



ST. AIDAN'S

CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Parents and Carers,

3rd June 2024

I hope you have all had a good rest over the half term break and are as optimistic as I am about the possibility of some warmer weather in the coming weeks. We now enter the final half term of this academic year and I wanted to write to you to share various information as we plan for September 2024. When I wrote to you in February, I apologised for the somewhat lengthy letter and I'm afraid I need to give the same apology again. In true teacher style, I have used the method of 'chunking' (a technique our conscientious year 11 and 13 students have certainly been using over the past few weeks as they diligently revise for their exams) and have tried to break my letter down into small manageable units! One important piece of information I need to share with you is a proposal to make a slight change to the timing of the school day from September 2024. As this proposal needs greater explanation and time for your consideration, a separate letter will come out to you tomorrow with the details and the rationale along with the invitation for you to share any feedback.

Subject Department Structure

Over the past few months, we have taken time to reorganise the department structure in school and will be moving to a faculty structure from September 2024. There will be nine faculties, each faculty consisting of several similar subjects and led by a Director of Learning who will sit on the St Aidan's Extended Leadership Team. There are many benefits to adopting this model which will impact positively on the quality of education and the provision of high-quality teaching and learning. Working in larger faculties rather than single subject departments will give more opportunities for collaboration and sharing of good practice between teachers so that we can ensure the best learning experiences for all our students. The Extended Leadership model will develop and empower a wider team of staff, creating a distributed leadership model at St Aidan's which will build capacity, support in re-allocating resources, develop talent, recruit, and retain the best staff, and develop opportunities for outreach. The clarity of the faculty structure will allow for tighter accountability and greater consistency through shared systems and processes. It will allow us to support and develop every teacher so that they become the best quality practitioners who are able to impart their knowledge skilfully on to every student, enabling us to provide a first-class education for each and every one of your children. More information showing the full faculty structure, the subjects that sit within each faculty, and the staff who will lead in these areas will be shared in the coming weeks.

Headteacher: Mrs S Dover

School Uniform from September 2024

As I am sure you will appreciate this has been a hot topic discussed at length in our many student voice activities. We have also spoken to parents and staff through a focus group that was set up and have taken time to look at what is sensible and reasonable when we consider everything that is positive and negative about the uniform that all students wear to school.

During Covid times, St Aidan's allowed students to wear their PE hoodie inside at all times. This decision was made as it was felt that the hoodies were warmer for students when the windows had to be left open for ventilation as directed by the DfE. From September 2024 we will be reverting to the original St Aidan's school uniform pre-covid. This means that students will no longer be allowed to wear their hoodies inside and instead must wear the navy-blue St Aidan's V-neck jumper or cardigan. All other aspects of the school uniform will remain the same and the hoodie will once again just become part of the PE uniform.

It is important to us that all students wear the correct uniform at all times to ensure they are smartly dressed while at school and so that they can proudly be identified as a member of the St Aidan's family. Please can I ask that you as parents and carers ensure your child wears the correct uniform properly every day to help us promote our high standards of appearance and to avoid any repercussions for your child under the behaviour system if they choose not to adhere to our school uniform expectations. A compulsory addition to the school uniform from September 2024 will be a school lanyard which must be worn by all students every day. Each year group will have a specific-coloured lanyard which will remain their colour throughout their time in year 7 to 11. Each student will be given an identification card which will allow them access around the school site. As safeguarding is our number one priority, we are improving the security of the school site and if your child does not have their lanyard and identification card with them, they will be unable to access areas of the school. This identification card will also allow students to purchase items from the school canteen. All students will be issued with their lanyard and identification card on the first day back in September.

A reminder of the year 7 to 11 uniform list for next academic year is as follows:

- Navy-blue V-necked St Aidan's jumper or cardigan
- White shirt/blouse
- St Aidan's school tie (year 7 to 10 or year 11)
- Compulsory lanyard and identification badge
- Tailored black trousers
- Plain black shoes
- Plain black ankle socks
- Year 11 students only may choose to wear a pleated navy skirt instead of tailored black trousers
- Year 12 and 13 students must wear smart business dress.

Headteacher: Mrs S Dover

School Management Information System

As you will be aware we are introducing a new MIS from September 2024 and moving from Bromcom to Arbor. The move from the old system to the new started a few weeks ago and takes several months to fully migrate. Having visited many schools that use Arbor and already begun some of the training for staff, we are confident that this single cloud-based MIS will help us to improve communication, collaboration and consistency at St Aidan's and will provide us with an effective, secure system that will bring with it contemporary efficiencies to drive the school forward. As with any significant change it is prudent to anticipate some teething problems so, please bear with us if we do experience some issues.

Form Groups and the Role of the Form Tutor

Currently our year groups in years 7 to 11 are split into 8 or 9 forms. In some cases, this means that students are in form groups of up to 34. Next year we will be moving all our year groups (except for the new year 11s who we feel are better served by staying with their current group) into 10 forms. As a result, students will be in a form group with between 25 and 28 students. The role of the form tutor is central to the relationships we build with all students. Acting in loco parentis, our form tutors will have time to get to know their individual tutees well, both academically and socially, so that we can provide the best quality care, nurture, and support to them and remain in close contact with you as parents and carers.

From September our form groups will spell the word FLOURISHED (8F, 8L, 8O, 8U etc.); this is partly because we needed to find a ten-letter word without repeated letters (!), but more poignantly because having a clear Christian vision for education enables all our young people to flourish. In fact, Ofsted and the DfE talk regularly about successful schools being positive environments where children can flourish so we felt this was appropriate and fitting, linking well to our vision of St Aidan's students knowing the gift of 'life in all its fullness'. The majority of students will stay with their current form tutor, but a small number of students carefully selected by the Heads of Year will move form groups in September to allow for us to have smaller numbers with each form tutor.

As well as their form tutor, every student from years 7 to 13 will be supported by a Head of Year and a non-teaching Assistant Head of Year. This enhanced pastoral structure, and the names of these staff, will be communicated when we share with you the new faculty structure in the coming weeks.

Assessment and Reporting

Knowing and understanding how well your child is doing at school is key to ensuring every student achieves the best possible outcomes they can. Having spoken to many parents and carers about this topic I acknowledge that we have some work to do as a school to ensure you feel fully kept up to date with honest feedback about your child's progress and the next steps needed to support them in their learning. We have also reflected on a parental survey that was taken last academic year where, although some parents liked the report around CODE, many parents felt this was not giving them the bespoke feedback about their child's academic

progress that they were looking for. From next year we will be phasing out the reporting based on CODE in favour of providing parents with an attainment percentage based on a most recent assessment, and an attitude to learning grade based on our core values and expectations. I know that you will support me in acknowledging that the wellbeing of all teaching staff is very important, and that staff workload is a huge driver for many dedicated and expert teachers leaving the profession. A national survey conducted by the DfE last year reported over 40,000 teachers (9%) leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement and it is no surprise that increased workload was cited as one of the main contributing factors. To help reduce teacher workload we will no longer be asking subject teachers to write individual student comments on the reports. We will have three assessment and reporting cycles each year and parents will be given feedback after each cycle either in the form of a report and/or via a parent meeting. As I said, we know we have some way to go in making sure our assessment and reporting is as good as it can be whilst finding the correct balance for everyone, so we continue to research best practice and listen to feedback on this.

Vision and Values

Our school vision and values are grounded in the Christian faith based on love, kindness, compassion and respect for each other as well as the world we live in. As we move towards the end of this academic year, we realise the need to remind ourselves of the St Aidan's values and refine our vision so that it truly drives all that we believe in, all that we do, and how we do it. On Friday the 28th of June we have a full staff training day where we will be relaunching our vision and values with staff and looking at how we can ensure we embed these qualities into everything we do. Our mission is that all our students will understand our values of Wisdom, Aspiration, Learning well together, and Kindness, and be able to articulate how they are guided by these values each and every day. Students will begin to hear us relate to the importance of WALK more frequently as we strengthen and celebrate the unique culture of St Aidan's.

Associated Sixth Form

Last October we celebrated 50 years of the unique association we share with St John Fisher Catholic High School to deliver high quality further education for students when they finish year 11. Together our two schools are using this milestone as a platform to redesign some aspects of the associated sixth form so that we can strengthen the quality of education and learning experience for all students and staff. This includes shared teaching between our performing arts faculties, more regular opportunities to come together and celebrate our successes, joint trips, visits, clubs and societies, collaborated careers provision, and weekly joint assemblies to bring us together through collective worship. We are also developing a programme of professional development between the two schools so that teachers share good practice and build positive networks to benefit student outcomes.

Continuing Professional Development

Senior leaders in all schools are responsible for prioritising the professional development of staff, ensuring that they have regular opportunities to access high-quality training which is aligned to the whole school improvement priorities. Relevant and planned teacher development is how we can ensure we provide high quality education and care to your children. I thought it would be useful to you if I share with you the main areas we will be focussing on next year as part of our commitment to continuous school improvement. Our staff CPD programme will mostly be focussed on the following:

- **Adaptive teaching** and how we can plan lessons that respond to the individual needs of all our students, linking closely to our principles of learning.
- **Relational culture** and how we understand our young people well in order to foster positive relationships particularly when poor behaviour choices have been made.
- **Quality assurance and monitoring** which ensures we focus on the right strategies at the right time, not being afraid to hold ourselves to account for delivering the highest possible standards.

Thank you for taking the time to read all this information and apologies again for the length of the letter. We will continue to send out our monthly InTouch magazine which is a wonderful celebration of many of the things we achieve here at St Aidan's, and I hope that you find this correspondence helpful. As I have said before, it is an absolute privilege to serve you and your children, and I give you my word that I will make sure we do all we can as a school to enable them to have the best education, care, and support possible. In the coming weeks we will be sending out a parent questionnaire as your feedback and comments are extremely valuable to us and will help us shape the future of St Aidan's. We are realistic in our acknowledge that we don't always get everything right for everyone all the time but your support in spreading the positive messages about St Aidan's to all who will listen is always much appreciated.

I pray for the health and happiness of all our young people and their families, and that we can continue to work together to nurture this next generation so that they become thoughtful, caring, honest, and successful adults.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Sian Dover

Headteacher

Headteacher: Mrs S Dover