

# LEIGHTON ACADEMY NEWSLETTER



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## Principal's Newsletter

### Introduction

With the completion of the statutory tests, it is easy to lose learning impetus for the rest of the year. However, it is so important to keep a focus on making academic progress with over seven weeks of school left before the long break. There is evidence that too long a holiday has an adverse impact on children's learning which is why a number of academies have started to examine the structure of the academic year. For our children moving to high school, it is imperative we make the best use of any available time left at Leighton to ensure a consolidation of their learning. Leighton Academy has already adjusted the learning schedule by introducing Saturday school, along with a review of the academic year's structure – watch this space under a new author!!

### Building News

There will be additional building work during August to accommodate the extra pupils - subject to planning permission. We sent a letter earlier this term explaining the reasons why there would be a TEMPORARY adjustment to the planned admission number. Just to verify, this DOES NOT increase the planned admission number across the remainder of the academy which stays at 60. Some concern has been expressed that class sizes would increase across key stage 2 in the future – this is not going to happen except where a Cheshire East appeals' panel overturns the governors' decision NOT to admit a child. Unfortunately, this happens regardless of the planned admission number. There was a moral case that excluding families from within the catchment area would be unacceptable, hence the decision by the governing body to make such a temporary adjustment.

We are grateful to the PTA for the finance to support the installation of the drama lights and projector in the hall, complementing the sound system already installed previously with PTA investment. By adding some funds from the academy budget for decoration, blinds and comfortable adult seating, we have a valuable facility for a range of future events. The canteen has also been decorated and new dining tables purchased in preparation for the increased numbers of children having school dinners in September.

Late July and August will be busy times for the site officer and leadership team in ensuring all the building changes, boiler replacement programme and assorted adjustments to the infrastructure are completed in time. Becoming an academy has been such a spur to our ambitions – really exciting.

## **Staff News**

At the end of this term there will be farewells to a number of teachers. After working here for over twenty years, Kim French is moving to a new post in another local school. I have worked with Kim through some challenging times and she has always dedicated herself to the children. Although she will be missed, Kim deserves the chance to explore new opportunities in her professional life. Leighton will also be saying goodbye to Susan Gell as she has applied successfully to a school in Chester. Starting as a newly-qualified teacher at Leighton, Susan will join that very significant group of teachers who have worked at our academy and continue to make a massive impact elsewhere in the educational system, at all levels. We are grateful for her hard work and commitment to the children. Rowan Hoper is also leaving to a new phase in her life – once again we are appreciative of her contribution to our children's learning.

Congratulations to Sam Brennand on her appointment as vice principal at Leighton Academy. Over the years, Leighton has provided many successful applicants for leadership roles elsewhere across Crewe and Cheshire East so it is wonderful that we have managed to appoint a first-rate talent to our own academy. Sam interviewed superbly and she will bring insight and a range of honed skills to the role.

Whilst there are some changes to personnel, we are all very excited by the new teachers appointed for September. I believe they will supplement the talented staff already at Leighton. Introductions to the new staff will be included in the final newsletter of the academic year in July, whilst class allocations for September will be included with the written reports.

## **Teaching and Learning News**

The German curriculum continues to evolve with developments in speaking, listening and writing. A number of students from universities in Germany are willing to come and work across the academy as assistants for a significant part of the year. The international programme through Manchester Metropolitan University has also been expanded with other European students alongside students from Bridgewater State University, USA. I know there are plans afoot for a Sommerfest during the next half-term aligned with visits from a variety of guests.

Two appointments of a PE instructor and design/food technology teacher have now been completed in preparation for the next academic year. Frankly, I have never seen such compelling ideas in design/food technology or engineering in my entire career. Much preparation is going into the science, technology, engineering and mathematical professional development programmes. These are not 'off the shelf' curriculum programmes but intensive investments in professional development for staff and resources for the children.

This will not result in the neglect of the arts or other areas of the curriculum. Leighton Academy has an array of quality marks acquired over many years reflecting a commitment to a broad curriculum – there will be no diminishing of this commitment into the future.

## **Academy Year**

The school converted to academy status on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013. So far the progress in the last year has been substantial but much of it has revolved around creating an appropriate infrastructure. For next year, and beyond, the priorities will shift to raising standards in teaching and learning as office routines become established and the staff investment has an impact. The governors have worked hard to ensure Leighton Academy has a succession and transition plan in place in preparation for September.

## **Holiday**

The academy closes Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 3.15 pm and opens at 9.00 am on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

Let us hope for some good weather.