

18th December 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

As the school term draws to a close I would like to inform you about some important information about MAA and to share some of the successes we have had this term.

Investors in Children (IiC)

In November we were successful in gaining our Investors in Children Award. We are delighted that we have received this award and we are very proud of the pupils and members of the Academy Council that worked alongside staff and IiC to showcase the ways we all work together to ensure that pupils are at the very core of everything we do at MAA.

Sporting Events

On 17th December our football team took part in a 6 a side tournament at the Beacon of Light in Sunderland. All players demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship and were unfortunate not to make the play-offs, we were only one goal short! We are looking forward to further fixtures over the remainder of the year.

Prison Me No Way/PSHCE

As part of our PSHCE curriculum pupils have had the opportunity to take part in workshops and seminars on a wide range of topics including knife crime, racism, domestic violence and personal safety. All pupils who participated were very well behaved and engaged well. The agencies and groups that delivered these sessions were very complimentary about our pupils and MAA. In October we were fortunate to have Prison Me No Way visit us for a second time. Pupils were able to engage in sessions which focused on preventing anti-social behaviour and were able to hear from ex-offenders about the mistakes they had made, the lessons they had learnt and the impact this has had upon them and their families.

Building Investment

Over the last six months we have financially invested in improving our facilities for pupils. We now have a fully functioning Hair and Beauty Salon and a Construction Workshop. Pupils are really enjoying being able to work in these areas and we are very impressed with their attitudes to learning and the progress they are making. **However** we are noticing that a small number of pupils are not being respectful in the way they use our facilities. Damage to fixtures, fittings and the fabric of the building are costly to repair and ultimately remove funding for further improvements to be made. Where pupils have caused deliberate damage and there is a cost

incurred by MAA to rectify the damage we will, from January 2020 be passing this cost onto the relevant pupil's parents/carers. Fully itemised bills will be sent and full reimbursement will be expected. Acts of criminal damage will also be reported to the police.

Culture and Attitude

Our pupils continually tell us that they enjoy positive relationships with our staff and that they value the help, guidance and support they receive. This is something that we are, rightly, very proud of. However recently I have become concerned about the way in which some pupils are behaving towards staff. I am sure you will agree that we all have a shared responsibility to instil in our pupils the need to be respectful and polite to all people at all times. On occasions recently some pupils have fallen short of those basic expectations. I am disappointed that some pupils have felt the need to use foul and abusive language when speaking to staff when reasonable requests or reminders of expectations have been given. Additionally I am saddened that on occasions a very small number of pupils have felt it appropriate to use physical force or behave in a threatening manner towards staff. All staff have the right to work in a safe environment and one that is free from abuse and aggression. To be clear these kind of behaviours are not acceptable and where appropriate we will seek support and advice from the police. I would ask that you discuss this with your child and ensure that they understand that we will not tolerate this kind of behaviour and that we endeavour to provide a safe, supportive learning and working environment for all pupils, staff and visitors which is built on mutual respect.

Attendance and Punctuality

At Mary Astell Academy we aim to support individuals of all abilities and aspirations to fulfil their potential through learning. We are happy to help you resolve any issues there may be affecting your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss the support we can offer.

You can help prevent your child missing school by:

- making sure they understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- taking an interest in their education - ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities;
- discussing any problems they may have at MAA - inform their Key Worker about anything serious;
- not letting them take time off school for minor ailments, particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work; and
- Arranging appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays will help to prevent disruption to your child's education and to the school.

As a parent/carer, you're legally responsible for making sure that your child attends the Academy regularly unless you're home-educating. Parents/carers must ensure that a reason for absence is reported to school on the first day of absence, ideally before 9.30am, and every day of absence, this can be done by either:

- contacting Main Reception on 0191 2674447 or
- texting the Attendance Improvement Officer on 07786208450

Time lost by children and young people due to family holidays taken in term time can be disruptive to their education.

We advise that wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school. Many parents say that the time their child misses because of a holiday doesn't

affect their school work. However a child who has 10 days holiday each year of their school life will miss 24 weeks (nearly a full school year) of their formal education. This is in addition to absences – for instance, if your child is ill. If, after serious consideration of this, you still propose to take your child away from school for a holiday, it is important to note that in line with government guidelines, MAA will not agree to leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Requests for the following reasons are not considered to be exceptional circumstances;

- Availability of cheap holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- Overlapping with beginning or end of term

Where children have unauthorised absences in term time, legal action may be taken against each parent under the following legislation:

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her child, being of compulsory school age, fails to attend regularly the school at which he or she is a registered pupil. Section 444A allows for a penalty notice to be issued to parents who commit such an offence.

Failure to pay may result in prosecution where on conviction you would be liable to a fine of up to £1000

School Holiday Dates

Spring Term 2020

Term starts: Monday 6 January 2020
Half term: Monday 17 February 2020 to Friday 21 February 2020
Term ends: Friday 3 April 2020

Summer Term 2020

Term starts: Monday 20 April 2020
May bank Holiday: Friday 8th May 2020
Half term: Monday 25 May 2020 to Friday 29 May 2020
CPD Day: Monday 22nd June 2020
Term ends: Friday 17 July 2020

Appearance Expectations

All pupils are expected to follow our expectations with regard to their appearance. Students who are not in uniform will not be allowed to enter the academy premises. We will offer to loan pupils the items of uniform but in the unlikely event that pupils refuse to do this they will be sent home. Before any pupil is sent home we will contact you to make you aware of the situation. Once the second instance of a pupil being sent home for not wearing academy uniform occurs, attendance will be marked as unauthorised. If you need to purchase uniform please contact the Main Office.

KS3 (Years 7, 8 & 9)

- Black Mary Astell Sweatshirt
- White Mary Astell Polo Shirt
- Black School Trousers
- All Black Footwear

KS4 (Years 10 & 11)

- Black Mary Astell Sweatshirt
- White Mary Astell Polo Shirt
- Dark Coloured Trousers (i.e. jeans, sports clothing, jeggings)
- Appropriate Casual Footwear (i.e. trainers)

All outdoor clothing must be removed before entering the building. Pupils are not allowed to wear any outdoor clothing while inside the academy building. Pupils have access to a cloakroom to store their outdoor clothing during the school day. Pupils who refuse to do this will not be allowed to remain on site and will be sent home. Before any pupil is sent home we will contact you to make you aware of the situation. Once the second instance of a pupil being sent home for not following academy appearance expectations, attendance will be marked as unauthorised.

Mobile Phones

All pupils will be expected to hand in their mobile phones for safe keeping during the day. Phones will not be returned to pupils until 2.20pm. Pupils who refuse to comply with this will not be allowed into the academy building and will be sent home. We will contact you to make you aware that this has happened. Following the second instance of a pupil being sent home for not handing in their mobile phone, attendance will be marked as unauthorised.

Vaping/Smoking Paraphernalia

MAA is a 'Smoke Free' site. We do not condone smoking or vaping on the academy premises. Pupils who wish to access support via cessation sessions and/or counselling have access to these services via the Academy Nurse who runs drop in sessions every Wednesday on the MAA site. If your child wishes to make an appointment to see the Academy Nurse they should speak to Miss Wilson in the first instance.

All pupils will be expected to hand in their smoking paraphernalia for safe keeping during the day. These items will be returned to pupils at 2.20pm. Pupils who refuse to comply with this rule will not be allowed into the academy building and will be sent home. We will contact you to make you aware that this has happened. Following the second occurrence of any pupil refusing to hand in their vaping/smoking paraphernalia, their attendance will be marked as unauthorised.

Remaining on Academy Premises

All pupils are expected to remain on site for the duration of the academy day. Students who abscond from the academy premises will not be allowed to return. This will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us to discuss them further.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you as pupils and parents/carers for supporting our beliefs and working with us as we continue to move MAA forwards. I wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Spowart
Head of School