

19th December 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

As usual it has been a particularly busy last few days of the term with our termly presentation rewards assemblies. Our students always enjoy these events which provide us with an opportunity to celebrate the success of our “Rockstars”. It has been so lovely to see the sense of community and support of one another. Students across all year groups have also been rehearsing for their COREUs and Eco Eternal performances, with an exciting performance taking place at New Street Station and City Academy.

In a troubled world where, all too often, we don't take the time to express gratitude, can I thank you all for your continued support and for allowing us the immense privilege of looking after your children. Thank you also for the appreciation and kindness shown to the staff, who always have the children's best interests at heart.

I am immensely proud of our young people, who I truly believe have a genuine pride in the school and I sincerely hope are grateful for the opportunities they have here at Rockwood Academy. This term I am delighted to announce that we have awarded over 25,000 merits which is an incredible achievement. I regularly remind parents to engage with Class Charts which I see as an important tool in tracking progress and achievement on a daily basis.

As I hope you now understand, I believe that providing a wide range of opportunities is critical for developing students' confidence, raising their aspirations, and helping them to build transferable skills. I also believe passionately that a student's background should not be a barrier to their success, and I am committed to helping every Rockwood student achieve their very best. In the new year, we will be returning to standards and expectations where I will be communicating some exciting plans and news with parents about our involvement with the CORE Executive Leadership Team and Trust Lead Practitioners to ensure that Rockwood students gain the most from school life, the curriculum we offer and maximise every learning opportunity.

Highlights from the term

This has been a positive and purposeful term at Rockwood. I am pleased to share a few highlights:

Support for international peace

Community is at the heart of Rockwood's values. I am extremely proud of the students who completed an impressive fundraising challenge. The “bake sale” was to raise money for all families over the world affected by war or conflict. We here of the sadness over the world and wanted to do our little bit to help and support those who need us most.

Opportunity Day – Autumn Term 2023

We are committed to giving our students as many rich opportunities as possible and it was wonderful to see students enjoying our first Opportunity Day of the year. The day provided students the chance to explore essential safeguarding topics such as calling out sexual harassment and local community issues. Our Year 11s had a day packed with careers sessions and application support with education providers from around our city. An enjoyable day for all.

A special focus on the Science Department

As a new feature of my end of term letter, I have dedicated some time to shine a light on one particular subject. During the term our Science students have been exceptionally busy representing the school in external events, engaging in enriching lessons and practical activities to apply their scientific knowledge.

The Rockwood Science team are very excited to offer our students unique and engaging STEM opportunities. Through equipping our students with invaluable skills, experiences and opportunities, we aim to prepare them for a society where STEM careers are transforming the world in which we live. Our STEM programme has been awarded a grant by the Millenium Point Trust, as part of the grant our students have been able to offer:

A weekly STEM club where students are completing an array of exciting practical activities. Within the club the students are also completing their Bronze Crest Award, where they are exploring what makes the best type of shampoo!

An opportunity for Year 7 students to complete the Junior Engineering Engagement Programme [JEEP] with the Talent Foundry. Our students have been exploring different aspects of facilities management. As part of this project student visited the Mander Centre in Wolverhampton where they went behind the scenes and explored all aspects of security and shopping centre design!

Early in the term, 60 Year 9 students participated in a workshop on technology and engineering led by industry experts. Students were given the opportunity to present their engineering design to a team of judges who scored them on creativity and innovation. Our students developed their interpersonal, creativity and communication skills through their participation.

An intergenerational KS3 STEM project for Year 7 students and their families has also taken place. During the dreary October half term, our Year 7 students had an electrifying time with their families! The students were provided with Buzz wire kits to build at home with their families and measure their reaction times. Students recorded and photographed their creation as part of the Year 7 competition. A range of creative entries were shared, and our winners will be celebrated in the end of term assembly!

30 Year 10 triple scientists are also to be mentored by experts from The Big Four Firms (KPMG, PwC, Deloitte and EY) in the Spring Term. Students will be completing STEM workshops and career specific guidance to enable them to prepare for post 16 transition. We can't wait to see the progression over the course of the year.

A once in a lifetime opportunity for our Year 9 Students to be interviewed by the team at "generating genius" for a prestigious Junior Genius Scholarship, a total of twenty scholarships were up for grabs! Twelve of our students were shortlisted for interviews and were we delighted to find out that two of our students were successful in securing a coveted space on the programme! Year 9 students were the successful duo! As part of this three-year scholarship students will receive targeted mentoring, workshops at the University of Cambridge and a laptop to support the engineering endeavours.

Finally, we look forward to taking 8 of our Year 10 Physicists to Oxford University in the New Year, students will be participating in a material Physics workshop. We can't wait to share their successes with you in the new year communication.

I am sure that parents will want to prepare their children for the new year ahead. As a reminder we expect all students to arrive in full school uniform with full equipment, ready to "reach for the stars". Our 'Uniform and Equipment Policy' is clear and is available here:

<https://www.corerockwood.academy/school-life/uniform-equipment>

Full Rockwood PE kit should be worn on PE days, together with lanyards and blazers. If you have any queries or require support with any aspects of uniform or PE kit, please drop into reception and we will be happy to help. I have become a little concerned that not all uniform standards have been adhered to.

As a result of this, I will be reminding all students that corrections are in place for any students who fails to meet our uniform expectations. Please can I ask that parents pay close attention to uniform and equipment over the holiday period to ensure that each morning all students are ready to learn.

In the New Year we will continue to use the Class Charts app to communicate key data about your child's performance at school, including rewards, attendance, and behaviour. School attendance is a key focus for us all during the year ahead. Please ensure that your child attends school regularly – we aim for 100% attendance. We have included really good advice regarding school attendance on our school website. I would urge all parents to read this important addition as we strive for excellence. Please can I ask all parents to check Class Charts on a daily basis so that any sanctions are well communicated, and children are safe when returning home later than usual.

All that remains is for me to wish you and your family a very enjoyable holiday, and a Happy New Year.

Please remember that **school closes at 12.25pm on Friday 22nd December 2023. There will be a staggered exit from the building on Friday, so please bare this in mind when collecting children. The school reopens to students on Tuesday 9th January at 8.35am.**

Best wishes.

David Cooke
Head of School