

Dear Parents and Carers,

Changing the school day from September 2019: Consultation

I am writing to you as part of a consultation process to make some changes to the school day. The changes and my reasons for making them are set out below. This consultation began with a conversation at a Parents' Forum. We are now consulting with governors, staff, Churchill School leaders, caterers, students and parents. Once the consultation is over, we will consider whether or not to introduce these changes for September 2019. A consultation on a similar proposal is taking place at Churchill School, with the view that the two schools would operate a school day with the same structure. The final decision on this proposal will take into account the opinions of the various stakeholders. The proposal is as follows:

1. To move from 6 lessons of 50 minutes to 5 lessons of 60 minutes each day
2. To move from a one week timetable to a two week timetable
3. To move to a single common break and lunchtime
4. The extend lunch time from 30 minutes to 40 minutes
5. To shorten our morning meeting time from 20 minutes to 15 minutes
6. To begin school 5 minutes earlier, at 8.40am.

Why change the school day?

Our school day is currently very complex. There are thirteen times during each day when at least half the school move from one activity to another. Under the new proposals, there would be seven such times, making the day less rushed and less disrupted.

Lesson length

Students currently learn attend six lessons a day but don't really have the time to absorb that breadth of learning properly. Fewer, longer lessons mean that teachers and students can increase the depth of learning. Each day, students will be absorbing less information but in more depth.

The best way to predict the future... is to create it.

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Two week timetable

To offer the range of options subjects that we want to, within a 25 lesson week, we will need to move to a two week timetable. This is very common amongst secondary schools because it increases our freedom to timetable more creatively and choose where we want to put certain lessons, rather than putting them in the only places they will go. It is slightly more challenging for students to manage, but not significantly so.

Lunch time

Having two breaks and two lunch times means that the school community lacks cohesion. It is impossible to offer activities or interventions at lunchtime. Learning is inevitably affected by the noise of other students at lunch. Staff duties are stretched very thinly trying to cover twenty breaks and lunches a week instead of ten. Students who wish to speak to teachers are often unable to do because they are on different lunch times. Colleagues who need to speak to each other often find the same. It is difficult for us to offer the amount of support that we would like to with the current arrangement. A single break and lunch in common would solve all of these problems.

Lunchtime is too short, meaning that students do not have the time to do anything meaningful or creative in their lunch break other than eat lunch. An extra ten minutes would allow us to run activities and clubs at lunchtime for those students who find it difficult to stay after school. Having one lunchtime instead of two would increase pressure on our catering outlets, but we are working with the catering company to explore ways of overcoming that problem. Other schools feed a similar number of pupils in a similar time from only four tills. We would have five or six tills in at least four locations, so I am confident that we can make it work.

Morning meeting time

Morning meeting time is currently twenty minutes. We need to find some time to put into lunchtime, and we don't want to either reduce learning time or increase the school day by more than five minutes. This means that the morning meeting time will be slightly shorter.

Starting the day earlier

Having a single lunchtime will increase pressure on our catering resources, so it is important that we make sure that there is enough time for everyone who wants to eat, to eat. If we add five minutes to the end of the school day, those students who catch the 14 bus, a public service bus, would miss it and have to wait an hour for the next one. Starting the day five minutes earlier avoids that problem. The huge majority of students are on site well before 8.40, so for them the change is not substantial.

Summary

I want to achieve the following things through the changes outlined above:

- More effective learning
- More flexible timetabling
- More staff on duty
- A more cohesive school community
- More opportunities for support

I believe that these changes will be a significant benefit to the school. If you have a view on the proposal please email me at consultation@samuelward.co.uk. This consultation will end at 12pm on Friday 15 February. I will inform all stakeholders of the outcomes before the end of the spring term.

Yours



Andy Hunter

Headteacher

Samuel Ward Academy