have made over this academic year, and it is therefore vital that students invest fully when completing this piece of work. Prior to completing the No More Marking assessment, classroom teachers will set a piece of homework that centres around transactional writing and will help prepare students for the set task. Much like the NGRT reading data, writing ages will also be sent home so that parents can celebrate the progress that has been made.

## Ditch the Doubt

This week, twenty of our Year 10 girls attended a coaching session from HeppSY around self-esteem and how to have a positive mindset. The girls fully interacted in the session and had in depth discussions around concerns and how to overcome them. Students are looking forward to their trip to Sheffield University on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May as part of the Discover Us programme.

## Discover US

Our Year 11 cohort of Discover US students completed their two-year course this week with a final graduation at the University of Sheffield. Parents and carers were invited to attend, and it was a proud moment for everyone. One of our students achieved a Star Student award for his contributions over the two years. We know these students are now fully equipped and knowledgeable about the progression routes into Higher Education if they wish to follow them. Congratulations to all the Discover US students.

## Paul Jenkins Creative Writing Club Visit

On Tuesday this week, Creative Writing Club enjoyed a visit from Paul Jenkins, a published poet and author. Paul worked with the students on their poetry for Empathy Day on 8<sup>th</sup> June, and they all engaged in discussions about difficult topics that can be expressed through poetry. By the end of the session, the students had grown in confidence and were brave enough to perform their poems to the group.

## Teaching and Learning

### Homework Reward

This week, we have been proud to award our students who have received fully invested scores for their homework in their latest learning cycle. These committed and dedicated students were given a free breakfast wrap to enjoy with Mr McDonald and given a token to use in our book vending machine. We look forward to celebrating students' success and investment in the months leading up to the summer break following the next learning cycle.



## French Speaking Exams

After a Saturday Revision session which was very well attended, the GCSE French Speaking Exams took place this week from Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> to Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April. This challenging exam is worth 25% of the total GCSE and is the culmination of many years of practice and hard work. If any of you have ever done a language exam before, you will remember how stressful it can be. The students applied themselves maturely and creditably to their exam. Bravo la Seconde!

## Reading Testing

As a school, we know the importance of being able to read competently and confidently. It is a valuable life skill which we practice in all subjects. In recent weeks, students in Years 7 to 10 have completed another round of reading testing. The data is looking incredibly positive, with a considerable proportion of students making notable progress. Across Years 7-10, 39% of students tested have a reading age significantly above their actual age. Not only do we focus on challenging students' reading skills, we also ensure we support those who need it. From next week, those who require additional reading support will access it during tutor time, either through small group intervention or by being placed in a reading tutor group staffed by English teachers. Our primary trained Librarian, Mrs Harris-Boldy, will also carry out second wave intervention to certain key stage three students during their Library lessons. If your child will be accessing the provision, you will receive a Class Charts message.

## PCAB (Parents and Community Advisory Board)

Our next PCAB meeting is being held at STWA on Wednesday 12th July from 5-6.30pm. This meeting is your opportunity to find out more about the exceptional learning opportunities on offer at STWA, as well as give your feedback on anything concerning the improvement journey that the academy is on.

Please register your interest with [g.harris@stwacademy.com](mailto:g.harris@stwacademy.com).

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Mr. M McDonald  
Principal

