

1 May 2020

Dear Students and Families,

As ever, I hope this letter finds you all safe and well.

Whilst I am very proud and humbled by the way staff and students have got on with finding a new way to communicate and learn, I am hopeful that sometime soon, when it is safe to do so, we will all be back at school, interacting in a way that I am sure we would all prefer.

The Leadership team and I, along with the Trustees, have begun working on plans to make that happen, so that we are ready to move forward once the Government has announced it is safe to do so. We will keep you informed of the steps we have taken both in terms of health and safety and the organisation of classes and learning, which may need to look quite different for some time.

In the meantime, it is important to keep looking forward. I have been waiting for an opportunity to share some exciting plans that we have been working on for some time now and which will be introduced from this September.

We will be re-shaping and re-branding our current 'House' system, alongside investing in staffing to further enhance the pastoral provision and support for students' mental health and wellbeing.

Like many of you I am sure, I am blown away when I see young people taking on responsibility and leadership, particularly when this involves students from different year groups working together and supporting one another. Our new plans are centred on fostering exactly this type of community and collaboration, providing students with a greater number of opportunities to develop each of our core values of Ambition and Pride; Kindness and Respect; Equality and Moral Purpose; Resilience and Teamwork alongside the development of key skills such as leadership, communication, empathy, creativity and problem solving.

Our old Houses will become new smaller 'schools'. There will be just four rather than the current six and they will be renamed after inspirational figures, who will be used to help develop a unique identity for each smaller 'school' (I will come back to this later).

Rather than Heads of Year, we will have Heads of School, each supported by a Deputy and an additional non-teaching member of support staff.

Unlike our current practice, most student assemblies will be vertical, across year groups 7-11, with the support of the Sixth Form, and you will be able to identify students in the same house by coloured stripes on a newly-designed tie, provided by the school for all current students.

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As well as coming together in assemblies, students in the same small 'school' will collaborate through things such as buddy systems, competitions and events, charity work and student voice.

We are really excited by these changes and believe that students will benefit in so many ways. However, you may be asking yourself 'why this?' and 'why now?' when we already have House system. Whilst that is true, our current system has its limitations. Students in different year groups do not know who else is in their house across the school and they only ever really come together on sports day. We feel that we are really missing an opportunity to do so much more for them. By creating these four smaller communities, 'schools', identifiable by their tie, students will feel a greater sense of belonging, pride and opportunity. Rather than being one in a school of over 1,000 students, they will benefit from being in a community fewer than 250.

A summary of benefits for the students includes:

- More staff to work alongside our new Heads of School (previously Heads of Year), so that we can provide even more personalised pastoral and academic support.
- A greater sense of community and belonging with their new 'smaller school'.
- More leadership and student voice opportunities.
- Opportunities for them to learn from, interact with and look up to their older peer groups
- For older students, even greater opportunities to support younger students, by acting as buddies, young leaders and role models. This will be particularly beneficial at key transition points in the year.
- More events and competitions for them to take part in, strengthening our commitment to developing the 'whole' child and offering broad and rich opportunities beyond that of the taught curriculum.
- A consistent Head and Deputy Head of School who will stay with them from Year 7 to Year 11, strengthening our relationships with them and consequently the support we offer.

Additionally, our families should also start to see some benefits over time:

- A consistent Head and Deputy Head of School that will stay with your child from Year 7 through to Year 11, strengthening our communication and relationship with you.
- When younger siblings arrive at The Misbourne, they will join the same 'smaller school', where parents/carers will already have an existing relationship with the Head and Deputy Head of School.
- More opportunities for your child to get involved in 'school' activities throughout the year that will cater for a number of different skills and interests.
- You will see them gain in confidence as they interact with students in other year groups in a healthy and productive way.
- They will be motivated to work hard and progress through the school as they aspire to their older peers, many of whom will become role models.

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It is important to note that this new system will not impact on the tutor group that students are in, nor will it result in a change of form tutor. Equally, students will not see any difference in the way that their timetable works or who is in the classes. Some students will have a new Head of School who is not their current Head of Year but they will get to know them very quickly.

I hope you can see from the information provided here that our new plans will enhance much of what is already good about The Misbourne and give us scope to provide even more opportunity and support for our young people. We will share more information over the course of this term as our plans progress, including a Frequently Asked Questions sheet for families, in place of a planned information evening and student assemblies that were going to take place later this term.

Lastly, we would really like the help of parents/ carers and students in choosing the names of the four new 'schools'. Please take some time to discuss this as a family; you might want to debate your own long list before narrowing it down for us. By clicking on this [link](#), you will be taken to a short survey where you can submit a maximum of three suggestions. We will then use these to create our own shortlist and finally our chosen four 'school' names.

Stay safe and I look forward to reading your suggestions.

Warm regards,



Ms Jo Meloni
Headteacher

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