

9 July 2026

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Looking To Next Academic Year - 2026/27

Dear Parents and Carers,

www.firvale.com

As we approach the final weeks of the year, I want to provide you with a clear and comprehensive update on our plans for the upcoming academic year, the improvements we are putting in place, and our ongoing commitment to making Fir Vale Academy the best possible school for your children and our community.

This year has been marked by hard work, positive change, and meaningful progress. We have seen notable improvements in behaviour, teaching and learning and the introduction of our Morning Routines has enabled calm, orderly, and supportive starts to each day. Our Step Out process ensures transitions between lessons are smooth and structured, so students move quickly and purposefully. We have also welcomed strong new leaders, teachers, and support staff, all committed to joining us on this journey of rapid improvement. These appointments place us in a strong position as we look ahead to the future and our plans for the next academic year.

While we recognise there is still work to be done, we are proud of the progress we have made together this year. However, we remain determined that there is much more ahead, and it will require the commitment of our staff, students, and community, working together, to achieve our ambitious goals and vision for Fir Vale.

Looking Ahead to the New Academic Year

While students are preparing for a well-deserved summer break, our work is continuing.

In recent weeks and months, we have been carefully planning for the year ahead. Every decision we make is guided by a single purpose: to give every student the best possible opportunity to succeed.

As part of this work, we are further aligning our teaching, learning, and student support with the wider United Learning family. This will allow students to benefit from proven approaches used successfully across many schools in the Trust, while preserving the strong sense of community that makes Fir Vale unique.

These changes will provide greater consistency for students, clearer routines, and high-quality learning in every classroom. Additionally, they will enable our academy to collaborate more closely with our family of schools by sharing staff expertise, working together on initiatives, and pooling resources where appropriate.

In this letter are several key updates to keep you informed about what to expect in 2026/27 as we return in September.

Achievement Respect Opportunity Togetherness Kindness Determination

Principal: Mr Danny Bullock

School Day Structure

As part of our commitment to improvement, from September we will introduce a new timetable that reflects proven best practice across the country. This approach allows us to benefit from shared curriculum planning, resources, and expertise - providing students with a richer, more coherent educational experience.

Students will have four lessons each day, each lasting 75 minutes. Longer lessons give students more time for deeper learning, enabling them to explore ideas thoroughly, complete meaningful work, and receive sustained support from their teachers without feeling rushed.

This structure also reduces the number of transitions between lessons, helping to reduce lost learning time, create a calmer, more focused, and purposeful environment throughout the school day.

In addition to the new timetable, we are introducing new dedicated social spaces, with a 20-minute break and a 40-minute lunch each day. Students will spend social time with students from their own year group or key stage, which improves supervision, and fosters a safer, more relaxed environment where students can enjoy their social time.

These changes are designed to enhance learning, strengthen relationships, and make the school day more enjoyable for every student.

Academy Uniform

A smart school uniform is about much more than appearance. It helps create a culture where every student feels that they belong and are part of the Fir Vale community. Wearing the same uniform reduces visible differences between students, promotes equality and allows young people to be recognised for who they are rather than what they wear. This equity applies to all students and therefore, all students will be required to wear the full Fir Vale uniform.

Wearing uniform also helps students develop positive habits that will benefit them far beyond their school years. Arriving dressed correctly encourages pride, self-respect, discipline, and a readiness to learn. It reinforces that Fir Vale is a place of high expectations where we work hard and show respect for ourselves and each other. Additionally, uniform makes it easier for staff to identify students quickly, supporting a safe and secure environment for all.

The Department for Education is clear that schools should have a uniform policy that is fair, practical, and affordable. Schools must set high expectations while also making sure costs are manageable for families. Our uniform policy reflects these principles, providing a clear and consistent standard for all, and ensuring compulsory branded items are kept to a minimum.

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To further support families, we are making a significant investment ahead of September. Every student will receive a new Fir Vale tie and a school logo jumper, and for new Year 7's a PE top free of charge ready for the start of the new academic year.

Uniform Expectations from September **for all students** are as follows:

- Plain black shoes or trainers
- Plain black school trousers
- White shirt with a collar
- Academy tie
- Fir Vale logo jumper
- Optional – Black blazer with Fir Vale logo
- Optional - Plain black hijab
- Jewellery - One pair of stud earrings only, one small plain ring only

Academy Ties

- Year 7 – Blue Sapphire
- Year 8 - Green
- Year 9 - Yellow
- Year 10 – Blue Saxe
- Year 11 – Black

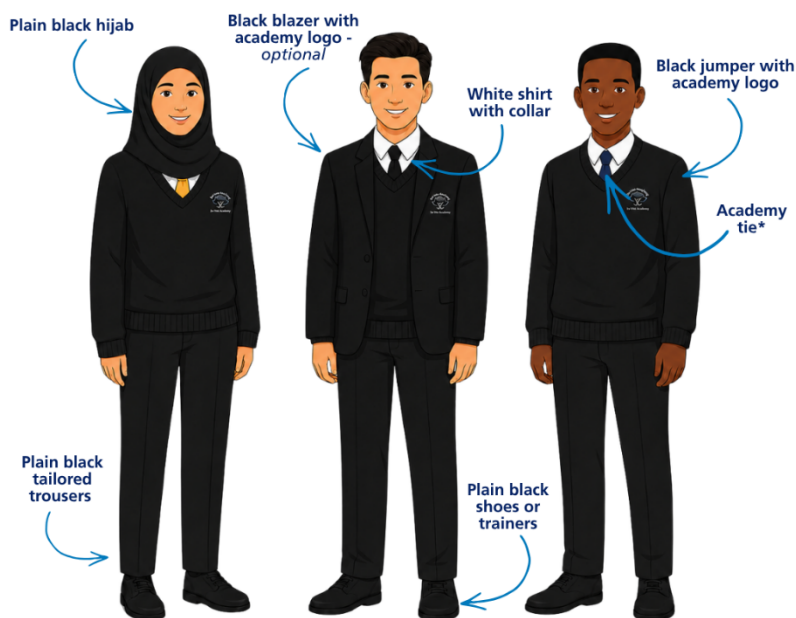
We will write to you again in the summer specifically about uniform to provide more detail on our expectations and what to expect with the delivery of new uniform for all pupils.

In return, we ask all parents and carers to support us by ensuring that students attend school each day in the correct uniform and ready to learn. Our staff will work with families where further support is needed, but we will also apply our uniform expectations consistently and fairly. By working together, we can continue to build a school where students take pride in themselves, respect one another and are able to focus on achieving their very best.

As well as uniform, for students to be successful they must be equipped for learning. This means your child arrives to school with a school bag and writing equipment (pens, pencil, ruler).

As always we are here to support. If you have concerns in accessing or purchasing items of uniform or equipment, please do contact us.

Our Academy Uniform



Remember -

- No leggings, combat style trousers or jeans.
- Shoes and trainers must have **no** patterns, logos or coloured soles/heels.
- Hijabs are welcome to support religious dress requirements; however, all other uniform items must comply with the standard uniform policy to ensure consistency.
- No jewellery is permitted except one pair of plain studs and a small plain ring.

**Tie colour is determined by your year group.*



Determination Achievement Respect Opportunity Togetherness Kindness

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Introducing United Pathways

From September, we are launching United Pathways - an exciting new initiative and one of the academy's largest investments in supporting our students and meeting more needs better. We recognise that some of our young people need a higher level of support to be successful both academically and socially, and United Pathways is designed specifically to meet more complex needs.

Around 120 students will benefit from United Pathways each academic year. Students who will access United Pathways will remain full members of the Fir Vale community, following the same school day and continue to access the curriculum, but with additional literacy and numeracy support, specialist teaching, and carefully planned interventions to help them thrive.

To deliver United Pathways effectively, we have invested in recruiting a dedicated team of experienced staff who will work exclusively within United Pathways. This significantly increases the level of support available to those who need it most. We are also working alongside sector experts to ensure the design and implementation of the pathway reflects best practice.

It is important to note that students in United Pathways will have the same school day as everyone else, but with different entry points, social spaces, and tailored support throughout the day. This enables us to provide the right support while upholding high expectations and a strong sense of belonging within our school community.

We will write directly to families whose child has been selected for United Pathways. This letter will outline the pathway, why we believe it is the right support for their child, and what they can expect from September.

Ultimately, this process is about meeting the needs of our students who currently are not receiving the educational experience they deserve. We firmly believe that this significant investment in facilities, staffing, curriculum design, and school structure will be transformational for many of our young people.

In Summary

The new academic year marks an exciting new chapter for Fir Vale. Together, we are creating a school built on high expectations, excellent teaching and a culture where every child is supported to thrive.

I will write to you again prior to the summer break regarding start of year arrangements, our summer communication plan and any further next steps on the context in this update.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Danny Bullock

Principal

If you need a translator to understand this please call the school on 01142439391
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