



29 September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: 'The learning experience' (September 2023)

Welcome to a new academic year. I hope that as we look forward to all that it brings, you are encouraged, having enjoyed quality family and friends time over the summer and have a sense of hope for what the future holds this year.

The year has started strongly for our students. Attendance has never been so high, and we have made huge improvements in working together to ensure our students arrive at school promptly by 8:40am. Detentions have reduced compared with this time last year and the year before and high-level misbehaviours are also reduced. Our zero-tolerance approach to mobile phones has had a positive impact to the extent that students are now talking and playing more with each other and more frequently conversing with adults on site. Thank you for your support with this as it really does make a wonderful difference.

We completed a survey of students recently to find out how many were engaging with our extracurricular activities. 86% of our pupils are engaged in at least one out of school learning experience. This is phenomenal and reinforces how amazing our young people are at developing their wider interests which will stand them in good stead for the future.

We had the BBC into school this week to film a documentary about how music can improve your mental health and support well-being. Danny Willshire interviewed students and staff as well as performing for them as part of his story about the stresses and strains he went through.

Our young people presented themselves brilliantly at our Open Evening and were a true credit to you and the school. Over 900 visitors toured around the site, interacting with students and found out what makes Finham Park School such a special community in which to learn.

Over the summer I decided to try something new by learning to paint with watercolour. The process of learning a new skill was fraught with the usual frustrations and sense of disappointment as well as the occasional sense of joy when a painting was finally produced to an 'acceptable' standard. One of my friends amusingly called my collection of paintings 'The imperfect perfectionist'. This captured my attempt to learn to paint brilliantly. It is this process of try, try and try again that is so important to enable learning to enter long term memory. The ability to have a go, make mistakes and learn from them is vital to all our successes. Taking the shortcut by using AI technologies such as Chat GPT or downloading mark schemes off the internet and copying them only robs the learner of the joy of learning and the benefits it brings to improve themselves.

Please take the opportunity to remind your young people of the need to walk safely to and from school. This includes taking care when crossing roads, or when being approached by strangers. Occasionally we get notification from the public of some students not taking due care and consideration when walking in the local area.

As always, if you would like to get in touch with the school, please do so through the normal mechanisms outlined on our website which includes contacting your child's mentor, college leader, wellbeing officer or simply just emailing the school following the link on the website's front page.

Mr C Bishop (Headteacher)