Atlantic Academy Portland
an Aspirations Academy

Miss Heppell - Principal Type to enter text Type to enter text

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Wednesday 20th May 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Parent Forum. We appreciate the time parents took to join us for what was a lengthy and challenging but constructive discussion. It was encouraging to see the largest turnout we have had for a Parent Forum to date, and we are grateful for the honest and open dialogue about how we continue to strengthen Atlantic Academy together.

Following feedback from parents, we recognise that evening meetings provide the greatest opportunity for families to attend after work commitments. As a result, we will continue to hold future forums at similar times where possible.

The forum provided an opportunity for parents to raise questions, share concerns and hear directly from senior leaders about current developments across the academy. A summary of the key themes discussed is outlined below.

Staffing and Curriculum

You said:

- There were concerns around staffing and recruitment.
- Parents raised questions about option choices.
- Some parents highlighted the impact of staff absence and cover lessons, particularly within Year 8 Maths.

We said:

We are pleased that the academy is now in a stronger position regarding recruitment and staffing capacity. Recent successful appointments include:

- A new Head of History, allowing us to reintroduce GCSE History.
- A full-time Art teacher, enabling us to offer both GCSE Art and GCSE Photography from September.
- A Lead Practitioner of Maths.
- A Year 7 Teacher with a Digital Literacy specialism.

We have been encouraged by both the number and quality of applicants for recent vacancies, reflecting a positive shift from previous years.

We also acknowledged the impact that long-term staff absence has had within Maths, particularly for some Year 8 classes. To support continuity, we successfully recruited Ms Wheatland, former Head of Maths at Atlantic, on a temporary basis from mid-March to support the department during this period.

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Parents also requested clearer communication regarding staffing changes and updates. We fully recognise the importance of this and are committed to improving transparency and communication moving forward.

In addition, we discussed improvements to pastoral support structures. From September, each House will have a dedicated Pastoral Support Leader. This strengthens our non-teaching pastoral capacity significantly and will ensure students and families receive more consistent support and guidance.

Attendance

You said:

- Some parents felt there is a very strong focus on attendance and questioned whether this outweighs other priorities.

We said:

We discussed the academy's approach to attendance and why regular attendance remains an important priority for student wellbeing, achievement and future outcomes.

We shared examples of how attendance is celebrated positively through tutor groups and House competitions, focusing on collective success rather than singling out individuals.

We also discussed a number of case studies demonstrating how the academy works alongside families to improve attendance through tailored support, including use of alternative provision and support through The Harbour.

In addition, we shared current Year 11 attendance data, which shows that approximately 70% of the cohort have improved their attendance compared to the previous academic year.

Communication

You said:

- Some parents felt communication is not always timely or easy to access.

We said:

We recognise the importance of effective communication and appreciate the honest feedback shared by parents.

We explained that our online contact forms are monitored by senior leaders, enabling concerns and trends to be identified quickly and ensuring communication can be tracked effectively.

We also reflected on recent positive parental engagement, including:

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- High attendance at Year 9 Options Evening.
- Strong attendance at Year 11 Raising Achievement evenings.
- SEND breakfast meetings and regular opportunities for parents to meet with leaders.

Senior staff also remain visible on gates before and after school, and parents are encouraged to contact the academy if meetings or further support are required.

We are committed to continuing to strengthen communication so that updates are timely, transparent and accessible for all families.

SEND Support and Provision

You said:

- Parents raised concerns regarding support for some students with additional needs and consistency of staff understanding.

We said:

We discussed the significant developments made this year to strengthen SEND provision across the academy.

Parents spoke positively about The Harbour provision, which now includes:

- An academic classroom.
- A social triage space.
- A sensory room.

We also shared the academy's ongoing investment in SEND leadership and expertise, with three senior leaders and one middle leader currently completing SENCO qualifications.

In addition, extensive staff training has taken place this year to further strengthen understanding of inclusion, adaptive teaching and support strategies within classrooms.

Learning Profiles were also discussed. We recognise that these have not always been shared as consistently in the secondary phase as they are in primary. As a result, the Inclusion Team will now work to ensure profiles are shared more regularly with families.

From September, all Learning Profiles will move onto a new digital platform, Provision Map. This will allow plans to be updated more efficiently, shared electronically with parents and communicated more transparently.

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In addition to the themes outlined above, a number of individual questions and personal concerns were raised during the forum. Where appropriate, these matters have been followed up directly with families to ensure support, clarification and next steps could be discussed in a more personalised and appropriate manner.

Thank you again to all parents and carers who attended and contributed to the discussion. While some conversations were challenging, the forum demonstrated a shared commitment to ensuring the very best outcomes for our students and wider school community.

We remain committed to listening, improving and working in partnership with families as we continue to move Atlantic Academy forward together.

Yours sincerely,



Melissa Heppell
Principal