

Tomlinscote School & Sixth Form College



A Specialist Language College

June 2017

Dear Parents,

Thank you for responding to our consultation regarding changes to the start and finish times of our school day. Over 150 families responded for which I am very grateful. The purpose of this summary is to address the points raised by the majority and to provide you with feedback. Below are the main points raised, together with an outline of the school's plans to mitigate the issues identified. I hope this will provide some reassurance and helps you understand the steps the school is taking. If you feel your point has not been addressed I would be happy to discuss further. Please contact Mrs Allen, my PA, via the school office. A copy of this information will be placed on the school website to inform other parents.

In summary, the responses were:

- 54 were supportive of the proposal, with no negative points raised.
- 58 had both positive and negative points, mainly focussed on one issue.
- 45 did not support the proposal, with three issues dominating.

Following this consultation, and after considering all the views received, the school has decided to implement the new timings of the school day from September 2017. This means that school will start at 8.35am and finish at 3.05pm. As now, there will be a slightly later start on Thursday at 8.45am as we have meetings of teachers before this time. Years 7 & 8 will finish early on Friday at 2.10pm. We will continue to have six lessons each day of 50 minutes' duration and so there is no change to the learning time. The consultation did not specify the length of break time as we wanted to focus on the principles during the consultation. I can, however, confirm that in order to achieve these timings the plan is to reduce the morning break a little. This was a frequent suggestion from families and their children.

There were many positive comments about the changes, however I would like to respond to the main concerns raised:

1) The main issue related to lunch time.

Comments were made about the time spent queuing to be served and students having enough time to finish their meal before having to move out of The Beehive.

A number of steps are planned, including a staggered early entry for younger students, the provision of additional serving points, reallocation of seating areas, investigation of a 'pre-ordering' option and an extended lunch break.

The queues are supervised by staff and experience shows that they are usually cleared well within the existing lunch period. We will however be making some changes to reduce concerns of 'pushing in'. Some concerns were also expressed about the range of food available, particularly later during service. I can confirm that pasta, baked potatoes, a plated main meal, a vegetarian option, baked goods, salad pots and sandwiches are routinely available at the end of the lunch period. If you wish to monitor whether your son or daughter is simply choosing pizza every day, I would like to remind you that you can monitor their choices online!

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2) Traffic congestion was a second issue.

I can confirm that our plans were discussed with the Headteachers at St. Augustine's and Ravenscote Schools. We are all of the view that the start and finish times are as compatible as possible. The vast majority of our students walk or cycle to school; they will obviously benefit by the earlier finish during the winter and will be clear of the surrounding roads before parents from primary schools drive away. Parents who drive experience problems now. Our surveys have shown that there is not a 'clear window' on the local roads. As our students will leave before children from either primary school, we believe the change may actually partially alleviate these problems.

3) Concern about parents' other commitments including working times.

This was balanced by a number of families who commented positively about the benefits to them of the earlier finish, either due to their particular work patterns or the fact their child would be able to walk home in daylight.

In terms of other points raised, I can confirm that a register will continue to be completed in the afternoon. We actually register electronically in each lesson, so the removal of the afternoon registration period is not an issue. Pastoral support will continue to be a high priority as we are maintaining the morning tutor period and our current system of assemblies for each year group.

The details of lesson and break times will be shared with students and updated on the website before introduction in September. I am pleased that we have been able to allocate additional time for staff to work together, improving learning even more. While these changes will not save money, I am pleased that at a time of exceptional financial pressure we have been able to keep the same learning time while making these improvements.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Hylan

Ian Hylan
Executive Principal