



Solway Community School

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5th January 2016

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to 2016 and a new school term. I hope you all enjoyed a merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year!

At school we are looking forward to 2016 and the chance to think again about how we do things – and the opportunity to do things differently, and we hope better.

So we are making some changes. Our senior leadership team have spent some considerable time looking at provision for all our students and we feel that, in order to move forward and keep exam results improving we need to look at KS3 in particular. Nationally, research shows that Years 7 – 9 are often given less priority and this has a knock on effect to the performance of students in KS4; so we are changing and improving our approach to KS3 because it is clear that if we get years 6-9 right, years 10 and 11 will fall into place more easily.

We will be working much more closely with our feeder primary schools; staff from our school will be spending time in Silloth Primary next term, working with Year 6 teachers – and children from the primaries will be invited to spend more time with our teachers, especially in Science and Technology to ensure we are building on firm foundations.

We have already launched two lessons a week for all students in KS3 focussing on independent study, literacy, numeracy and IT skills which so far seems to be very successful and well received by the students who have risen to the challenge of determining their own learning.

The next step is the mastery of skills and knowledge at KS3 which will set up success at KS4. We are going to provide our students with an opportunity for intensive, targeted teaching which will allow us not only to ensure mastery of key skills but also the opportunity to teach something new, interesting, exciting.

We are going to add in a 25 minute lesson every day which will focus on mastery of concept and knowledge and be an opportunity for independent learning, revision, repetition, as well as stretching the most able of our students by giving us the chance to cover more advanced work. It also gives us the chance to teach children according to their needs and ability not their age – so for example the best mathematicians in Year 7 could be working alongside the best mathematicians from Year 9; while those who need more support with numeracy for example will receive targeted and individualised support. For KS4, this intensive teaching slot will be used to consolidate learning and support the development of exam techniques. We will be tailoring what and how we teach to a much greater extent focusing on the students – and for teaching staff, it's a chance to remember what we enjoy about

teaching and learning ourselves. I have asked staff to plan lessons thinking about how could we use this opportunity to raise the status of KS3 and consolidate and support learning in KS4? How could we use it to develop a thirst for knowledge?

We are limited only by our imagination and energy, and we have plenty of that!

Start and finish times of the school day remain unchanged; we have slightly shortened our existing five lessons to find the 25 minutes for our new period 3. Times of break and lunch are slightly different. The new timetable is below for your information.

Registration	08.40-08.55	15 mins
Period 1	08.55-09.50	55 mins
Period 2	09.50-10.45	55 mins
Break	10.45-11.05	20 mins
Period 3	11.05-11.30	25 mins
Period 4	11.30-12.25	55 mins
Lunch	12.25-13.05	40 mins
Registration	13.05-13.10	5 mins
Period 5	13.10-14.05	55 mins
Period 6	14.05-15.00	55 mins

We are confident that this change to the way we teach and students learn will pay dividends in the future. Any change to a school's timetable may have teething problems as we all get used to different times. Please be assured I will write again at the end of this term to let you know how things have gone.

In the meantime please do contact me at school with any questions or comments you may have about these changes – I will be pleased to help and interested to hear your views.

Yours sincerely



Judith Schafer
Headteacher

