



16th September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: 'The importance of listening' (September 2021)

Someone told me recently, as soon as people stop listening to each other, society struggles.

A new year, new opportunities and fresh approaches. As the school has re-opened this year under much more 'normal' circumstances, it has been a joy seeing students interact with each other and staff, talking and listening with remarkable ease.

I have enjoyed 'connecting' with our students as I tour around lessons, play table tennis with them at lunch or pass them in corridors on the way to lessons. We have been discussing kindness with them this half term; one of our core values. What does it mean to be kind in all areas of life; on social media, in face-to-face interactions, in making new friends or in looking out for those who are isolated or anxious and how do we ensure we include everyone so that no-one feels left out.

One of the exciting developments supporting us this year is a broad and focused Student Leadership Team in the Sixth Form who are supported by a Student Council team in the lower school made up of a full range of students from all backgrounds. This is enabling us to ensure that we understand and develop the experience of our young people, particularly those who are more vulnerable. The six projects they are working on are: School Transition; Wellbeing; Inclusion; Cultural Diversity; Academic Mentoring; and Environment. These are projects that they said they felt most passionate about. They are long term projects, initially lasting for three years. Details can be found on the website.

The intention to turn a few of our toilets into 'all gender' toilets has been sparked by our student voice process and follows an Equality Impact Assessment. The need to listen to all our stakeholders, students, staff and parents is always key to making sure we continue to serve our school community well. I do have to apologise for some initial confusion around this proposal which understandably caused concern with some of our parents. However, it is heartening to engage in constructive dialogue with all elements of the discussion, particularly when you get in touch directly with the school. I hope that recent communications have satisfied some concerns and clarified context as many schools, locally and nationally have already put this in operation.

The start of the new year is a great opportunity to engage our new parents in the life and operation of Finham Park School. I would therefore like to invite you to express an interest in supporting or joining our PTA called 'Friends of Finham'. They are a fabulous group of individuals who give up their time freely to support, fund raise and educate our young people by providing opportunities in industry, interviews, and lectures so that the personal development of our students is widened. Do email my PA, Di Case, (d.case@finhampark.co.uk) if you would like to get involved.

We are starting to see students engage with our expanded Bring Your Own Device policy in lessons. Details about the Device Lease Scheme will be coming to you over the next few weeks if you would like to get involved.

Yours faithfully,

Mr C Bishop
(Headteacher)