Last week we hosted our annual Sports Day and what a sporting spectacle it was! There were many highlights, from Mr Cadwallader treating us all to a PA commentary that will go down in the annals of broadcasting brilliance to Mr Ward and Mr Bishton showing that you really do have ‘to earn it to win it’ and being anything but chivalrous in the staff relay event. My overwhelming feeling was one of excitement at the attitude of our fabulous young people; the seriousness and desire with which they approached their events, how they celebrated each other’s achievements, the raucous nature of the cheering and the extremely high participation rates. Our students certainly did ‘turn up’ on Sports Day. As I have said many times there is much that we can learn from sport.

Last Monday all OAT West staff, over one thousand of us, attended a training day at the Bethel and at GSA, where one of the guest speakers, Sir John Jones, encouraged us to reflect on our key values. For me the most important has to be that of ‘courage’. As a teacher for twenty plus years and as headteacher for eight years I think I have the best job in the world but am also aware that for some I may, at times, be the object of criticism. I understand this and embrace it as do our GSA staff. It takes courage to stand up in front of others, to teach, to lead and to care as deeply as we all do here. I see courage in very many places at GSA; I see it in our insistence on the very highest standards at all times, in performances like the wonderful Chicago at the end of last month, in lessons when a student who doesn’t understand asks ‘the question’ that lots of others would like to and yes, in exams when students know so much depends on what they commit to paper in such a short space of time. Well done to all those students who, this year have had the courage to ‘turn up’ and to give something a go; success starts with this seemingly very small but hugely significant first step.

Not surprisingly courage has been identified as one of academy key values. From September as part of our values driven character curriculum the young people will be introduced to the ABCs of GSA. A for ambition, B for belief and C for courage. Of course there will be other values that we will share, discuss and reflect on but if we get these three right then our children really will have the right character to change the world when they leave. Given the nature of current political discourse I certainly hope that they do.

Developing a character curriculum will play a huge part in our planning for next year. However, as regards, our academy development plan there really are only two priorities:

- to develop strategic reviewing and planning actions, and
- to develop core knowledge, skills and ‘character’

Too many organisations overcomplicate and have a long list of priorities that they ultimately never get to and are therefore ineffective. If, at all levels, we can continue to get better at reviewing our performance and putting in place key actions we will certainly improve. Similarly, if we focus on making sure that our curriculum offer in lessons develops the key knowledge that students need to succeed whilst at the same time developing the character of the whole child we will really have an outstanding provision to be proud of.
Unlike some academies we will be fullystaffed with specialist teachers next year; we will need to be as we welcome an extra seventy students in a Year 7 cohort. We hope that a refurbishment of Art, DT, Science and PE changing rooms means we have further enhanced our physical environment. Of course, we also hope to open our new £2 million ten classroom block. It will be sad to see some teachers leave and we wish the following staff all the very best in their future careers:

- Miss Beckett (Geography)
- Mrs Birch (Health and Social Care)
- Mrs Chandard (Business Studies)
- Mrs Creary (MFL)
- Mrs Dhanoya (Head of Post 16)
- Mrs Dhillon (Maths)
- Miss Gregory (PE & Deputy Head of Post 16)
- Mr Guirguis (MFL)
- Miss Jones (English)
- Miss Shah (English)
- Mrs Smith (ICT)
- Mr Taylor (Product Design)
- Mr Uddin (Science)

With regard to uniform, we have a very sensible uniform policy at GSA as we believe in high standards. Could I please ask you to be mindful of this when purchasing uniform items for September?

Finally, can I please take this opportunity to remind you firstly of the terms dates for next year and that secondly Wednesday’s will no longer be a 2pm finish for students? They will finish at 3pm, as they do on all other days.

**Term dates 2019/20:**

**Autumn Term** – Monday 2nd September 2019 – Friday 20th December 2019 (Training days: Monday 2nd and Tuesday 3rd September 2019; Half term: Monday 28th October 2019 – Friday 1st November 2019)

Christmas Break: Monday 23rd December 2019 – Friday 3rd January 2020


Easter Break: Monday 6th April 2020 – Friday 17th April 2020

**Summer Term** – Monday 20th April 2020 – Friday 17th July 2020 (May Day Bank Holiday: Friday 8th May 2020; half term: Monday 25th May 2020 – Friday 29th May 2020; training day: Monday 6th July 2020).

I wish you all a very safe and happy summer holiday. We return after the summer holidays on Wednesday 4th September 2019: Years 7, 12 and 13 to arrive at 8.45am; Years 8 – 11 to arrive at 9.50am.

As always thank you for your support.

‘Onwards and upwards’

Adrian Price
Principal