

Lowton Church of England High School

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Dear Parent/Carer

Changes to the school day

Since joining the school in September 2014 I have had the privilege to lead what I truly believe is a fantastic school. The 'Lowton Family' is an expression we often use and each day we show that these are not just words but how we work together. Our mission as a school is clear: we strive as a school to provide the best education for every student. We believe in delivering the highest quality learning in the classroom matched with a rich variety of opportunities to support each child at this stage of their learning journey. As Headteacher my responsibility lies with ensuring that we are thoroughly preparing our students for their futures. We as a school are constantly evaluating how we provide the best opportunities and deliver the highest quality education to everyone in the 'Lowton Family'.

This is an enormous time of change in education:

- New curriculums at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
- National Curriculum levels are being phased out and will no longer be valid, instead schools are being asked to devise their own reporting systems
- New GCSEs are being introduced with brand new syllabi
- GCSE A*-G grades are being replaced by numbers (1-9)

We as a school are committed to ensuring that our students receive the best possible education in this time of huge educational change. A great deal of work has already taken place to prepare us for these significant changes, additionally we have worked closely with other schools and have been sharing practice. As a result of this we are going to make the following changes to our school day from the start of term in September 2016:

- We will be moving from one hour lessons to **fifty minute lessons**.
- School will close at 2pm every Monday in order to operate a weekly training session for staff.

The 50 Minute Lesson

The 50 minute lesson allows us to operate with 6 lessons each day as opposed to 5. This means key subjects will have a greater frequency of lessons and have the opportunity to see pupils every day. In addition to this it will allow us to move away from a two week timetable and focus on a less confusing one week timetable.

Monday Staff Training

We are all learners and it is essential that we ensure staff have the access to the highest quality training both from expertise within the school and from outstanding practice from outside the school. Looking at the structure below you can see that finishing at 2pm on Monday allows staff to be involved in a robust Training Programme until 4.30pm. This program will ensure that the quality of education delivered to all students remains as our top priority. It gives us, as a school, the time to constantly evaluate teaching and learning and make the amendments which will be necessary as a result of all the changes in education.

From September 2016 the school week will look as follows:

Tuesday to Friday

Time	Lesson
8:35 – 8:55	Form Time
8:55 – 9:45	Lesson 1
9:45 – 10:35	Lesson 2
10:35 – 10:55	Break
10:55 – 11:45	Lesson 3
11:45 – 12:35	Lesson 4
12:35 – 13:10	Lunch
13:10 – 14:00	Lesson 5
14:00 – 14:50	Lesson 6

Monday

Time	Lesson
8:35 – 8:55	Form Time
8:55 – 9:45	Lesson 1
9:45 – 10:35	Lesson 2
10:35 – 10:55	Break
10:55 – 11:45	Lesson 3
11:45 – 12:35	Lesson 4
12:35 – 13:10	Lunch
13:10 – 14:00	Lesson 5
14:00 – 16:30	Staff Training

Extra-Curricular

For those pupils who will find it difficult to leave at 2pm on Monday there will be a rich variety of extra-curricular activities such as study support groups and sporting activities. Information on this will be given to your child on their first day in September.

Sharing Excellent Practice

As I previously stated we have been looking at good practice across the borough and have worked with other schools. We have developed a close partnership with St James' Church of England High School (an outstanding school in Bolton) who operate a similar system to the one we are introducing. The following is information from their Headteacher, Mrs Tania Lewyckyj, on the impact of the system:

"We have been running the Wednesday afternoon training sessions for staff since 2011. I can honestly state that I do not know how we coped before!

*The weekly two hour slot has brought benefits that I did not originally anticipate and five years on, has far exceeded my expectation. I believe that this planned time has significantly contributed to our school being judged **outstanding**.*

With regards to the benefits:

- **Pupil progress has increased** to 77% 5A*-C and Value Added has increased significantly from a Value Added of below 1000 to a very positive Best 8 score- despite losing 50mins of teaching per week
- All new initiatives are planned **and time is given on the CPD afternoon to embed**
- **More time for departments** to work together on their development plan
- Cohesive planning and tracking of departmental and school priorities and how they link together
- We rarely bring outside speakers in unless tried and tested. We feel that our own staff (**at all levels**) have the expertise we need- this method produces staff who are confident in presenting, working with others and allows all to share best practice. This has also led to a number of our staff becoming SLEs (Specialist Leaders of Education), supporting other schools, at the same time as developing their own leadership skills (this has also helped us to retain some of our best teachers)
- Any staff going out of school to experience CPD is carefully chosen and it is a given that they will share, lead and evaluate the work they bring back into school
- **Less teaching time lost** on staff going out of school for courses - staff absence is also at an all-time low
- The programme is planned approximately 12 months in advance and always focuses on our key areas for development. It is always work in progress and we adapt the programme to suit our priorities every year. We evaluate everything and this also forms the basis of our next steps. Pupil progress is at the heart of what we do and we constantly ask ourselves, 'How would our young people benefit from this?'"

The model we are developing has had a significant impact in St. James' Church of England High School. We believe it will have the same impact in our school. We hope that you and your child will see the benefits of the teachers' Training Programme in the way they enjoy and learn in their lessons, and eventually, through their academic success.

I must stress emphatically that the decision to change the school days in order to further improve teaching and learning has **not** been taken lightly. The main points behind our rationale for these proposals are:

- To improve learning and teaching opportunities for all our students

- To further develop classroom practice for the benefit of pupils and become an Ofsted rated 'outstanding' school
- To improve standards and results for all learners
- To further increase the expertise of teachers in school priority areas
- To provide the best opportunities for excellence for everyone in the Lowton Family, for students, staff and for you as parents.

Changes for the next school year will be explained to students in their Form Period on Friday 13th May.

I hope that in this letter I have managed to cover the reasoning behind the changes that we are making to the timetable. I do understand that you may still have questions on this so I will hold a meeting for Parents and Carers on Thursday 26th May 2016 at 6pm in the Lighthouse (please fill in the slip below if you wish to attend and return to Reception in A Block).

Yours sincerely

Julian Pollard
Headteacher

Please return to A block office

I will be attending the Parent meeting Thursday 26th May 2016 at 6 pm

Name of child _____ Form _____

Signed _____ Date _____