



Outwood Academy Bydales
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Principal: Robert McGreal

Friday 6 February 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

School Updates

Communication

We are aware that it can be difficult to get through to reception on the phone during the school day. We have 830 students in school and only 1 receptionist trying to take those calls as well as dealing with visitors and other queries in school. We use our student receptionist role to support the receptionist, but clearly they are unable to answer the phone and sign in visitors. If you can't get through on the telephone, please do email us using enquiries@bydales.outwood.com - this mailbox is monitored daily and messages are passed to the relevant person to respond.

Please understand that staff are very busy during the school day. Teachers generally will teach every lesson of the day and members of SLT and learning managers will have many prior commitments too. It is not always possible to return calls or reply to emails straight away - and staff are very likely to be unavailable to see you if you arrive in the academy without a prior appointment. We do have a communication log in place where all messages are added with the staff member tagged in so they know they need to contact parents back. We give a 48 hour working window for replies, but I am aware that this hasn't always been happening recently - mainly due to staff absence. We are reviewing these procedures and endeavour to improve on this so that all replies are received within that 48 hour working window.

Student Attendance Communication

We have a dedicated telephone line and email address to report absence and inform the academy of student medical appointments. To ensure your messages can be picked up promptly and directly by the attendance team, please email attendance@bydales.outwood.com or telephone 01642 474000 (option 2). Where possible, please ensure all medical evidence is emailed to attendance@bydales.outwood.com prior to collecting your child and a note is added to their planner so their teacher at the time is aware your child is to report to reception for an appointment.

Uniform

We believe that a smart uniform improves discipline, self-esteem, focuses attention upon learning and away from distractions, and gives pupils a sense of pride in their appearance. We ask that the uniform is worn appropriately and in its entirety. Our uniform expectations can be found in the school planner on



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pages 13 and 14. You can also view this information in the uniform policy and guide available on the academy's website: <https://www.bydales.outwood.com/uniform>

Unfortunately there are a small number of students who are not meeting these expectations. The most prevalent issues are currently:

- **Students not wearing the correct type of trousers** - Trousers must be plain black and in a tailored formal style. They must not be leggings, cropped, a tight or skinny fit, or flared in style.
- **No Tie** - The number of students attending the academy without a tie is increasing. If your child misplaces their tie, please purchase one from the school shop on iPay and inform your child to collect it at reception. If they do need to borrow one for the day, a reminder will be sent to parents if it isn't returned that day, and if not returned a charge will be added to iPay the next day.
- **Students wearing nail polish or false nails (including clear polish, gels, acrylics, extensions and Shellac)**. These are not allowed in the academy
- **Students wearing jewellery, in particular piercings** - Students who wish to have their ears pierced, or any other form of piercing, should ensure that this is done at the start of the summer holiday.
- **Noticeable make-up including excessive eye shadow, liner or mascara is not allowed.** Make-up, if worn, must be discreet, unnatural false eyelashes are not to be worn. The decision as to what qualifies as this rests with the Principal.
- **Socks must be black and cover the whole foot and ankle.**

We ask that by the time we return after half term that any uniform issues are sorted, the biggest issue being trousers and especially the type that are stretchy and flared. From this point onwards students arriving in these will be asked to lend a pair of ours, refusal will lead to sanctions having to be escalated.

Mobile Phones

You may be aware that the Government recently issued stronger guidance around Mobile phones in schools. The link to this is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools/mobile-phones-in-schools>

Mobile phones can have a very negative impact on an otherwise calm and structured learning environment, causing distraction and the potential for lost learning. The academy has always had a firm policy against their use and is a 'phone-free school', but unfortunately we have seen an increase in students using phones around school; including filming and taking images in lessons that are then posted on social media platforms. Of equal importance are the issues that can be caused by the use of social media and other applications that impact on students' health and well being. This includes the inappropriate use of messaging apps which then can cause conflict between groups of students in the academy.

With this in mind we will be reviewing our mobile phone policy, in the meantime we will continue to rigorously enforce our existing rules around mobile phones in school. Phones should not be used,

seen or heard at any point in the academy. Any phone that is seen at any time in the building, even if not being used, will be confiscated. Phones should remain switched off and either in an inside blazer pocket or inside a bag.

If a phone is handed over when seen then no further sanction will be awarded - the student will be able to collect the phone at the end of the day for a first offence. Any subsequent offences will require a parent/carer to come and collect the phone from reception.

If the student fails to hand a phone over, it will escalate to a C5b being issued, with students having to spend the rest of the day, and the following day, in our reflection room.

This message will be shared with students in assembly and PDG sessions next week.

Please do not encourage your child to use their phone to contact you or others whilst in the academy. If students need to contact a parent or carer they should speak to a member of staff who will arrange to make this contact.

Lunch Accounts

Unfortunately we have had to make the decision to not allow students to run up a debt on their lunch account due to the cost of this to the academy when it is not paid off before we are charged by the catering company. For context, this term alone we have had nearly £800 of meals where students didn't have money on their account to pay for their lunch - today alone we had 22 students at a cost of almost £50.

We do not want any student to go without a meal, so moving forward we will be doing the following:

If a student doesn't have enough money to cover the cost of their lunch, a member of duty staff will issue a voucher to cover the cost of the lunch. This cost will be added to Ipay for parents to pay that debt, a text will be sent home informing you of this and asking you to add money to the account for future use. If this happens again within a week, then the student will be provided with a choice of sandwich to ensure they have had something to eat. Again, the cost of this will be added to Ipay for parents to pay and a further message sent home.

If you are facing any financial difficulties that mean covering the cost of lunches is challenging, please do contact us and ask to speak to your child's learning manager to see how we can support.

In the Community

I am proud of the young people at our academy, they are a credit to themselves, their families and our academy. They demonstrate the academy values of 'be safe, be respectful and be responsible' alongside working hard and being kind. However, we have had a number of complaints from our local community regarding the behaviour of a small number of students on their way to and from the academy.

Concerns are being raised about the volume of litter being left between the academy and the village and the responses residents are receiving when they ask students not to drop food and drink packaging or vapes. As well as this there have been some complaints about cyclists and using the

footpaths and even cycling on drives and gardens. We reserve the right to remove students' cycle permits where they are identified as being involved in any anti-social or unsafe conduct on the way to and from school.

We have a limited number of staff on duty as staff are required to monitor both inside and outside the school site. It is not possible for the academy to monitor the behaviour of students travelling to and from school and I would respectfully ask families to reinforce expectations at home.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. McGreal', written in a cursive style.

Rob McGreal
Principal
Outwood Academy Bydales