Atlantic Academy Portland
an Aspirations Academy

Miss Heppell - Principal

Maritime House
Southwell Business Park
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Monday 6th July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend our recent Parent Forum.

We know some parents were unable to join us for the parent forum and therefore wanted to share the key discussions with our wider parent community.

The forum provided an opportunity for parents to hear about our ongoing improvement journey, ask questions and discuss the priorities for the next academic year. A summary of the key themes is below.

Ofsted and School Improvement

You said:

- We were pleased that Ofsted recognised the progress the academy has made.
- Some parents asked how we continue to improve whilst ensuring students who consistently work hard continue to be recognised and challenged.

We said:

We were pleased that Ofsted recognised the improvements made since the changes in leadership, particularly around behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the positive culture across the academy.

We also explained that meaningful school improvement is a sustained journey rather than a series of quick fixes. Whilst we are proud of the progress recognised by inspectors, our focus remains on embedding improvements consistently so every student benefits from high-quality teaching and learning.

Parents also asked about those students who "always do the right thing." We discussed the significant work undertaken this year to strengthen our rewards systems so that these students are recognised and celebrated more consistently, we will be further developing this in the next academic year.

We also explained that our focus on adaptive teaching is not solely about supporting students with additional needs. High-quality adaptive teaching also ensures that our most able learners are challenged appropriately, enabling every child to achieve their full potential.

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Priorities for 2026–27

You said:

- Parents asked what the key priorities will be for next academic year.

We said:

Our priorities remain largely unchanged because genuine school improvement takes place over a number of years.

Our continued focus will be on:

- Raising outcomes.
- Improving teaching and learning.
- Developing adaptive teaching and inclusion.
- Improving attendance.
- Ensuring every child experiences excellent teaching every lesson, every day.

By maintaining a consistent focus on these priorities, we believe we will continue to see sustained improvements across the academy.

Mobile Phones

You said:

- Parents asked about our proposed introduction of the Blackout mobile phone system.

We said:

Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposal.

We explained that Blackout has been chosen because it supports our expectation of distraction-free classrooms whilst allowing students to retain possession of their phones. Emergency calling remains available, there is no daily collection of devices and the system automatically locks phones whilst students are on site.

We recognise that no system is impossible to bypass. However, parents agreed that introducing clear expectations around mobile phone use sends a strong message and will support learning, wellbeing and positive behaviour.

Further information will be shared with families in September ahead of the Autumn second half term rollout.

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Staffing

You said:

- Parents asked about staffing levels and recruitment.
- Concerns were raised regarding comments on social media suggesting the academy continues to experience staffing shortages.

We said:

We were pleased to reassure parents that all but one teaching vacancy has now been successfully filled. The only current vacancy is an additional Assistant Principal position for the primary phase. This is not replacing an existing member of staff, but increasing leadership capacity, due to staff promotion, to accelerate further school improvement.

Recruitment has historically been one of Atlantic Academy's greatest challenges, so we are particularly proud of the progress made over the past year. We have deliberately maintained high expectations throughout the recruitment process, ensuring we appoint outstanding staff rather than simply filling vacancies.

Many of our new colleagues are joining us from outside Dorset, including London, Birmingham and across the South West, bringing valuable experience from high-performing schools and strengthening the quality of teaching and learning across the academy.

House Structure

You said:

- Parents asked how the new House structure will support students.

We said:

From September, every House will have its own dedicated Pastoral Support Leader. These non-teaching roles will provide additional support for students and families, allowing concerns to be addressed quickly whilst teachers remain focused on delivering high-quality lessons.

Alongside this, the revised House structure will continue to strengthen belonging, healthy competition, enrichment opportunities and the identity of each House community.

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Communication

You said:

- Parents wanted to know the best way to raise concerns or ask questions.

We said:

We genuinely want parents to contact us.

If you have concerns, questions or simply need clarification, please get in touch. We would much rather have conversations early and work together to resolve issues than allow problems to grow.

Senior leaders remain available before and after school, and our online contact forms continue to be monitored daily. We hope to see even more parents at future forums as we continue working together to strengthen Atlantic Academy.

Thank you once again to everyone who attended and contributed to the discussion.

Your support, challenge and feedback continue to play an important part in our improvement journey, and we remain committed to working openly and collaboratively with all of our families.

Yours faithfully,



Melissa Heppell
Principal