



# Castlebrook High School



● INSPIRE ● CHALLENGE ● EXCEL ●

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Acting Headteacher: Mrs S. Armstrong BA (Hons), NPQH

22nd December 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

With the festive holiday fast approaching, I would like to take the time to keep you informed of some of the key developments and events that have taken place in school over this half term. It has certainly been another busy, productive and very rewarding half term, and I know everyone is looking forward to a well deserved break.

## **Enrichment Activities**

In my role as acting head teacher, I am determined to ensure that our learners are able to experience a wide range of enrichment opportunities. "Enrichment" is called just that because it enriches the school experience for young people. It helps to make them well rounded individuals as well as team players; it helps them to learn and have fun beyond the normal timetable of lessons; it helps them to develop new skills, build confidence and self esteem, as well as make new friends and get the very most out of their time here.

Our enrichment timetable is now more extensive than it has ever been and I would like to thank all those staff who has enabled us to provide this fabulous offer. Mr Gurney and Mr Swan now lead our largest ever cohort of over forty learners on the journey to Duke of Edinburgh Award success. Well done to all those learners who have signed up for this challenge? It is one you will never forget!

In November the majority of our year 7 learners went on our annual Year 7 Residential to Manor Adventure in Shropshire. Despite the cold weather, they all managed to take on a range of new challenges, make new friends and memories, as well as keep many of the staff awake into the early hours of the first night! A big thank you must go to Mr Gildea the visit leader and all the other teachers who gave up their time to make this event so successful. In Food technology Mrs Mundy and her team have organised Bonfire and Christmas after school cookery sessions. The quality of the Christmas cookies I saw last week was exceptional. Mr Wilson, Head of English has launched "Debate Mate 2017", Miss Sowerby and Miss Bruce have put on a Christmas Art Workshop, while Mrs Ogden and Miss Phillips organised theatre visits to see "The Little Shop of Horrors" and "Cinderella". Mrs Ogden has informed me that the staff at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton, as well as members of the audience, came up to her to commend her on the outstanding behaviour of our learners as they enjoyed this traditional festive pantomime. It is wonderful to receive such public recognition for the excellent behaviour of our young people.

At the start of December Miss Osbiston, our newly appointed Chemistry teacher, made sure that the year 7 Science Club got off to a spectacular start with a Christmas fun lab experience where learners made Candy Cane Crystals, Christmas Tree Slime and Acid and Alkali baubles! The X Factor didn't have a patch on the Castlebrook Factor Night on Tuesday 20th December when a packed lecture theatre audience was treated to a whole range of acts. Congratulations to Beth Ryan in Year 11 who sang her heart out and is our 2016 Castlebrook Factor champion!

Rehearsals for this year's school production of "The Little Shop of Horrors" are well underway. There will be three performances mid February, so book early to avoid disappointment as the show is guaranteed to be a sell out this year.

In January 2017 details of our new Key Stage 4 PGL confidence and team building residential will be released. This will take place in October 2017. Our full enrichment timetable is now on the school website in both the Learner and Parent Zones. Why not take a look at our photo gallery of enrichment activities at the same time?

### **Academisation**

Castlebrook was on track to convert to academy status on 1st January 2017, joining the Shaw Education Trust (SET), which is currently comprised of the following schools: Blackfriars Academy, Coppice Academy, Saxon Hill Academy, Walton Hall Academy and Wolstanton High School. More information about the Trust can be found at [www.shaw-education.org.uk](http://www.shaw-education.org.uk). Due to legal matters regarding land transfer, the move has had to be postponed until 1st February 2017. At this time you will notice slight changes to our school signage and letterheads which will incorporate the Shaw Education Trust Logo. We are delighted to be joining the Trust and look forward to a thriving partnership which is committed to driving up standards across the school. In order for Castlebrook to align with the teacher training days across the Trust's family of schools, there have been two slight changes to the recently published Term Dates 2017-18. School will now be closed to learners on Monday 16th April 2018 and we will now close for the Summer Holidays on Friday July 20th 2018 and not on Thursday 19th July 2018 as was previously published.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding at Castlebrook continues to go from strength to strength. Our latest revised Safeguarding policy (October 2016) has been described as one of the best Safeguarding Policies currently in place. Several of our feeder primaries have asked if they can re-brand our policy for them to use in their schools, and the Shaw Education Trust will be adopting our policy across their entire family of schools. We also work closely alongside the NSPCC and will soon put a link to one of their excellent videos entitled "Talking to your children about terrorism" on our website, to support parents/carers who would like some additional support to enable them to discuss this sensitive topic at home.

### **Assessment and Reporting Cycle 2016-17**

All the details regarding the dates for all Key Progress Indicator (KPIs) data input, reports and Parents' and Carers' evenings are now on the school website. Please can all parents and carers make every effort to attend these Parents'/Carers' evenings as they provide a valuable opportunity to discuss the next steps to support each child's progress. As of this year, all Heads of House will also be in attendance at these evenings, thus enabling us to ensure that the pastoral team are working closely with the academic team in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for every learner.

### **Year 11 GCSE Summer 2017 Exam Preparation**

The year 11 GCSE English and Maths mock results afternoon took place on Friday 9th December 2016. Organised by Mr Orrell, the day provided a valuable opportunity for year 11 learners to reflect on what their actual results will be in these two critical GCSE subjects if they do not do any more revision in the 22 weeks left until the GCSE exam season begins.

The GCSE Summer 2017 exam timetable is now on the school website and copies are also in all form rooms and around school. Bespoke individual GCSE exam timetables will be issued during the spring term. This end of year 11 schedule of public examinations will soon be upon us and all year 11 learners have been asked to ensure that they attend after school revision classes. In January 2017 we will launch our Extra Revision Incentive Card (ERIC) with all our year 11 learners to encourage them to attend as many of these extra classes as they possibly can, and especially so in English and Maths. A timetable of enrichment activities including revision classes is now on our

website in both the Learner and Parent Zone". Information about revision classes during February half term, Easter and the Spring Bank break will be released in due course. The next set of English and maths mock exams will take place the week beginning Monday 6th February 2017 and the final Year 11 Parents' Evening is on Thursday 30th March 2017. Further details are again available on our school website.

### **New School Building**

I am delighted to inform you that Castlebrook High School has been chosen as the sample school in the first batch of North West Schools, which form part of the DFE Priority Schools Building Programme. Due to the financial constraints of this block replacement building programme, the Sports Hall, Gym, Construction centre and astro turf will not be replaced. The new school building will be built on the existing hard stand area adjacent to the astro turf. Myself and Mr Orrell will be involved in working with the two companies who have been chosen by Arcadis to compete for the contract to build our new school and thereafter the other three schools in this batch. We will be visiting several other new builds in the North West to ensure that we make the very most of the space available to us in the new main school. Building work is scheduled to begin in July 2017 with the new school building scheduled to be up and running by January 2019.

### **Staffing**

Leaving us at the end of the Autumn term are Miss Travis (temporary appointment in English), Mr Taylor (temporary teacher of PE), Mrs Howard (second in MFL and teacher of Spanish) and Miss Yates, (cover supervisor). We wish them all the very best as they pursue new career opportunities and thank them for the contributions they have made to the school during their time with us. Mrs Hughes, one of our receptionists is also leaving and we wish her a long, happy, healthy and well deserved retirement. I would like to welcome Mr Fletcher who joins us as the new head of PE, Miss Minshull who joins us as an experienced teacher of Spanish and French, and our new cover supervisor Mrs Nightingale.

### **School Council 2016/17**

Student Voice continues to go from strength to strength. Our Executive School Council is led by the Senior Prefects, all of whom lead the six following sub-committees: Environment, Publicity, Charity, Community, Teaching and Learning, and Inter- House Challenges.

Learners across all year groups were recently invited to apply (by letter to myself) for positions on any of these sub-committees. The calibre of letters was exceptional; so much so that I have personally written to all the successful candidates to congratulate them on the quality of their applications. There are now over 50 learners on the school council and the various sub- committees will be meeting over the next few weeks to finalise their action plans for this academic year. Several inter-house challenges have already taken place, including the Dodge Ball Challenge which took place last Monday night in the gym after school. The teaching and learning sub-committee members have been meeting with Miss White to put forward some of their ideas to further improve teaching and learning across the school, and the Charity sub-committee has already raised over £500 for Macmillan Nurses through our cake sale, as well as £175.00 for Bury Hospice through our "Sponge the Teacher" fundraiser. Our Christmas Jumper Day which took place today was to raise money for the charity Cystic Fibrosis. Well done to all those staff and learners who donned their jumpers and raised money for this very worthy cause.

### **Parking and Punctuality**

Concerns have been raised with regard to parents/carers parking on the yellow lines in front of the school building when they drop off and pick up their children from school. Furthermore, it is increasingly the learners with parents/carers who drive them to school who are arriving late. This lateness then in turn leads many of these parents/carers to park on the yellow lines. Please can I urge these parents/carers to allow plenty of time for their car journey, and more so during the darker winter months. Arriving in plenty of time will also ensure that their children can be dropped off further

down each side of the road, as they will have the time to walk that little bit further to school without arriving late.

### **Stranger Danger**

It has been brought to my attention by Bury Community Safety Partnership that on Tuesday 20th December a man driving a white van or people carrier in the Tottington area was seen trying to grab a young girl on her way to primary school. The girl pulled away and ran off to school where she reported the incident. Please can all parents and carers reinforce the stranger danger message to their children as we approach and during the school holiday.

### **Holidays in Term Time**

It is often the case that during the Festive break thoughts turn to planning for Summer holidays. Please can I remind all parents/carers that the school will not support holidays taken out of term time and that any such unauthorised absences will impact on your child's learning, as well as their attendance figures.

Have a wonderful Festive season and best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year. Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "S. Armstrong".

**Mrs Armstrong**  
**Acting Headteacher**