



# Castlebrook High School



● INSPIRE ● CHALLENGE ● EXCEL ●

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Academy Principal: Mrs S. Armstrong BA (Hons), NPQH

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Dear Parents and Carers,

It gives me great pleasure to write to you all at the end of what has been a truly fantastic Autumn term, a term during which it has been a real privilege for me to work in partnership with yourselves, your children, our staff, our academy councillors and colleagues across the Shaw Education Trust, as we drive forward school improvement and work to secure fantastic futures for all our young people.

The new year 7 learners have settled into our school family exceptionally well, quickly and sensibly learning to find their way around our site, familiarising themselves with our routines and expectations and really getting involved in school life. Well done to all of them!

Our Open Evening in September drew in a record number of prospective parents and carers. Feedback was brilliant, and overwhelmingly focused not on the new build, but rather on how informative, warm, honest and welcoming the evening had been, and how enthusiastic and committed our staff are. As we all know, it's not a building, but what goes on inside it that really counts. Our learner ambassadors and guides who supported the event were once again a credit to us and their families, their pride for their school clearly shining through in all their interactions with our visitors. We will have our highest year 7 intake for many years in September 2019. Fantastic news!

Our curriculum enrichment offer has once again been significantly enhanced this term, with several new clubs launched, as well as new and exciting off site educational visits. Alongside "Debate Mate" the English department now runs a thriving Book Club, based on the Bolton Children's Fiction Awards, a Creative Writing Club, and "Cakes and Classics" which is a teacher and learners after school book club. In Science Miss Osbiston, with the support of Mrs Smith and Year 11 Ti Yi, ran several themed Year 7 Science Club sessions that included exploring the Science behind fireworks and making Christmas bath bombs. Miss Hill kick started the Bronze CREST Award which has seen a group of Year 10 scientists meet weekly to explore a project on how flour affects the rise of cakes. Next term the group should successfully be awarded their Bronze CREST Award - a nationally recognised qualification. Miss Clough has just started Eco Club, aimed at our Year 9 scientists, which should allow pupils to look at how we can improve the school's environmental impact. This week a group of our Year 7's were invited to compete in our first STEM Spelling Bee; the top 3 pupils will be invited to compete in a regional round next term. Brilliant!

GCSE Spanish revision club runs every lunchtime in the MFL department while Chess Club is thriving in the maths department and is packed out every Thursday lunchtime. There is lots to do in ICT at lunchtimes as well. The Learning Hub runs a range of lunchtime and after school activities including Creative Art Therapy, Music Club, and the LGBTQ and Pride

Group, which promotes inclusivity and emotional wellbeing for all. Earlier this term staff and learners from the hub sold yellow ribbons and cakes to raise awareness of Mental Health Week. The PE department is providing a climate where everyone can get involved in sport, with football, table tennis and badminton on offer every lunchtime in the Sports hall and gym. The great and diverse enrichment offer here is something we are all really very proud of and is a great testament to our brilliant staff who really do go the extra mile.

This term has seen two residential; the annual year 7 one to Shropshire, and a new year 8 and 9 outward bound residential to the Lake District. The Geography department visited Salford Quays for their GCSE field trip, the History Department went to Manchester University, the learning hub team took learners to visit the animal care centre at Eccles College, and the Book Club enjoyed a trip to John Rylands Library. The Science department organised a fabulous visit to the RSC Christmas Lecture at Bolton School, and the English department took a group of girls to the Inspirational Women's event held in Manchester. In October, Mr Fair, Deputy Principal, went on a visit to China with a group of North West senior teachers, to see our sister school, Datong High School. We look forward to welcoming our Chinese colleagues to our school in February 2019, with an amazing educational visit to China and Datong school planned for 2020. Details to follow shortly! Just this week Madison and Michael won the Castlebrook Factor 2018 in style with Madison singing whilst accompanied by Michael on the piano. A big well done to all the contestants and staff who put themselves forward to provide a wonderful evening of entertainment.

Our charity work and commitment to supporting our wider community continues to grow. Alongside our Macmillan Coffee Morning and Save the Children Christmas Jumper Day, this term saw the launch of our "Together We Can Make a Difference" Christmas Appeal. The response from learners, teachers, parents/carers and the local community has been amazing, with one thousand cans of food donated for local food banks to distribute to needy families over the festive period. A big thankyou to Berrys of Unsworth and the local Co-op, who kindly supported our appeal.

This September saw the launch of our whole school Careers Strategy led by assistant principal Mr Orrell. Support for our year 11 learners got off to a flying start in September with a week of assemblies led by a range of local post 16 providers including Bury College, Hopwood Hall, Holy Cross and Bolton College. This term we also became the first high school in Bury to sign up to the Barclays Life Skills programme for schools. Highly regarded professionals in the fields of human resources and public speaking came into school to host workshops for our year 11's on how to prepare for and be confident in interview situations. In October Barclays staff, alongside Galliford Try staff and some of our academy councillors, ensured that our year 11 mock interview day was a roaring success, with all our year 11's really appreciating the opportunity to practise their interview techniques and receive valuable feedback before going on to actual college and apprenticeship interviews. Without exception the interviewers all commented on how focused and mature the year 11's had been in their interviews, as summed up in this quote from Pauline Boyes, Senior Agent for Barclays Bank: *"The pupils in this school are a shining example of what our education system should be about. They are engaged, polite, respectful well-presented and enthusiastic. The session was a delight from beginning to end and we could not have been made more welcome. I would do this again anytime."* Mr Orrell has also led House assemblies highlighting the wealth of fabulous free careers advice available for learners of all ages, on the Barclays Website: <https://barclayslifeskills.com>. Please take the time to have a look at this brilliant website and encourage your child to register; it really is a great resource. Throughout this term Mr Zubair and Miss Ross have held year 11 college application workshops at lunchtimes and Mr Welsh, our independent careers adviser, has held career drop in sessions at lunchtimes in the canteen, along with bespoke one to one careers interviews.

Revision for the forthcoming mocks in February and the actual GCSE exams which begin on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019, is well underway, and attendance at the year 11 weekly after school revision sessions has been really pleasing, with bespoke nights for the following key subjects: English=Tuesday, maths = Wednesday, Science = Thursday. It is worth mentioning here that the government's English and maths re-sit strategy is failing dismally. Last year nationally, only 22% of 17 year olds who sat maths or English again after failing at the end of year 11 passed with a grade 4 or above. So the message has to be clear to all year 11's. Make sure you revise for your GCSEs now, with English and maths the top priorities. Never again will you have so much support. Make the most of it while it is on offer!

I would like to extend a heartfelt "thanks" to parents and carers for your support in the inception and implementation of "The Unsworth Way" which Mr Leyland has led on. Our whole community has developed a sense of togetherness and common purpose, based on mutual respect and the shared goal of achieving the best outcomes, academic and personal, for every child. Your support in ensuring our learners are appropriately dressed for school, without trainers, makeup or jewellery helps remind members of our community that we are here to concentrate on learning - both in terms of the subjects in lessons and how to present yourself professionally.

A small number of learners are still not fully equipped for their lessons, however and I would appeal to you to ensure your child has a full set of stationery from January so they are not at a disadvantage in their lessons.

Attendance at school is currently the best it has been for many years, down to the fantastic support home and school provide in ensuring learners miss as little learning time as possible. We are keen at school to continue that trend and this is why we have included attendance targets on reports. I cannot stress how important it is for academic and social success that children strive for 100% attendance at school.

If you drive along the M66 I am sure you will have seen our wonderful new school building taking shape. We are on track to move in at Easter, so please check our school holiday pattern for 18/19 on our website, as there are some changes to last year which we have had to make to accommodate the move. Just the thought of unpacking the old building and moving into the new one seems quite overwhelming at the moment, but I have every confidence all will go to plan when we finally make the move!

Please keep taking a look at our website for all the latest school information, including upcoming parents' evenings. Thank you for all your support this term. Have a wonderful, safe and restful break and we look forward to seeing all our learners back at school, on time, in full correct school uniform and ready to learn on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Very best wishes



**Mrs S Armstrong**  
**Academy Principal**