

Thank you to everyone who attended the Open Day on Saturday 6th October and a big thanks to everyone who gave me a hand and to Rothamsted for hosting the event.

I was asked a series of questions by parents during the event and thought it might be useful to make these and the answers available to everyone.

1) Should I put KWS as my first preference on my application form?

The application process for this year is that you have 4 preferences in Hertfordshire AND you can also apply to KWS. In effect, it's a free additional choice. This is because the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education is not in place. The timeline for any school, is that the Funding Agreement is in place by January or February prior to the school opening. On March 1st, National Offer Day, places permitting you will be offered a place at one of your 4 preferences and a place at KWS and then you can decide which to accept. If you do not get offered a place straight away at KWS, it is important to remain on the continued interest list.

2) How do I apply to KWS?

Please visit our website - <https://kwschool.co.uk/admissions/> and complete the application form and return it to HCC.

3) How large is the catchment area?

We don't know until we have offered all the places and they have been accepted. However, it will be wider this year than in future years because the sibling rule will not apply. Often, siblings can take up to 50% of the places available in any year group.

4) Will the noise of the main school build and next door classrooms interrupt lessons in the repurposed Sports Centre in the first year?

The construction of the new school building will take place behind a large fence, which will shield a great deal of the noise. Noise between classrooms will not be an issue because all walls will be floor to ceiling. When walking into the school in September, you will not know that the building is a repurposed Sports Centre. It will be built as a school, and then turned into the Sports Centre once we move into the main building.

5) Do you intend to teach French and German?

We intend to teach Spanish and Mandarin in Year 7 and 8, one half of the year group will have two lessons of Spanish and one of Mandarin in Year 7 then the opposite in Year 8 and vice versa. It is possible that the numbers who wish to take Mandarin to GCSE will be limited so we would move that into the enrichment lesson (period 7) for those students and offer either French or German as a further GCSE option at Key Stage 4.

6) Are you going to set subjects?

There is quite a lot of research evidence to suggest setting (creating higher ability and lower ability classes) does not advance the speed of student learning (Education Endowment Foundation). My priority is to provide both support for those who need it and additional challenge for those who will benefit from it in order to drive the progress of all our students. Careful data analysis will enable us to track the progress of our students from the outset. So, we will need the ability to do targeting fast

track catch up for some students in certain key subject areas e.g. maths/English. Similarly our more able students will be challenged both in class and during our enrichment programme (period 7) with options for accelerated maths, oracy and literacy. My appointed Teaching and Learning lead will work with me to map out that provision .

7) In the first year, will there be proper science lessons?

Yes, both of our accommodation plans (repurposed Sports Centre or temporary mobile classrooms) will have a specialist science lab that is fully equipped for Year 7 science lessons, enabling scientific experiments to take place. When we move in to the fully built school, we will have 7 state of the art science labs at our disposal.

8) In your speech, you said our children will always be the oldest in the school. Won't they miss out on interacting with older students?

They will always be the oldest and there will be many leadership opportunities that will be available to them as well as being able to make their student voice heard from the outset. Currently there are about 15 inter-school and inter-year opportunities across the existing Harpenden secondary schools e.g. inter-school quiz, debating etc. Plans are already in place to ensure we are part of these activities from September. There is also the opportunity to welcome other students from other schools e.g. sports leaders and 6th form science specialists to interact with our younger students, modelling mature learning behaviour.

9) What will be your sports specialism?

We will offer a broad range of sports opportunities from male and female football and rugby to netball, cricket and basketball. Student voice will play a large part. If students wish to focus on other sports e.g. lacrosse , and provided there is enough interest, we will pursue it.

10) Where will they play sport and what about teams?

We are incredibly lucky to have 4 full sized playing fields once the full school is built, including a cricket pitch, running track and field sports facility plus a sports centre. In our first year sports will be on the multi-use games area for practice. Teams will be selected in our main sports and they will play competitively on grass using the facilities of neighbouring schools both after school (3.15pm onward) and on Saturday mornings.

11) How can you afford to run a school with only Year 7?

Every student comes with funding from the government but new schools, with DfE approval, get a development grant which reduces year on year until the school has each year group filled. The DfE require us to submit robust financial projections on how we will manage this process financially, our staffing levels, wages, resources expenditure etc. Whilst we must run a balanced budget and the funding is not overly generous, it is certainly substantial.

12) Will the teaching staff be qualified?

Yes, the teachers will be qualified.

13) How many specialist teachers will you have?

All of our teachers will be specialist teachers but they will also be able to teach in a second subject. Some teachers would not have the time to teach in more than one subject, e.g. Head of English, maths and science because they will also take on whole school responsibilities. Some subjects, such as music, will need a specialist from the outset, but there will not be enough teaching time to fill their timetable (nor fit with the budget). As is normal in many schools, this person will also teach another subject such as RE. When recruiting, we will ensure that we have the right mix of qualified, experienced teachers, to cover all of the subjects required for Year 7.

14) How will you work with SEN students?

Students who have difficulty accessing the curriculum will receive extra support. This provision will be designed by our SEN coordinator, utilising additional staff such as specialist intervention maths/English teachers and teaching assistants. It is also a fundamental part of any and every teachers' training that they adapt lessons to include all students and plan differentiation into every lesson. Our commitment is to teach all of our students and aid them to progress no matter what their starting point.

15) Will there be a library in the first year?

Yes, reading and the language fluency that results from reading is a key cornerstone of developing students for a future world of work. In our first year the library will be overseen by the English department before we appoint a full time librarian as we move in to our finished school with a large library and learning resource centre.

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