



MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

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HEIDI THURLAND B.A Hons *Headteacher*

Dear parents, carers and students,

I am writing to you firstly to say how delighted I am that you have chosen us as your Secondary School. We recognise this is a huge decision for you and we feel very privileged that you have trusted us to take your family through the next stage of education. I say family because education is never about one individual. Excellent education is achieved through the support and hard work of a community. By choosing to be with us during the next 5 years you are immediately part of our MHS family. I hope that you will feel cared for throughout your time with us. In this letter I want to write to parents & carers and also to students to outline some key information and to provide you with some reassurance at a tricky time. As such I will break this letter into two parts, this is an exceptional transition period so my approach will be a little different this year!

Dear students, I want to reassure you that we are going to take great care helping you overcome the challenges you are currently facing. We fully appreciate how difficult it has been to have everything you know changed suddenly. We know just how hard you were working for your SATS, how much you miss your friends, we know because we talk to your Primary teachers and Headteachers. We know because we are also parents (or even grandparents!), carers, aunts & uncles who have children in exactly the same situation as you. We understand that you may feel upset, frustrated or even cheated right now. We know that you might be a bit worried about moving to a new school with lots of students and staff you may not know. However, we also know that you are amazing, that you are talented, that you are kind and respectful, that you work hard. We know that you want to be the best version of you because you chose us as your Secondary school. We have an ambition for excellence and you are going to help us achieve this. As Headteacher I am going to do everything I can to make sure that you quickly feel 'part of the fabric' of MHS. My staff are brilliant and they will care for you, help you achieve your potential, help you look to new horizons and realise your ambitions. As I have said to all my students during this time, don't worry, we've got this. We cannot wait to meet you, take good care until then and keep reading!

Dear parents & carers, I am sure you are also anxious and worried at this time. I know you will have lots of questions, I hope I am able to answer some of these in this letter. We are living through an unprecedented period which seems to change daily. Please be assured that we will navigate calmly through this, we will keep you informed throughout and we will do everything we can to get things right for you. I do not yet know how things will work in terms of re-opening the school or arranging transition visits etc, but I do know we will find a way! Please be assured in choosing us you have chosen a school on a journey to excellence with a solution focused mindset, care and kindness is at the heart of our decision making. Excellence in academic achievement, character development, community partnerships, enrichment, careers support and guidance and student welfare drives us – we have set a high bar and we intend to reach it. The following information will I hope answer some initial questions – I am sure you will have others, if you could direct them to the admin email I can put together some FAQs for new intake families which I will share with you in due course.

Will the school be open before the summer holiday? As yet I do not know the answer to this, there is a great deal of conflicting information out there so I will stick to what I know which is at this time schools remain closed for the foreseeable. In the background however I am planning for several scenarios i.e. full/partial re-opening so please be assured if the decision is made to re-open we will be ready for it. We will communicate with families throughout. I will state very clearly however that I will *only* re-open the school fully/in part if it is *safe and manageable* to do so. We will work closely with the DfE, LA and Public Health England regarding this.

How will you carry out school transition if the school is closed? Ok – tough one! There are a couple of options. One *might* be that we open only to Yr6 students at the end of term in July. Another option *might* be that when we re-open in September we open initially only to Yr6 students as part of our phased induction week. During this period we will complete the usual induction in terms of payment for school meals, timetables etc. We will plan this carefully, but it is my express aim that our new intake students do have some time in the school without other students to help them settle and navigate a new environment. I will inform you in due course when I have a clearer picture of lock down/social distancing/staffing/safeguarding restrictions that affect this decision.

What are you going to do to help my child catch up? We are already carefully planning our curriculum to take into account gaps in students learning for all years. The September curriculum will address gaps in knowledge. We do envisage checking the understanding of all students – not to catch students out – but to simply show us what they know. The best preparation for Secondary School is for students to continue reviewing the knowledge they had already built up for their SATS. Ensuring your child is reading with you and by themselves if they can, practicing grammar & spelling is also an excellent way to keep them on track.

How are you going to set my child? It is our usual practice to look at KS2 SATS scores to help us place students in the right groups. We realise this data will not be available to us. We will be working closely with our Primary schools to understand the standard they believe students would have achieved in their SATS. Understanding student progress is always part of our transition discussion. We will then use our own assessments to see what knowledge students need and this will inform the classes they are placed in. We will be using September to *thoroughly understand* our students and we will work closely with our teaching staff to ensure they are placed in the class they will best achieve in.

How will you place my child into their form group? As part of our transition work with primaries we take care to get to know as much about our students as possible. We then use this information to put form groups together. We then monitor these groups when students arrive with us to see if there are any issues with students settling. We review any issues carefully with families. We are sure however, that your child will quickly settle into their form and will make some brilliant friendships.

My child has SEND how will you support them? Part of our usual transition process is to ensure we have all the right information about students. This is a thorough process which involves discussions with Primary schools and where appropriate other agencies who may be involved in supporting your child already e.g. LA SEND team. The LA is still reviewing EHCP in the normal way albeit remotely so we do not anticipate this year being different to any other in terms of transition. As part of our staff INSET we ensure that staff are clear on student plans and EHCP provision.

I've heard your school day is changing is this right? Yes. We have been through a period of consultation and from September our school day will begin at 8.40am and finish at 3.00pm. The school buses have been informed and have amended their timetables accordingly. We will share timetables with you in due course. Our breakfast provision will be open daily from 8.00am. Our afterschool homework club will be open daily until 4pm, this is a free provision which your child can access.

I have heard your uniform has changed is this the case and what do we need? Yes. We have been through an extended period of consultation and will be implementing a new uniform for Sept 2020. It was my intention to implement this for all years with the exception of Yr11. However due to the extreme financial pressures of COVID 19 we have decided to phase this in more carefully. We have reduced the overall cost of the new uniform and improved the quality whilst also ensuring that the uniform is sustainable. The new tie and skirt is made of 100% recycled materials. The new blazer will also be made of 100% recycled materials within 18-24 months. We are one of if not the first school nationally to have a uniform that is made from sustainable materials. We believe this 'future proofs' us against any future directives in relation to environmental responsibility, a matter which is close to the hearts of all our students. We have reduced the number of compulsory items, and the number of badged items, we have improved the range and quality of the PE kit. You can find all new uniform info on our website in the parents/uniform area.

We have also made the decision to support new intake families as we appreciate this is an extra cost for you. For **one year only** we are providing **all new intake** families with a **free blazer**, we are working with our suppliers to agree the best way to do this. We believe we will issue you with a discount code at the end of May which can be used online when you order the new uniform. On their first day at school all students will also receive a **free tie** and a **free house badge** (pin badge). This reduces the cost to all families by £35.50. We have also reduced the cost of any replacement ties from £6.50 to £5.50.

Compulsory items from our supplier: School Blazer, PE T-shirt, PE socks & one choice of PE bottoms (Skort/Shorts/Tracksuit/Leggings)

Compulsory items sourced independently: white shirt, black trousers, black shoes

What if my child does not want to wear black trousers? Your child can wear the school skirt, available from our supplier. The new style is a tonal grey pleated skirt with MHS detailing on the top of the skirt.

Optional Items available from our supplier: ¼ zip PE top, school jumper, additional PE bottoms (Skort/Shorts/Tracksuit/Leggings)

I would like more than one tie where do I get this from? We provide you with the first tie free of charge and additional ties can be bought from reception once school is open (£5.50). We also provide the first house badge free, if this requires replacing this can also be purchased from reception (£1.50).

I have more than one child starting in Yr7 is there a multi-buy option? No. However each student will receive a free blazer and tie so this will reduce the costs.

Can students wear a different jumper/jacket for PE? No. If students wish to wear an outer layer over their t-shirt it would need to be the ¼ zip top. We find that many do not wear this which is why it is now optional.

Where do we order the new uniform? All our orders will be taken online using Sportswear International (SWI). Orders can be taken **from the 15th of June**. If you order a size that does not fit the company runs a full exchange service.

Will I receive any other information apart from this letter? Yes. In mid-May we will be sending out further packs of information which will include a pen portrait from Yr7 form tutors and our Leadership team, Parent Portal information, equipment list (approved calculators for example), uniform policy (acceptable shoes etc), Behaviour contract, behaviour policies, explanation of how to pay for school meals, map of the school and other useful information.

I hope that you have found this information useful, please direct any other questions to our admin email (below). Please be aware our phone lines are being kept free to support keyworkers at this time so please email queries rather than call. We also use social media to provide an update and information (links below), I would ask however that you do not ask question in the comments section as these can easily be missed or at times discussion leads to misinformation & misrepresentation. Please allow us to deal with any questions or concerns. Please also follow our code of conduct which is simply that any posts are respectful and kind, posts that do not meet this code will be removed.

I am very much looking forward to working closely with all of you in the near future – wishing you all a very warm welcome to Middlewich High School.

Regards



Heidi Thurland
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Excellence in Learning – Achievement for All

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