

20th June 2023

Dear Families,

Re: Changes for September 2023

First and foremost, I have included our year 6 families in this correspondence and would like to formally welcome them into our school community. It is a pleasure to have you on board and we look forward to working with you over the next 5 years. I will be writing to you all separately this week and look forward to seeing you all at the transition evening on Wednesday 28th June.

Over the past term we have been listening to our students, staff, and families and as a result there are some exciting changes happening for September which I believe will enable the school to continue to develop following on from its recent positive Ofsted visit, that you may have read about in the Shropshire Star this week. This inspection report is now available on the Ofsted website. In the paragraphs below I have highlighted some of the key changes we are implementing and our rationale for change.

1. School day and timings.
2. Move to year groups.
3. Leadership structure and staffing.
4. Parent advisory council.

School Day and Timings

In September we will be removing the early start on a Wednesday so that every day starts and finishes at the same time. Parents have told us that the inconsistency with start time means that it has a knock effect with the school run for other siblings, and work commitments. Students have also commented that they just 'forget' sometimes that it is an early start.

Students will need to have **arrived by 8:45am** and **school will finish at 3:05pm**.

Within our curriculum we will also be removing Period X and putting the time back into our academic subjects. This was a difficult decision because seeing our students all engaged in a range of activities on a Wednesday afternoon was fantastic. We do however need to ensure that our students are making the progress they should across their subjects, and this is the reasoning for it being removed. Whilst this means removing an extra-curricular offer, we have bolstered our PE department and appointed a Head of Performing Arts (Miss Ruston) and a new Head of Drama to ensure we can improve our offer at lunchtimes and after school. We also have a number of new and exciting trips, visits, and tours which will be available to students moving ahead. We launched our skiing trip earlier this term for example and already have 60 students signed up to go!

Move to Year Groups

In September your child will start the day in a tutor group with students from their year.

Since we launched our Small School system in 2017, we have increased considerably as a school population year on year. The pandemic has also meant that the challenges for schools and extended services have expanded and evolved in their nature. What this means is we have outgrown this system. It also means we have differing pastoral needs and gaps in knowledge due to lost learning and lost socialisation that are specific to individual year groups. It is essential that we can create positive year group communities, and staff who can support the specific needs within these communities. If you take year 7 and 11 as an example, being able to support our oldest students to make the correct post-16 decisions when there are now so many options available and when all of our students leave is

critical. At the same time, coming to 'Big School' is a very big step and having a team of staff devoted to our new year 7 students will allow this step to be less daunting.

Leadership Structure and Staffing

Earlier this year we re-aligned our leadership team to ensure that we are focused on the key areas that matter. Ofsted noted these changes and recognised that as a result the school is making the improvements required to support our community moving forward. For example, we now have a member of the senior leadership team who has a focus on literacy and numeracy alongside subject interventions as part of their role. This has meant that already every single one of our year 10 students is currently receiving additional bespoke support to close gaps in knowledge.

In terms of staffing, nationally there is a recruitment and retention crisis in the profession. A recent statistic showed that 45% of all maths teaching nationally is by non-maths specialists. Whilst we are no different to all other schools concerning this national crisis, we look forward to starting the new term with minimal cover compared to last September.

We are also pleased to announce that our SEND provision has been bolstered further this term with the addition of two new teaching assistants, and our SENCO has now moved to working fulltime. Alongside this we have secured a mental health practitioner to work alongside our expansive counselling and student support services. It has always been a belief of ours that these extended services are critical in supporting the emotional needs of our young learners and families.

Parent Advisory Council

We have spent a lot of time over the past few months offering our families opportunities to come into school to discuss the school or be a part of shaping the school moving forward. We have run meet the Principal and meet the Governors events as well as regular SEND picnics. Our anti-bullying group have only just again met to discuss how we can continue to evolve our work in this area. Next year we want to grow this offer by initiating a parent advisory council which will meet regularly to give parents a platform to share their thoughts and ideas and give parents a voice to support strategy within the school. Further information will be available on this in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Ben Morgan
Acting Principal

