

September 2016

Dear Middle School Parent

I hope you have had a pleasant summer and managed to have some quality 'holiday' time.

For our school we have had an amazing summer with our longed for move into our new buildings. As I write this letter we are settling in well. No more journeys between sites, no more dripping ceilings, no more damp classrooms!

I am writing to you as Headteacher to introduce myself and my school and to give you a brief summary of what will be happening in the next few weeks and months to support your child's future move from their present school to our school community. As both a Headteacher and a parent I know it is important that your child enjoys their remaining time in their present school feeling confident that transition between schools will go smoothly and they can look forward positively to the next step in their learning journey. September and October is a busy time for your family in making sure information is gathered about possible choices for September 2017; discussions are had, visits are made etc. To give you some detail and dates I have outlined below what to look out for:

- Weeks beginning the 12th and 19th of September – myself or my Assistant Headteacher, Alan Rogers, will be coming to run an assembly in each Middle School. Hard copies of our prospectus will be given out with an invitation to our Open Evenings. An electronic copy of the prospectus will also be available on our website (www.dchs-alnwick.org)
- Wednesday 28th September and Thursday 6th October – our Open Evenings for Years 6, 7, and 8 when there will be an opportunity to talk to our staff and students, look at work that is going on and, if you wish, book individual meetings with a senior member of staff to discuss any individual issues or concerns. If you have any transport issues on that evening please let us know and we will endeavour to arrange a way for you to get to us.
- All through September and October we will be happy to book you in for a tour of our school and a meeting with a senior staff member during the school day if you wish. I know some parents are keen to see how a school operates during a normal school day rather than perhaps the artificialness of an Open Evening.
- During the rest of the academic year our English, Maths, Science, Languages, Humanities, D&T, and Sports staff will be working with your children to provide experiences as to the kind of learning that will be taking place once they arrive at the Duchess's School.

We are thrilled with our progress over the last few years. Our Ofsted inspection in September 2012 showed that we are a strong school. Its positive wording confirmed our belief that we are on the right track in wanting to make sure we deliver for everyone within our diverse community. Since then our results continue to improve with students across the ability range enjoying their studies and attaining high levels of success. Our academic programme sees large numbers achieving very high grades (20% of our GCSE grades are A/A* and over 50% of our A Level grades are at A* to B). Many of our

students go on to take high quality courses at university or gain places on much sought after apprenticeship programmes. Our vocational programme supports those students who struggle with academic work and provides them with a solid base from which to seek skilled employment. Our extra curriculum programme in Music, Sport and Drama is a significant strength of the school.

For parents of children in Years 6 and 7, I do appreciate the extra level of anxiety that you may have with the idea of your child moving to us at an earlier age to what you expected. Different educational systems have different strengths. I believe that we can offer our new Year 7 and 8 an exciting and challenging experience within a safe environment. They will be taught by teachers who are secondary trained and will work with them all the way from Year 7 to GCSE and beyond. They are experts in their subject and do not have to teach across a range of disciplines. Our facilities are very wide and varied. Your children will have all the support they need with the help of our experienced staff, enhanced by many Middle School staff from our Partnership Schools. There is no doubt in my mind that we can build on the already strong base that our local schools provide.

Our community is proud of what our school and its students achieve. I hope you will be sending your child to us in the knowledge that they will be safe, enjoy their time with us, and fulfil their potential.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch to either arrange a visit, have questions answered, or simply if we can help in any way.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our Open Evenings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. R. Hall', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Maurice Hall
Headteacher

