Updates from the Principal

Update - 11th September 2026

Principal's Update

I hope that you and your families have had a positive start to the new academic year. It has been a real pleasure to welcome pupils back to Vale of York Academy and to begin my first term as Principal.

I feel incredibly privileged to lead the Academy and I am very much looking forward to the year ahead. Vale is a school with many strengths and, over the coming months, my focus will be on building on these while ensuring that every pupil is happy, safe, known, valued and supported to achieve their very best. I want our pupils to enjoy coming to school, to be proud of their Academy and to leave us with the knowledge, confidence and experiences they need for the future.

The start of term has already given me the opportunity to spend time with pupils in lessons, around the Academy and during assemblies. I have been really encouraged by the way pupils have responded to the routines and expectations we have introduced and by the positive start that has been made across the school.

As we begin the year, I also wanted to introduce our Senior Leadership Team and explain the different areas of school life they lead.

Mr Alexis Green-Harding – Principal
Overall leadership of Vale of York Academy, including the strategic direction of the school, standards and the quality of education and care provided for pupils.



Mr John Hunt – Vice Principal
Culture and Inclusion, including behaviour, safeguarding and support for pupils.



Miss Penny Tyrer – Assistant Vice Principal
Quality of Education, with responsibility for teaching, learning and the quality of pupils' classroom experience.



Mr Rory Donaldson – Assistant Vice Principal
Standards and Outcomes, including pupil progress, assessment and examinations.

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Mrs Rachael Harrower-Long – Assistant Vice Principal
Attendance and Personal Development, including attendance, wellbeing, PSHE and the wider personal development of pupils.



Mr Rob Orr – Associate Senior Leader
Community, Transition, Enrichment and Student Leadership, including our work with primary schools, careers, enrichment and links with the wider community.



We are fortunate to have a leadership team with a wide range of experience and expertise, but most importantly, a shared commitment to the pupils and families we serve. Although each member of the team has particular areas of responsibility, we work closely together to ensure that pupils receive the support, challenge and opportunities they need.

As part of our commitment to working closely with families, we will be running Leadership Drop-In Sessions throughout the academic year.

These sessions will give parents and carers the opportunity to book a 15-minute face-to-face appointment with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss a question, concern or issue linked to their area of responsibility.

Our first session will take place on Thursday 17 September, from 3.45pm to 5.00pm, in the school library.

Appointments are available at 3:45pm, 4.00pm, 4.15pm, 4.30pm and 4.45pm and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Once an appointment has been booked, it will no longer be available to other families.

This is the first of a number of Leadership Drop-In Sessions that will take place during the year, so there will be further opportunities to meet with senior colleagues.

To book an appointment, please click here.

Strong relationships between school and home will be central to the way we work. I want families

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to feel informed about what is happening at Vale, confident in approaching us when they need support and very much part of the life of the Academy.

These regular bulletins will be one way of helping us to achieve that. Alongside important information and reminders, I want them to celebrate our pupils and share some of the many things happening across the Academy.

Mr Hunt, Trust Vice Principal

What a fantastic start to the academic year! Thank you to all of our fantastic pupils and everyone at home for such a positive week.

I would encourage parents/carers to respond to Mr Green-Harding's invitation to come to meet the Leadership Team to discuss any concerns you have or any feedback you may have for us regarding all elements of the Academy. We are committed to working with you and, importantly, listen to everything you have to say.

Support for our pupils

I am lucky to work with a great team of professionals, all of whom are here to offer as much support as possible to our young people. They are:

Behaviour Manager

Mrs Rainbird

Learning Managers

Year 7 and 8: Mrs Yildirim

Year 9 and 10: Mr Clark

Behaviour Support Officers

Year 7, 8 and 9: Mrs Goodall

Year 10 and 11: Mr Wilson

Given the importance of Year 11, those students are being supported by a brilliant team of staff, outlined below:

Area	Staff Overseeing
Data/Progress	Mr Donaldson / Mr Rice
Behaviour	Mr Hunt / Pastoral Team
Safeguarding	Mr Hunt / Miss Cook
Attendance	Miss Harrower-Long
Classes/Teachers/Lessons	Miss Tyrer
SEND	Miss Barnes / Miss Nicholson

Uniform

Pupils may have noticed a focus on uniform this week as we seek to establish high expectations at the beginning of term. School uniform is an important part of Academy life and a high standard of personal appearance is expected of all Vale of York Academy pupils.

Wearing the Academy uniform reflects pride and a sense of belonging and presents pupils positively to visitors and the wider community. Uniform will be checked, alongside equipment, on arrival and during tutor time, including through Reception if a pupil arrives late.

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Where a pupil is wearing incorrect uniform, they will be given the opportunity to borrow appropriate items, which should be returned at the end of the school day. Parents/carers may be contacted to provide the correct items where possible. ***We do not want pupils to miss any valuable learning time due to uniform infringements***; please ensure you are familiar with the policy, particularly around shoes and leggings, which is available here.

Please do communicate with us if there is anything at all we can help with. The whole staff team are here to support and ensure that our young people do their absolute best. I'm looking forward to meeting and working alongside you to support your children.

Mr Donaldson, Assistant Vice Principal

I'd like to welcome everyone back to another exciting year. I'm lucky to have already had the opportunity to enjoy many interesting and engaging conversations with students, and look forward to many more across this year. I hope you have all had an enjoyable summer and share my high hopes for the months ahead of us. Onwards and upwards, team!

Year 10 and 11 Parents - Please be aware of our upcoming KS4 Revision Information Night, which is currently scheduled to take place on Tuesday 20th September. More information will follow shortly.

Mrs Rachael Harrower Long, Assistant Vice Principal

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

I am delighted to be joining Vale of York Academy as the new Assistant Vice Principal, with responsibility for Attendance and Personal Development.

I am genuinely excited to be part of the Vale of York team. I have been fortunate enough to work at a school not too far away, which gave me the opportunity to see first-hand just how amazing Vale is before taking on this role. I was immediately drawn to the school because of the students and staff – it really is a very special place.

The students have been absolutely amazing. I have really enjoyed having lots of conversations with them and welcoming them back after the summer break this week. Their energy, enthusiasm and manners are three things that have stood out to me immediately.

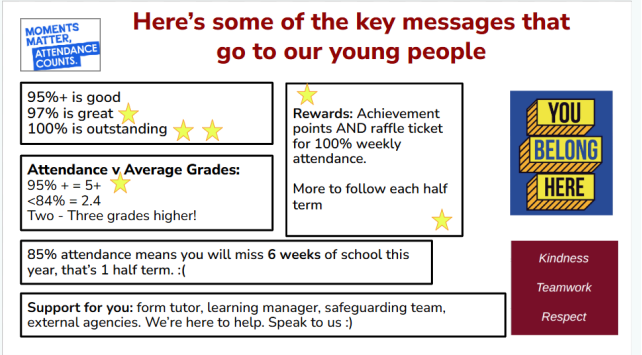
I am looking forward to supporting our students and families with attendance, as well as working with students through their tutor time activities and helping to develop and celebrate our rewards throughout the year.

I am also really looking forward to working alongside such a wonderful team of staff, students

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and parents, both within the Academy and across our wider community.

I feel incredibly lucky to be joining Vale of York Academy and am very much looking forward to getting to know everyone and working together throughout the year.



Miss Tyrer, Assistant Vice Principal

Hello to all our new year 7s and welcome back everyone else! It has been a great start to the new year and it's been lovely to see such purposeful learning going on in classrooms around our school.

Next week our reading plus benchmark assessments will take place for year 7,8 and 9. These will be done in exam conditions and it is important students treat this with the utmost care and consideration in order for us to accurately assign any reading interventions any students may need. We would also like to try and encourage more reading for pleasure for our students! With that in mind all year 7 forms over the next 5 weeks will have a library induction and the opportunity to take out a reading book of their choice. We would like our new year 7 students to carry a reading book with them at all times. They can of course also bring a book of their choice from home if they prefer.

Thank you for such a fantastic start to the new academic year.

Mrs Cook, Designated Safeguarding Lead

Hello and welcome back, it has been lovely seeing all the students, and I am amazed every year on how much they grow over summer!

I would like to welcome Mrs Bailey to the team, as the new Education and Welfare Support Officer.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you feel your child would benefit from additional mental health support, the earlier we can identify this, the more support there is available in school.

The Wellbeing in Mind team are running an Understanding Low Mood session for parents at The SEND Club at Clifton Green on Wednesday 16th September from 10 until 1130. You can just turn up, no need to book.

York Mind are open for referrals, we can support you with this but we will be unable to apply on your behalf. Please click here for more information.

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Key Dates:

Tuesday 20th September - KS4 Revision Information Night

Thursday 8th October - Open Evening

Friday 23rd October - School Closed

Monday 26th to Friday 30th October - Half Term

Thursday 12th November - Y7 Parents Consultation Evening

Friday 18th December School Closed