20 March 2013

Dear Parents and Carers

Enclosed with this mailing is a report from Ofsted based on their inspection findings. An Ofsted team visited the Academy on the 12th and 13th of February and went into lessons and interviewed members of staff in order to assess the progress we have made since opening. The new Ofsted rules measures all schools against national averages and The Thetford Academy’s results, while better than last year, are not yet at national averages. This meant that we had to show very good teaching and learning and behaviour in order to pass. Unfortunately, the inspectors were not happy with all the lessons they observed and they have decided to place the Academy into special measures. This means we have failed our inspection.

What does this mean for your child? The Academy will now be monitored carefully against an action plan, that we produce, and Ofsted will expect to see improvements in a short time frame. They will expect us to improve discipline in lessons and ensure that our teachers have planned well and mark the students’ books regularly. They will be checking on the progress of students to ensure that they are achieving the marks they are capable of.

This week we have, as a start to this process, asked all teachers to enforce five basic rules in their lessons. On page six of the report the inspectors write “Teachers do not challenge students who use mobile phones, drink juice, arrive late or wear their coats and bags in lessons.” I have told the staff I, or a member of the Leadership Team, will inspect every lesson every day to make sure teachers do challenge the students. I would ask for your support in this by encouraging your child to follow some simple rules relating to phones, headphones, drinking in class, using appropriate language in school and removing outdoor clothing, so a better atmosphere for learning can happen for the majority.

The lead inspector told us that we were working in the “most challenging circumstances” he had ever inspected and recognised that working across two sites and managing the requirements of a new build, after a difficult merger, was going to cause problems. On page seven of the report he says that everyone in Thetford needs to support this project or we jeopardise “an outstanding opportunity to build an academy capable of providing all young people in Thetford with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need for the next stage of their training, employment or further education.” We know that with the opening of the new building and coming together on one site we will be able to improve our curriculum, staffing options and have consistency with the students which is hard to achieve at present.

David Lawrence, Chair of Governors, and the other sponsors remain committed to this project and I and the Leadership Team also remain committed. We are very determined to make the progress we need to in order to come out of special measures as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

C Spillane (Mrs)
Principal