



Matrix Academy Trust

EDUCATION WITHOUT EXCEPTION

Our ref: LD/Wednesfield Welcome

11 January 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

We would like to take the opportunity to officially welcome you to the Matrix family. First of all, thank you for all the positive feedback we have already received. Many pupils and parents have already told us that they feel Wednesfield Academy is moving more rapidly in the right direction.

This letter outlines the reasons behind these changes and gives advance notice of exciting developments for the academy. Ideally, we would have liked to have been able to communicate directly with you before the Christmas break. However, we were not permitted to send anything out until Wednesfield Academy officially transferred over from the previous trust.

Mrs Carpenter was able to communicate to you in her letter before Christmas that the Department for Education chose Matrix because of their proven track record for improving schools and securing the very best outcomes for thousands of children. There was also a consultation letter sent last May from the Regional Schools Commissioner. You can read more about the trust's history and watch a short video where pupils from the different schools talk about the impact the trust has had, the video highlights the focus the trust has, which is all about improving the education of children.

<https://matrixacademytrust.co.uk/our-trust/>

Although Wednesfield Academy has been improving in a number of ways, moving from an Ofsted rating of Inadequate in 2017 to Requires Improvement in 2018, and has made massive improvements under Mrs Carpenter's leadership, the overall Ofsted grading remains Requires Improvement following the recent inspection. Examination outcomes for Year 11 and Year 13 are improving but they need to be better so that Wednesfield Academy's young people have as many doors opened for them as possible. Further significant strides will not happen without making some important changes to how the academy operates.

The full Ofsted report will be released on the Ofsted website on 17 January 2023. However, we are able to share it with you ahead of the publication date and we have attached it to this letter. As you will read from the report, Ofsted were very positive about many aspects of Wednesfield Academy. However, Ofsted noted that not all pupils "show the self-regulation and maturity expected when moving around school". Ofsted also noted that "There is considerable variation in how well the curriculum is taught". This is something Wednesfield Academy leaders were already very aware of. Although the teaching has improved in many ways, the academy recognises that learning is sometimes being held back by some pupils' behaviour.

Having a calm and orderly school is a prerequisite for learning to proceed without disruption. Ofsted noted to leaders that behaviour was especially affected by breaks and lunchtimes. This is why the academy has made some important changes to the ways break and lunch operate.



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Breaktime is now longer than it was previously, and the academy has split it so that different key stages have it at different times. This allows pupils more time to eat, drink and socialise with their friends. For the first two weeks, while the academy was adjusting to this new system, the academy allowed pupils access to an outside space if they chose: the Rocket Quad. Now that the new breaks are established, the academy will be allowing pupils - from Monday, 16 January 2023 - to also go outside to the bottom Quad. Of course, if pupils want to remain indoors, they can do so.

During breaks and lunchtimes, pupils are free to go to the toilet as long as they have asked a member of staff. This ensures that toilets do not become overloaded with people and staff know where children are at all times, which is essential for safeguarding.

Wednesfield Academy is a popular academy. With their pupil numbers having increased, it has become necessary to streamline how lunchtime operates so that all pupils have enough time to eat. This will be alleviated in September by the academy being able to introduce a third lunch sitting. However, the academy cannot currently do this due to timetable constraints. To keep queues manageable, the academy is directing pupils to sit in specific areas, based on whether they bring their own lunch, purchase sandwiches or hot meals. This is a tried and tested approach in Matrix's larger schools. Pupils stay indoors during lunch so that they can be supervised, essential for safeguarding. This is something which happens in every trust school.

Another thing Wednesfield Academy has adopted from other trust schools is using a non-verbal signal to indicate to pupils that they need to cease their conversations and listen to staff instructions. This reduces the need for staff to raise their voices, making school a much more calm and settled place for everyone. The signal is typically used at the end of lunchtime to ensure a safe exit from the lunch venue.

It is essential that the students exit the Dining Room calmly to ensure that learning that is taking place is not disturbed. When KS3 pupils are either on their break or lunch, KS4 pupils and KS5 students are in lessons and vice versa.

As a trust, Matrix has very high expectations for uniform. We would like to thank everyone who has taken on board the reminders about uniform standards which Mrs Carpenter put in her letter at the end of last term. Because the previous trust will not permit us to keep the existing blazers which feature their branding, we are going to be **replacing all pupil blazers**. We will be supplying these completely **FREE** of charge as soon as we have procured them.

In addition to supplying everyone with a blazer, the academy will also be supplying, without charge, **a new school tie**. The tie will be in one of four coloured stripes. The colours correspond to the academy houses. While the academy does have a house system of a kind currently, this will be very different going forward. Each house will have a Head of House, a pastoral leader who really gets to know the pupils in their house well. The Head of House will be supported by a house team, dedicated to the welfare of your child. The House office will be the first point of contact for parents.





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The academy **trousers and skirts** will also be changing colour to black, which is the same for all of our schools. Pupils may continue wearing grey trousers or skirts until you need to replace them. However, if you are purchasing new trousers or skirts, please buy them in black and not grey. This uniform will be much more cost effective than the previous uniform.

With the cost of living in mind, **PE kit** from September will also be changing to a plain black t-shirt, shorts and sports socks. These will be unbranded items so you will be able to source them from any sports shop or supermarket. If you need to buy new PE kit before September, please buy items in plain black.

To support you in making sure your child has the **correct uniform**, the academy **website** will be updated with images of what is appropriate. This will include plenty of images of what types of footwear are acceptable. We are aware that shoe companies do not make life easy here, marketing some trainers as 'school shoes'. The images we put on the academy website will hopefully make it easier for you to turn down your child's request to buy them expensive Nike trainers, or other branded footwear!

The academy has recognised that **attendance and punctuality** needed to improve. However, thanks to some important changes made this term, improvements are already starting to happen. Anyone who is late to school serves a break time detention in the Dining Room. Pupils face away from their peers to help them resist the temptation to communicate, which would result in further sanctions. The number of breaktime detentions is already significantly reducing because children are now more motivated to arrive to school on time. As we are sure you will agree, punctuality is important for the workplace so we are setting pupils up for success later in life. Thank you to everyone who has echoed these messages with their children.

There are so many benefits of being part of a trust with lots of other secondary schools. One of these is being able to offer an RAF Cadet Force. Mrs Carpenter will be sending out more information about this very soon but, in short, it will be a fantastic opportunity for pupils which includes them being able to go on outdoor expeditions, take part in competitions, take trips aboard and fly real aeroplanes.

There will also be a special Trust Awards evening early in the summer term where the achievements of Wednesfield pupils will be recognised alongside those of other Matrix pupils.

Thank you for your support and I look forward to working with Wednesfield Academy to ensure pupils achieve their full potential.

Yours sincerely

Ms L Draycott
Chief Executive Officer - Matrix Academy Trust

