

September 2018

Dear Parent / Carer

I hope you and your family have had a pleasant summer and managed to have some quality 'holiday' time.

For our school, we have had an exciting year. We are two years into our new surroundings with much improved facilities and resources for our students to access and enjoy. Our extension and extra sports fields are now finished, completing a fantastic set of 21st Century buildings and outdoor spaces.

I am writing to you as Headteacher to introduce myself and our school and to give you a brief summary as to what will be happening in the next few weeks and months to support your child's future move from their present school to our school community. We recognise that the move to a Primary/Secondary way of working will generate extra questions and concerns for parents and children. Moving school at the end of Year 6 is different to moving at the end of Year 8. Many children will be moving from small schools to our 'large' school. We believe we have the skills and understanding to make sure the transition will work for everyone. I know we have the confidence of all the Headteachers of our feeder Primary Schools.

It is important that your child enjoys the remaining year in their present school feeling happy that transition between schools will go smoothly and they can look forward positively to the next step in their learning journey. September and October is a busy time for your family in making sure information is gathered about possible choices for September 2019; discussions are had, visits are made etc. To give you some detail and dates I have outlined below what to look out for:

- Week beginning the 17th September –I will be coming to run an assembly in each school. Hard copies of our prospectus will be given out with an invitation to our Open Evening. An electronic copy of our prospectus is also available on our website (www.dchs-alnwick.org)
- **Wednesday 26th September (5.00 until 7.30 pm)** – our Open Evening when there will be an opportunity to talk to our staff and students, look at work that is going on and, if you wish, book individual meetings with a senior member of staff to discuss any individual concerns. If you have any transport issues on that evening please let us know and we will endeavour to arrange a way for you to get to us.
- All through September and October we will be happy to book you in for a tour of our school and a meeting with a senior member of staff during the school day if you wish. I know some parents are keen to see how a school operates during a normal school day rather than perhaps the artificialness of an Open Evening.
- During the rest of the academic year our subject staff will be working with your children to provide experiences as to the types of learning that will be taking place once they arrive at the Duchess's School.

We are thrilled at our progress over the last few years. Our Ofsted inspection in May 2017 confirmed our view that we are a good and strong school. Its positive wording showed that we are on the right track in wanting to make sure we deliver for everyone within our diverse community. Our academic programme sees large numbers achieving high levels of success (20% of our GCSE grades are 7+ and 50% of our A Level grades are A* to B). Many of our students go on to take high quality courses at university or gain places on much sought after apprenticeship programmes. Our vocational programme supports those students who struggle with academic work and provides them with a solid base from which to seek skilled employment. Our extra curriculum programme in Music, Sport and Drama is a significant strength of the school.

I believe that we can offer our new Year 7 an exciting and challenging experience within a safe environment. They will be taught by teachers who will work with them all the way from Year 7 to GCSE and beyond. Our pastoral and support teams are confident and knowledgeable and will go that extra mile to provide the care that children need at this age.

Our community is proud of what this school and its students achieve. I hope you will be sending your child to us in the knowledge that they will be safe, enjoy their time with us, and fulfil their potential.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch to either arrange a visit, have questions answered, or simply if we can help in any way.

We look forward to seeing you at our Open Evening – 26th September 2018.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. R. Hall', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Maurice Hall
Headteacher