



MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

HEIDI THURLAND BA (HONS 1ST CLASS) NPQH HEADTEACHER

Dear families,

I am writing to provide you with some key information regarding staffing, plans for the school and the school site. I also wanted to take some time to reflect on the year and the achievements of the last few months.

If you had told me in September that by March I would be running a virtual school and an on-site provision, I would have looked at you with complete disbelief. When we stop to consider how much our educational provision and indeed our lives have changed in such a short space of time it really is incredible. In the days leading up to lockdown we were busy trying to anticipate many things including the potential length of school closure. In all honesty, I initially thought that we would be back to school two weeks after Easter; I did not envisage the cancellation of exams and face-to-face schooling for the summer term. This has meant that week to week we have had to review and refine our home learning support. We learned very quickly that in the early days of lockdown we perhaps overloaded students with work, concerned that we were not setting enough. Our parent partnership is strong and I am thankful to all our families for your valuable feedback, which has helped us to achieve a better balance in the scheduling of work. Each week we have seen that even with an easing of lockdown the position of face-to-face schooling for all students still seems some way ahead of us. We have continued to invest in our online platforms and this term we are releasing pre-recorded taught sessions to students. We have started this work with Yr10 in core subjects and we will roll this out to other year groups and across subjects as we move through the term. We will continue to invest in our online provision so that we are ready for any / every eventuality come September.

I am so incredibly proud of all of my students, staff and families. The way in which all of you have responded to this situation is exceptional. Throughout the lockdown period, we have tried to recognise as many students as possible using virtual Hot Choc with me and also our ATL (Attitude to Learning) certificates and badges as well as subject rewards. We will be holding a virtual rewards event at the end of term, which will be streamed to all families – keep an eye out for that exciting event! I have seen so much courage, kindness, creativity, innovation and resilience and this should be recognised and celebrated across all year groups. I do hope you will be able to join us – more details to come on that.

September Return – Two things that I have learned throughout this period are that things change rapidly with guidance often coming out late in the day, and more importantly to be honest with my community about what I do or do not know. So at this point, I will say it is our ambition and the Government's for our students to return in September to full schooling as quickly as possible. However, we are preparing for a range of scenarios including blended face-to-face and online learning. During the summer break we will be working hard to prepare the site to welcome students back safely, we are planning our curriculum to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed and we are thinking carefully about how best to support student and staff wellbeing. It is my view that we begin the term with at least one day of exclusive provision for new Yr7, as they will not have had the benefit of face-to-face transition.

Our first week back will be a staggered induction at the very least to support all year groups safely back into school. Please be assured that I will write to you in August once I have a clear understanding of September's provision.

Online Learning Platform – During this period, we have used Show My Homework as the platform for setting work. Some families have asked why we have not delivered live/recorded lessons. The simple

answer is we have been busy putting in place the infrastructure to be able to move to an online platform that enables us to do this more effectively. As you know, we have started to release pre-recorded taught sessions to year groups this term. We have now installed google classrooms, which will enable us to use Google Meet for live tutorials/group teaching. This will be fully implemented in September; we intend to use the remaining weeks of term to train staff and pilot tutorial sessions with students. It is my view that over time we will move all our online teaching/resources including homework to google classrooms. I will write to you with further information regarding how this works in due course.

Student Leadership – It is the time of the year where we invite current yr10 students to apply for Student Leadership positions for the senior leadership team. We will be looking to appoint a Head Boy & Girl as well as deputies who will represent the school as Ambassadors and represent student views through the leadership of student voice. It is an excellent opportunity to have your say and make sure that students are at the heart of the decisions we make as a school. If you would like to apply for this post please write to Ms Thurland explaining on one side of A4 your personal qualities and ambition/ideas that you feel will improve the school. All applications must be sent by email into rdale@middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk by July 3rd. If you do not have access to email please post your letter to school and make sure that on the envelope you state it is a student leadership application. Successful applicants will then be informed of the next stage of the process.

Staffing – This term we have appointed two colleagues to a 12 month seconded teaching and learning post on the senior leadership team. Mrs Parkins and Mrs Beechener will support the strategic leadership and development of teaching across the school from September 2020.

We would like to congratulate Mrs Haddad and Mr Pearce who both move onto new positions in September. Mrs Haddad has been with us since September on a one-year contract; we have been delighted with her energy and her commitment to our students. She is moving onto a new teaching post in September 2020 and we wish her every success. Mr Pearce is an excellent member of staff, a dedicated PE teacher and inspiring Head of Year, and also a part of the extended leadership team leading teaching & learning across the school. Having given the school 14 years of service, he will be greatly missed. However, I am delighted to inform you that Mr Pearce is leaving to go to a promoted post as Assistant Head at Alsager School starting September 2020. Mr Pearce secured the post despite significant competition from over 100 applicants and a gruelling interview process. I am incredibly proud of his achievement and I have no doubt that he will be highly successful in his new role.

We have restructured the pastoral team in order to adapt to changing staffing and to improve the capacity for pastoral support. I would like to thank Mr Evans, Mr Pearce and Mr Priestley for their excellent work leading Yr7, Yr9 & Yr11 respectively. Mr Evans and Mr Priestley have chosen to step down from these roles with a view to focusing on excellence in MFL and Science, respectively. We have restructured the pastoral team so that we will have three achievement leads and three non-teaching Pastoral Support Managers:

- Transition & Yr7 Achievement Lead - Mrs Hanson, Pastoral Support Manager Mrs Fahrenholz
- KS3 (Yrs 8 & 9) Achievement Lead – Mrs Lythgow, Pastoral Support Manager – TBA
- KS4 (Yrs 10 & 11) Achievement Lead – Mrs Robinson, Pastoral Support Manager – TBA

We are recruiting our Pastoral leads this term and we look forward to welcoming our new pastoral staff in September, we have had over 30 applications for these posts with a very strong field. I am very confident we will appoint two excellent colleagues as a result.

The focus of the Achievement leads will be in the academic progress of students in their year groups, the pastoral support managers will focus on student wellbeing and pastoral care. We believe that this increased capacity within the pastoral team will raise standards and improve the level of support we offer

to students and families. We have also appointed a lead of Performing Arts, Mrs Tarbuck and an Enterprise Lead (ICT/Business/Computer Science) Mrs Hinds Taylor.

Governance – In response to the Ofsted inspection in November, we have completed an external review of governance conducted by the LA. We are now working together to reconstitute the governing body. We will be reviewing the structure of the governing body, terms of reference, looking to improve the profile of governors and recruiting new governors. Mr Chapman and Mr Wilson have both resigned from the Governing body. Mr Wilson has recently become part of the extended SLT and due to a conflict of interest is going to pass his role as staff governor on to another member of staff. Elections are underway for this position within school. Mr Chapman has provided the school with over 20 years of valuable service; he has acted in an advisory capacity as a representative of the LA. Mr Chapman has provided valuable support to our finance team and played a key role in school improvement. He is looking forward to increasing his time in the outdoors and I am sure will continue to enjoy his favourite pastime, fell walking. We would like to thank Mr Chapman and Mr Wilson for their valued service and contribution to the school. We will now look to recruit a new Co-Opted and staff governor. Before lockdown, we had just appointed two new governors to the governing body, Mrs Brandreth and Mr Mayhead. Mrs Brandreth is a recently retired Headteacher who has experience on the governing body of a Cheshire West Primary school. Mr Mayhead has experience of finance, invigilates for the school and is a governor at Middlewich Primary School. We are delighted with both appointments as we feel these significantly strengthen school governance. We will continue to recruit and strengthen Governance this term.

School Day – If we return to school fully in September, the new times of the school day will be as follows:

- 8.40am Arrival
- 15.00pm Departure

If we are still navigating COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, we will write to you at the end of August to inform you of any changes to school day structure. Student timetables will be distributed in September – once again, this is dependent on the guidance received in August regarding social distancing in schools.

Building Work – The refurbishment of the reception has unfortunately been lengthier than anticipated. However, I am delighted to inform you that the work is now being completed and in September, we will open with a fully refurbished reception area, toilets in DT and access to Tech classrooms improved. We have also had extensive roof works completed and further toilet refurbishments completed on site. Adding access doors to external entrances and widening the gate entrance by the drama studio have also improved the safety of the site. Over the summer, we will continue to invest in essential maintenance and the improvement of ICT resources.

I really must acknowledge the patience and resilience of my reception staff who worked for most of this year in a corridor! I am also deeply grateful to the work of my site team and cleaners who have been incredible during this difficult period.

Academy Conversion – As you are aware, the Governors approved the decision to convert to Academy status with a view to moving into a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) with the Sir John Brunner Foundation (SJBF) as the desired partner. For those of you who may not be aware this MAT is currently made up of two schools, Sir John Deane's Sixth Form and The County High School, Leftwich. Both are outstanding educational providers whose ethos, values and academic excellence matches our own ambition. This year we have completed a thorough due diligence on the MAT to see if they are the right partner to collaborate with. I am delighted to inform you that the evaluative report we received fully supports alignment with the SJBF MAT. Due to COVID 19 interrupting LA & DfE services we will look to apply for the Academy order in September. There will then follow a period of consultation with stakeholders, where all stakeholders will be given the opportunity to ask questions and we will provide you with more detail about the Trust and how working together will affect MHS.

Uniform – As you are aware, we have deferred the introduction of new uniform until Sept 2021 for year groups other than new intake students. A reminder if you need to replace old uniform the supplier will now only stock new uniform. We do have a small amount of old stock in school but only limited sizes, our admin team can help you with any enquires. Please be aware for new uniform it is a white shirt – our supplier had mistakenly put blue shirts on the website – this has now been addressed. I have had several queries about socks/tights. These remain unchanged: black tights, black/white socks. If you need to replace shoes over the summer months, please support us by first viewing the school website for the shoes we expect all students to wear in line with our school uniform policy. The link on our website is *Parent Zone, Uniform, School shoes*. For new uniform information, please see our uniform information page in parent information – uniform – new uniform – new uniform letter

Free School Meals Applications – We appreciate that the financial situations of many of our families has changed during this period. If call 0300 123 5012 / cheshireeast.gov.uk/FSM (Cheshire East) or 0300 123 7021 / cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk and search for free school meals you will be able to enquire if you qualify for free school meals, they will also explain the process for application. The Government has announced (rightly!) that FSM vouchers will continue during the summer holidays to support families during this COVID19 period.

Yr11 GCSE Qualifications – We have now submitted all GCSE subject grades; we have rigorously followed all protocols and guidance to issue these grades. We now await the results in August for the final outcome. We are unable to share any information on grading prior to the results day on 20th August and will be in touch with yr11 families to explain how the results day will run. Please be assured we will be there to support students, celebrate achievements and provide guidance for post-16 transition. If you have purchased a hoodie, you will be able to collect this with your results. We intend to celebrate Yr11 as part of our end of year virtual celebration event so make sure you tune into this!

Finally, I have been delighted with the hard work and engagement of our students and the continued support of all our parents and carers. Over the summer break, I encourage all our students to take the opportunity to continue to read words are powerful things! The more you read the more your own vocabulary improves and this will help you access your schoolwork more easily. The best advice I can give all of you is to go and get lost in a great book!

Wishing all of you a safe, successful end of term,

Regards



Heidi Thurland
Headteacher
Excellence in Learning – Achievement for All