



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

Lesson length change (from August 2024)

We continually review and monitor our curriculum and our student’s experiences, as they are at the centre of what we do, and we aim to provide them all with an outstanding education. This year, we became aware that students, parents, and staff wanted to discuss whether the lesson length (100 minutes) was the best structure for outstanding learning and progress. We listened to feedback gathered through parent and staff forums and student voices and began a detailed consultation with staff to ensure that our lesson length was the best model for supporting all students to achieve well. This consultation enabled teaching and support staff to reflect on and voice their thoughts and ideas about the structure of the day and lesson length. In truth, it has been a thorough process, and we are excited to share the outcome today. **The Senior Leadership Team has decided that all students will follow a 60-minute lesson structure in the new academic year.**

The benefits for students include:

- Being taught by their teachers more regularly (i.e. more frequent learning episodes).
- Sixth Form students will be less likely to have large blocks of private study with more frequent teaching.
- Greater opportunities for sustained focus and progress (i.e. shorter lessons, better paced).
- Benefitting from regular cognitive breaks (i.e. movement between lessons).

We have high expectations, great students, and fantastic staff. We know that this change will mean that routines for movement between lessons will need to be excellent, so we are working with student leaders to respond to their feedback on systems that they recognise as beneficial to reduce lateness or disruption to learning. For example, we are developing a document to be carried by all students to ensure that we have the means to discuss expectations to enable transitions between lessons and so that behaviour in corridors is calm and purposeful.

Things that won’t change:

- The start or finish time for school.
- The curriculum (i.e. subjects studied).
- The duration of break and lunch.
- The way that we split break and lunch to enable younger students to become confident.

Changes:

- The length of lessons.
- The frequency of daily lessons (i.e. moving from 3 to 5 per day).
- Year 9 - 13 lunch will be 40 minutes later (1.40 pm); students may need to eat more during the break.
- There will still be split breaks and lunches for KS3 and KS4/5

| Years 7 and 8 | | | | | | | |
|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Tutor | 1 | Break | 2 | 3 | Lunch | 4 | 5 |
| 8.45-9.15 | 9.15-10.15 | 10.15-10.40 | 10.40-11.40 | 11.40-12.40 | 12.40-1.15 | 1.15-2.15 | 2.15-3.15 |
| Years 9 - 13 | | | | | | | |
| Tutor | 1 | 2 | Break | 3 | 4 | Lunch | 5 |
| 8.45-9.15 | 9.15-10.15 | 10.15-11.15 | 11.15-11.40 | 11.40-12.40 | 12.40-1.40 | 1.40-2.15 | 2.15-3.15 |



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Ms. Kirk (College Leader) and Miss Nicholson (Associate Principal) spoke with our Student Leaders, as student body representatives, on Wednesday to discuss the rationale and to share this decision. They will speak to the whole student body after half term. The Student Leaders were excited by this change and raised some questions which we felt you might be interested in reading, including our responses:

Q. With more transitions in the school day, how will the corridors remain calm?

A. Transition times are a key part of our school day, and we ensure that students remain safe during this time by having a duty rotation of senior leaders and pastoral staff at key points around the site. We will also reinforce our current practice of teachers greeting students to their lesson at the door, again providing a presence in the corridor and maintaining the calm and orderly environment we expect.

Q. With more lessons I am worried about the amount of equipment I will have to carry around school daily/ Have you thought about how students will manage this?

A. We considered and discussed this extensively before deciding. Although all students are required to have access to a whiteboard, these will now be kept in classrooms, and where possible, teachers will keep class books in the classroom. We know that this works well in many other schools.

Q. How will my practical subjects cope with shorter lessons?

A. Most of our teachers have experience delivering their subjects in 60-minute lessons and so they are well equipped to manage this. Where possible, we will also seek to provide double lessons to those subjects that feel they would benefit from this extended time.

Q. Will I have the same lesson twice in one day?

A. This is unlikely, and we will do our best to limit this from happening.

Parent Forum

We are interested in your views so that this can be managed successfully. We invite parents to attend a Parent Forum next week (Tuesday 21st May from 6.00 – 7.00 pm) at the school. Please come to the Main Reception if you wish to attend. We look forward to your views on the new lesson length and any other subjects you wish to raise.

We are excited by this development, and we feel confident that it will further enable excellent progress and attainment for all students. Thank you, as ever, for your support and partnership.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Cleary
Principal



Part of Tudor Grange Academies Trust



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Key Dates: Summer Term

- **Tuesday 21st May:** SEND Coffee Afternoon (2– 3pm)
- **Tuesday 21st May:** Parent Forum (6–7pm)
- **Thursday 23rd May:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Monday 27th – 31st May:** MAY HALF-TERM

- **Monday 3rd June:** Year 7 Humanities Residential
- **Tuesday 4th June:** SEND Transition Morning (9.30 – 11.30am)
- **Friday 7th June:** PSHE Dropdown (P1)
- **Monday 10th June:** PE Adventurous Residential
- **Thursday 13th June:** SEND Parent Forum (6–7pm)
- **Tuesday 11th June:** Year 7 Careers Morning
- **Monday 17th June:** Sports Awards Evening
- **Friday 21st June:** Year 10 Faith Forum
- **Monday 24th June:** Year 9 MFL Residentials
- **Monday 24th June:** Year 10 Work Experience Week
- **Tuesday 25th June:** Year 12 Road Safety Day
- **Tuesday 25th June:** Year 12 UCAS Information Evening (6-7pm)
- **Wednesday 26th June:** Year 12 Careers Day
- **Wednesday 26th June:** Key Stage 3 Enterprise Day
- **Thursday 27th June:** Year 12 Faith Forum
- **Thursday 27th June:** Year 11 Prom (From 6.30pm)
- **Friday 28th June:** Teacher Training Day (school closed)
- **Monday 1st July:** Year 6 Meet the Tutor Evening (5-8pm; times TBC)
- **Tuesday 2nd July:** Year 6 Induction Day
- **Tuesday 2nd July:** Year 10 Careers Day
- **Wednesday 3rd July:** PSHE Dropdown (P1)
- **Wednesday 3rd July:** Summer Concert
- **Thursday 4th July:** Summer Concert
- **Thursday 4th July:** Sports Day (a change to the previously publicised date)
- **Wednesday 10th July:** End of Year Trips

- **Thursday 11th July:** SUMMER HOLIDAY BEGINS

Parents' Evening Dates (Summer Term)

- **Thursday 23rd May:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 6th June:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)

Teacher Training Days (Summer Term)

- **Friday 28th June**

Term Dates (2024/25), as previously communicated, can be found [here](#).