



16th May 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Changes to the school day - The Howard

The consultation on proposed changes to the school day closed on 9th May 2024. Directors met on 14 May 2024 to consider all of the valuable contributions we have received as part of this process, which has been careful to involve all stakeholders. Headteachers and Chairs of Governors attended to share their recommendations which were to adopt the proposal to alter the school day from 35 hours to 32.5 hours.

As a result, and with effect from 1 September 2024, the school day will be:

**The Howard: 8.45 am - 3.15 pm**

Children will return on Monday 2nd September for school and learning which will start at 8.45 am. Headteachers, Chairs and Directors discussed fully all alternatives proposed by parents for the day structure and identified a range of reasons why these were not appropriate. This is also referenced in the Q&A. Examples include:

**Suggestion 1:** Earlier start and earlier finish - some parents cited that an earlier start would be easier for working parents.

- There was not enough data to identify that this was what the majority of parents wanted.
- This would not realise the financial savings needed in all schools to set a balanced budget.
- The current model allows flexibility for attendance start time but this option would require children to be in school at 8.30 am and ready to learn at this time.
- This does not align with the need to support staff retention.

**Suggestion 2:** Later start and later finish - some parents cited that a later start and later finish would be easier for working parents.

- There was not enough data to identify that this was what the majority of parents wanted.
- This would not realise the financial savings needed in all schools to set a balanced budget.

**Suggestion 3:** To not apply the change from Monday to Thursday and to take all the time out of a Friday afternoon.

- There was not enough data to identify that this was what the majority of parents wanted.
- This would not realise the financial savings needed in all schools to set a balanced budget.

**Suggestion 4:** Only apply this to each new year group joining our schools in EYFS.

- There was not enough data to identify that this was what the majority of parents wanted.
- This would not realise the financial savings needed in all schools to set a balanced budget.
- Parents with children in two classes would have significant time to wait between drop offs.

Directors wanted to reiterate key points from the consultation and Q&A:

- All UK schools are being financially constrained and have either undertaken significant measures in the last few years or are doing so at this time.
- There is no "do nothing" option. In addition to the school day change there are other measures in our business cases for each school to mitigate the deficit and any other options are much less palatable. We have worked constructively with Local Governing Committees, Headteachers, staff and their unions and parents in identifying, costing and analysing options and a few mitigations via consultations, that enable us to submit a balanced budget.

Inevitably, these decisions may cause some initial disruption for some however, the new budgets should continue to support our ambition to protect the values and viability of our family of schools so that we:

- Conform to the standard Staffordshire (and National) school day thereby reducing costs and supporting staff recruitment and retention.
- Have a uniform model across our schools to support our essential growth in order not to be merged with another bigger trust.
- Avoid using reserves to support an unsustainable structure that would have put us below the recommended minimum in our reserves policy and so we have the funds to continue to bid for school capital improvement funds.

Headteachers will be writing to you later this term with the final details of Care Club provision and the information on how to book, school day plans, attendance policy changes and a curriculum update. We appreciate your understanding in this matter.

Parents are reminded that the consultation period of 3 weeks and 6 days was your opportunity to raise questions. Should you have any queries about this decision please refer to our responses to the consultation in the Q&A document that was circulated across the period and the final version on 14th May. Any further questions or statements in relation to the consultation will not be responded to.

We also urge you to lobby your MP as a proactive action to help regarding school funding. We are grateful to our Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and their committees for their professional approach, to the Directors for their measured and thoughtful responses and to our HR provider for their guidance and support.

The final Q&A document is also attached for your scrutiny.

We thank you for your patience with this process.

Kind regards,



Mr P Halifax and Mr K Borg: Co-Chairs of Directors

Mrs H Robertson: Chair Of Governors

Mr J Wynn: Headteacher

Charlene Gethin: CEO of TSSMAT

