

NR/CH

11 July 2019

Dear parents or carers

Y7 at the high school

Y6 had their transition session at Acklington Road last week with some of our KS3 teaching staff and, by all accounts, thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The following day, Mr Nisbet talked to all Y6 groups about the possibility of them being taught on the upper school site from September and the overwhelming response was hugely positive.

Given this response, we plan for the upper school site on Acklington Road to house Y7 to Y13 starting in September, with Y5 and Y6 remaining at the lower school site at South Avenue.

This means your son/daughter will be moving from South Avenue to Acklington Road after the summer break.

I realise this early transition is a huge change, but I think that the benefits will outweigh any initial concerns.

Two years ago, due to increased numbers of students in Years 5 to 8, we did not have enough classrooms to teach all of the classes on the middle school site and ended up having to use the main hall as a classroom. Last year, to combat this, we moved Y8 to the upper school site and this has worked very well.

Given that Y5 and Y6 are now taught almost exclusively by primary staff, the vast majority of Y7 classes are delivered by teachers who travel from the upper school to teach them and then travel straight back to the other site at the end of the lesson. This doesn't help the staff and students to form strong, positive relationships, limits the number of staff on site during breaks and lunchtimes and puts a huge strain on the timetable.

Given our experience this year, we feel that having Y7 at the upper school would be extremely beneficial for them both academically and pastorally.

They would have:

- a consistent tutor team
- their subject teachers on the same site as them throughout the week

- a Pastoral Support Officer, shared between Years 7 and 8, who is available at all times to help and support them whenever needed (and also available to speak with parents and carers)
- direct access to better DT, engineering, science and sports facilities
- a specific area of the building that is exclusively for Y7 and Y8 to access during breaks and lunchtimes, including toilet facilities that are exclusively theirs. They do not have to stay in this area – they have access to the rest of the site - but this space is there should they choose to use it. We would anticipate that this will be popular at first and then become less busy as students gain more confidence to explore more of the social areas.

Some of the concerns you may have are:

Transition

- We have arranged a transition morning for your child next Wednesday 17 July, when they will spend the morning and lunch time on the upper school site
- They should arrive at the lower school site as usual and will then be walked up by staff.
- During that morning, they will spend time with their Y7 tutors and have the opportunity to explore the building and learn about the routines on the upper school site.

September starting arrangements

- Our first day of the new academic year with the students is **Wednesday 4 September**.
- All students should arrive at the upper school site for 8.50am. They will then spend some time with their tutors receiving timetables, etc. Students in Y7 and Y8 will be given additional opportunities to explore the site before lessons begin later that day.

Breakfast Club

- Breakfast club facilities can still be accessed at South Avenue by all JCSC students. They should ensure that they leave Breakfast Club with enough time to arrive at Acklington Road by 8.50am.

Timings of the day

- The school day runs exactly the same on both sites – we start at 8.50am and finish at 3.10pm.

Uniform

- The uniform for all year groups at JCSC is exactly the same – there is no need to buy different uniform, other than to replace outgrown or worn clothing as usual.

Lunches

- Additional areas for students to eat packed lunch and take-away food will be created, with additional picnic benches and bins
- There will be a formal sittings system at lunchtime, with planners being shown to verify students in the line are in the correct year group
- We currently have students from Y8 upwards through the lunchtime sittings within 20 minutes. With additional seating, adding Y7 should not require additional time (but we plan to give them some in the first week or two, to allow time to settle in).

My preferred vision for the future is to have all of the students in a new building on the Acklington Road site – that's something we're working closely with Northumberland County Council to achieve. Until that becomes a reality, this is a temporary arrangement to make the best use of the sites we have, for the benefit of our students.

If you would like to discuss any of the above arrangements, please do get in touch.

Best wishes

NEIL RODGERS
Executive Headteacher