



Headteacher: Ms S Kennedy

11th July 2022

Dear Parents and carers

Thank you so much to those of you who attended the first of our information evenings where we began discussing the launch of our new school in September 2023. We are both very excited about the prospect of our lower school site and equally aware of the work that needs to be completed before this can happen. This does create a certain amount of urgency in the way that we must work as we want you to feel reassured and informed about the process. We are very clear that you, as parents and carers, need information about this. We can assure you we will be working to provide information and responses as quickly as possible. Mr Froy, Director of Secondary Education, who attended the meeting, made notes of the queries raised at the meeting. He has responded to some of the queries, and you will find these below.

Parent Meeting for the Lower School – Questions

1. Admissions - Could we publish the admissions process/procedures as quickly as possible – parents seeking confirmation that places at the Upper school are secure at the end of year 8?
We are working on the new admissions policy for our new school. We have to change the entry age for the new school and also make changes to County Upper School's admissions policy. Our plan is to make admission from the lower school site as a key criterion, which will only be superseded by applications from children who are "Looked After" and or have Education Healthcare Plans
2. Transport – could we clarify how this will work for parents at HCMS? Cost implications? Year 1 and the longer term
We are working closely with Suffolk Transport around the arrangements for the children to get to the lower school site. We have committed to ensuring that there are no cost implications for children needing to go to the new lower school site, irrespective of changes in numbers using the service. We will look to add routes where appropriate and will confirm the details of the new transport plan as soon as we possibly can.
3. Why will most classes be Mixed Ability?
Current research shows that mixed ability teaching produces outstanding results. Students who teach others have far better recall than any other method of teaching.

County Upper School, Beeton's Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6RF



We are working really hard on the curriculum for our new school and will ensure that every lesson teaches to the very top and provides support or scaffolding for students who need additional input. Some subjects will be taught in sets.

4. Confirmation of USP's commitment to the project.
USP is committed to the project. The MAT appreciates the unique opportunities that the middle schools offered students and the creation of the lower school site will take the very best from HCMS and WMS. USP believes that this will offer an outstanding educational experience for our students which will in turn draw in children from other local schools.
5. Budget – what are the implications for the lower school? – see Q7 below
We have committed a larger budget allocation to the new school reflecting the pressures of a split site. This school shortfall will be provided by the central trust as it reflects USP's commitment to this project.
6. What is being done to stabilise the staffing situation?
We are committed to our brilliant staff and recognise the strain this reorganisation is placing on our colleagues. We have, after careful reflection, decided to interview for our new structure now to give our colleagues as much certainty as possible. We believe this will also allow our staff to start planning and securing the resources to maintain and extend the middle school offer.
7. Site – what is being done to refresh the site?
We agree that the site of the new lower school is "tired". We are creating a programme of works which will ensure that when the new school opens in September 2023, it is a bright, airy and purposeful learning environment. We will publish the plan as soon as possible (hopefully this term).
8. What is being done to upgrade communication?
We are working with USP to create a lower school section on the websites of Horringer Court and Westley Middle Schools site as well as County Upper school. We will also begin work on the website of the new school as soon as we have agreed the name.
9. What commitment is there to the longevity of the sixth form?
As was said in the meeting, we have recently appointed a dynamic and outstanding new Sixth Form Leadership team at County Upper. We have moved to a very academic offer targeted at supporting our students to the best UK universities (Russell Group). We are working to expand the already impressive extra-curricular

offer and leadership opportunities. We believe we have an offer which does allow our sixth form to compete successfully against other providers.

10. How will we maintain the Results plus element of the lower school provision? Who will monitor this?

We are committed to the role of the Local Governing Board. Like all USP schools it is the job of the Governors to ensure that the school delivers on its promises. We encourage parents and carers to be part of these boards to ensure that the challenge is rigorous, robust and relentless. We will publish the minutes of those meetings to allow parents and carers to review the level of challenge. We will also seek parent/carer views through regular information evenings/forums and from surveys. We encourage parents and carers to make an appointment to see us to discuss their concerns.

11. What have we learned from the Haverhill experience of middle school reorganisation? *One of the key things we will do differently than in Haverhill is to make sure that staff work predominantly at one site.*

12. When we consult about uniform can we consider the waste implications of discarding the existing uniform? Could we consider an iron on transfer of the new logo?

We are keen to establish a new school and believe that uniform is an important ingredient in this process. As we said at the meeting, we are going to have a full process to select the new name, its logo and therefore the new uniform. We will be guided by the views of the parents/carers, the students, issues around affordability and sustainability, as well as new government guidance on uniform.

13. Could we consider the logistical implication of having the same school day as the upper school site given the 15 minute journey time to get between the two sites if there are siblings in the two different sites? A staffed place for the kids to go if they are dropped off earlier at lower school site.

This idea of a staffed and safe place for students at our new school seems a very sensible one both at the beginning of school and the end of the day. We will make sure that this is in place and the parents and carers are notified as to how this will work.

14. Could we publish the amount allocated to a marketing budget for the lower school?

We have not allocated a specific budget to marketing other than the time for Mr Jeffery to go to other schools. This is to allow him to explain why our new school is a great option for parents and carers who were previously prevented from considering

our existing schools by their current primaries. We believe that the best marketing we can do is to ensure that every child in our school is challenged in their learning, supported where necessary to make more than expected progress and offered an incredibly wide and exciting range of extra-curricular and leadership opportunities. We feel that our happy students are our best ambassadors and will convey a message with an authenticity we could never match in marketing materials

15. Could we republish the timeline of movements as some parents/carers are still uncertain?

As we said above we will be setting up a discreet website area in all our schools to keep parents informed of the exciting developments as we move towards the launch of our new school. In the meantime, I have attached a document which I hope explains the timeline clearly.

We both see this as the beginning of an exciting partnership. We feel this will bring together the best of three amazing schools. We will have a great learning, extra-curricular and leadership offer that will challenge and stretch all our students. We are committed to working with you and your children to make the new school the very best. Please watch out for the regular updates from Mr Jeffery and if you have any concerns please make an appointment to see us.

Thank you again for your time, commitment and passion. We are confident that working together will ensure that our new school delivers for everyone. Our next workshop with parents will be held in September (Westley 14th Sept 6pm and Horringer Court 15th Sept 6pm).

Yours faithfully

 

Ben Jeffery and Sally Kennedy