



Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

www.midsomernortonschoolspartnership.com

Executive Headteacher/CEO: Alun Williams

Registered Address: Norton Hill School, Charlton Road, Midsomer Norton, BA3 4AD

Company No: 7365778

16th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you to thank you for all your support this year and to give you a few updates in preparation for the new academic year.

As you will know, this year we have been focussing our efforts on tackling prejudice and unconscious bias. A staff group has been set up to look at how we teach the curriculum and how staff colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds feel about their working environment. We have donated in excess of £2,000 to the Stephen Lawrence Foundation and have secured a key note speaker on the topic of Black Lives Matter for our staff INSET in September. Nikesh Shukla is a well-known author and screenwriter and has kindly agreed to record a piece for us as a Trust on racism and in particular, will be focussing on the story of Stephen Lawrence and his own experiences growing up in London. I hope this piece of video will again make us all think about unconscious bias and the need to tackle prejudice when it occurs in our schools, or when we see it in wider society.

There have been a number of changes to policies that will become practice next year. The most important ones relate to Teaching and Learning and to Assessment, Reporting and Target-Setting. The Teaching and Learning Policy has been added to and re-focused to pick up on the national agenda of helping children to **know and remember more**. This might sound like what we should be doing in schools anyway, but the emphasis nationally has shifted away from over-preparing children for tests and examinations, particularly if this is taking place well before the end of a Key Stage. To that end, we have been looking in schools at our schemes of learning to ensure they are encouraging children to **acquire more knowledge through the use of low-stakes tests and quizzes**. We will be **re-capping learning and ensuring children remember subject content. The application of this content in exam situations is now seen as less important at all Key Stages**. Naturally, children do still need to pass tests and exams, and we will of course continue to ensure that pupils can recall and apply knowledge in time-pressured scenarios.

Target setting will also be changing at secondary school level. We will still be using GCSE targets behind the scenes with staff and Key Stage 3 children so that we all recognise the potential of each child. However, KS3 students will receive their targets using a different language, which is not GCSE grade-based. This is because the Department for Education wants schools to avoid a narrowing of the curriculum with too much focus on GCSE at Key Stage 3.

We will use prior attainment data from primary schools and CATS score where available, to estimate likely GCSE grades and convert these grades into language associated with the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. Schools will write to parents and carers in September with details relating to their target setting and reporting changes.

The Government has issued guidance to test secondary age pupils for the Covid-19 virus in school during the first week back in September. Arrangements for asymptomatic testing will be communicated to you by Headteachers once further guidance is received, but I hope it will give you a sense of the seriousness with which the Government takes the safety of all staff and pupils in schools. From the 19th July masks will no longer be a requirement and it will be possible to relax the social distancing requirements, as well as formally relax our use of 'bubbles'. From mid-August, all children and those adults who have had two vaccinations, will no longer need to isolate if found to be a close contact. I hope these measures will help us all feel that normality is beginning to return. Schools will be updating their risk assessments over the Summer break to reflect the changes in guidance.





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From the 1st September we will welcome Buckler's Mead Academy into the Trust. We have been working with Buckler's Mead throughout the course of this year and hope that we can establish a 'hub' of schools in the Yeovil area in the next 3-5 years. Preston Academy, also in Yeovil, has indicated that it wishes to join the Trust later on in the next academic year. The Bath Hub will formally begin operating in September 2021. This brings together Beechen Cliff, Hayesfield Girls' School and St Mark's. Emma Yates, Deputy CEO will be leading the Bath Hub and I know has some exciting girls plans to support improved education across the City of Bath. Going forward, I am considering whether schools in the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area could be grouped together, again to ensure school improvement remains our focus so that all children can attend good or better schools.

We have undergone some structural changes in the central team following the retirement of long standing employee Alison Wyatt who has managed the finances firstly for Norton Hill and then the Trust, for the past 28 years. Chris Hobbs has taken up the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Nick Frankel will be joining us as Head of Finance. Phil Newbury, Estates Manager, has now told us that he will retire later this year. Phil has provided outstanding service to the Trust and has overseen our school buildings for many years. We have 27 sites, many with multiple buildings of different ages and design, so it has been a tough and challenging role to manage. Phil has done a superb job and kept children and staff safe over many years as well as leading on building projects. I wish Phil a happy retirement.

We are now in receipt of the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education Document. This is the annual update on areas to focus on in schools and communities relating to safeguarding. Our safeguarding team has updated our policies ready for September, but we know a significant national concern is the rise in cases of **peer on peer abuse**. Additionally, there is significant concern nationally about the damage to children when they over-use mobile digital devices, particularly the damage to mental well-being from social media. As such, we will be running more lessons, assemblies, etc on e-safety and being respectful to one another.

Finally, we have decided as a Trust, in line with Government thinking, to begin limiting the use of mobile digital devices in schools. Most of our secondary schools will be adjusting their expectations around the use of mobile phones, and other digital devices and are likely to say that whilst these devices may be allowed in school, they must be kept in bags switched off during the school day. This we hope, will reduce the use of social media, etc for a period of the day and give children respite from their phones/devices. Individual schools will be writing to you about their specific arrangements before the end of this term.

Thank you once again for your continued support following another tough year for us all.

I wish you a restful summer break.

Kind regards

Alun Williams
CEO

Incl. Term Dates 2021/22





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Academic Year 2021/2022

Term 1

Thursday 2nd September 2021

Friday 22nd October 2021

Term 2

Monday 1st November 2021

Friday 17th December 2021

Term 3

Tuesday 4th January 2022

Friday 18th February 2022

Term 4

Monday 28th February 2022

Friday 8th April 2022

Term 5

Monday 25th April 2022

Friday 27th May 2022

Term 6

Monday 6th June 2022

Thursday 21st July 2022 (*new end of term date*)

INSET DAYS

Inset day 1

Thursday 2nd September 2021

Inset day 2

Friday 3rd September 2021

Inset day 3

Friday 22nd October 2021

Inset day 4

Tuesday 4th January 2022

Inset day 5

Wednesday 5th January 2022

National Bank Holidays:

Monday 27th December 2021

Tuesday 28th December 2021

Monday 3rd January 2022

Friday 15th April 2022

Monday 18th April 2022

Monday 2nd May 2022

~~Monday 30th May 2022~~

Thursday 2nd June 2022 (moved BH)

Friday 3rd June 2022 (extra BH)

Monday 29th August 2022

