



Portsmouth Academy  
for Girls

ASPIRE & ACHIEVE

## End of year letter from the Principal

July 2014

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we come to the end of our first year as the Portsmouth Academy for Girls, it is a good time to reflect on what we have achieved, update you on some important changes and look forward to an even more successful 2014/2015!

Firstly, can I thank you all for your continued support for the school. I have enjoyed meeting so many of you and parents' evenings have been extremely well-attended with over 70% of parents joining us each time. This is a record high and I thank you for working in partnership with us to ensure that your daughter 'aspires and achieves.'

Without us working together we couldn't have achieved so much. Below are some of the key achievements of this year, however there are many more! Of course we await the summer results but I am confident that the hard work of our pupils and high degree of support from the parents of Y11 pupils will really pay off and put us on the map to being an outstanding provider of education for girls of the city of Portsmouth.

### New uniform

At the start of the year, we introduced a new uniform including a blazer and a tie to show which House each pupil belonged to (Curie, Rowling, Pankhurst or Austen). This has had a really positive impact on feelings of pride and belonging amongst all our pupils and many visitors to the school have remarked on how smart they look and how well they conduct themselves when moving around the building.

### New learning environment

We opened our new Mathematics Centre of Excellence, which is a fantastic learning resource with big, airy and bright classrooms. Other improvements are the main hall which celebrates our pupils through large photographs and our motto 'Aspire and Achieve' being emblazoned on the wall. We have also extended our wireless technology and invested in more iPads to enhance learning.

Over the summer months, the staircases will be re-decorated and a brand new Science Laboratory created. I am exceptionally proud of our Science department and really believe we have the potential to be the best school in the city in relation to supporting our students to achieve highly in STEM subjects; something that will surely set them up for a successful career in Portsmouth and beyond.

### Attendance, Punctuality and Conduct

We have made great strides in improving the attendance of our pupils and have achieved 93.5%. This is an incredible 2% increase in just one year! Thank you all for making sure your child attends every day and is here on time. We have reduced lateness to school by over 50%!

I have also been delighted with the behaviour of our students and can say that all visitors to the school comment on the calm, purposeful atmosphere we have created.

We have now opened the 'Leadership café'; a space for our students to meet and talk about how they would like to see the school develop. They will also provide mentoring for each other, whether it is to help with learning or with other issues, such as how to have healthy and happy friendships. I am so proud of the young people we have and really admire the way they contribute to our community. For our students who require extra support with emotional well-being, we have also opened the Turnaround Centre. This is a 'school within a school' and is staffed with learning mentors.

As Principal, I truly believe that the best place for a girl to receive an education is here at Portsmouth Academy for Girls and I have been so pleased to be able to meet the needs of all students in a school which is ambitious for their future and able to remove barriers to learning.

### **The Curriculum**

This year, there have been important changes in our curriculum not least the move to a two-year KS3 and a three-year KS4. This will really support your daughter to achieve well in her final exams. We have also introduced a number of new vocational subjects such as BTEC Science and these are proving to be successful in engaging students who prefer to learn in smaller chunks. In due course, I will share curriculum learning plans more thoroughly with you so that you can see the learning journey your child is on each term and can have conversations with them about what they are learning and why.

### **Concerts and productions**

It is important that our students have an enjoyable, enriching time at school. This year, we have held a number of concerts including the brilliant 'Sights and Sounds' show; a huge thank you to Mrs Scott and Ms Parker. Next year, we are looking forward to an excellent school production of "Alice in Wonderland" which will be led by our new Drama teacher Ms Boniface. I am very keen for your child to participate in after-school activities and a full menu of what we have to offer will be made available to you when we return in September.

### **Farewells**

Of course, it is the time in the year when we sadly say goodbye to some staff. This year, two long-standing members of the English department – Ms Vidler and Ms Roberts are moving on to new schools. Mr Hurdle (Lead Teacher-Art); Ms Lawrence (Lead Teacher-Food technology) and Amber Colliss (Maths teacher) are also moving onto new schools. We will miss them and thank them for all their hard work and dedication to the school.

Mr Bicknell (Associate Leader for Maths and Numeracy) also leaves us to pursue his navy career. He has given a very long service to the school – 14 years, and will be sorely missed!

Also leaving are Mr Patel, Ms Butler and Ms Usher who joined us as temporary teachers; and Ms Oberman (Cover supervisor). All have new teaching posts and we are delighted to have supported them to develop their careers as well as grateful for all their hard work.

Finally, Mr Rust (Finance Manager) and Ms Gibbs (Admin Support) also leave us for pastures new.

We wish all our leavers every success in the future.

### **Thanks to all**

I would also like to thank the new local governing body for all their hard work and tireless championing of our school. To the school leadership teams and all their efforts to ensure pupils have an outstanding school environment. I would also like to thank all the staff – both

teaching and support staff – who make this school the terrific school it is and a wonderful place of work and learning. Congratulations to our students who so deserve to succeed. As the new academic year approaches, I am excited about our journey to become a 'thinking school' and making excellence a habit. Your partnership in this journey is so very important and I look forward to continuing to work with you and providing your daughter with an education she can be proud of. Please find below some key dates for your diary.

INSET DAYS FOR 2014/15	IMPORTANT DATES FOR TERM 1
Tuesday 2 September 2014	Y11 Parents' Evening - Wednesday 22 October 2014
Friday 24 October 2014	Awards Evening - Wednesday 19 November 2014
Monday 19 January 2015	Y7 Parents' Evening - Wednesday 26 November 2014
Monday 2 February 2015	Carol Service - Wednesday 3 December 2014
Thursday 2 April 2015	End of Term - Friday 19 December 2014
Half term - Monday 27 to Friday 31 October	

I hope you all have a wonderful summer and look forward to welcoming your daughter back on Wednesday 3rd September.  
Very best wishes



N. Sheppard  
Principal

