

8 April 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

Proposed changes to school day - consultation

We are writing to you to gather your views as parents and carers to a proposed change to the school hours from September 2022. Currently as you are aware the school day is 8:40am-3:15pm on four days and 8:40am – 2:20pm on a Wednesday. We are proposing to extend the school day to 3:25pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and retain the shorter school day on a Wednesday from 8:40am-2:20pm. There are several reasons for this change:

1. It allows us to operate as a whole school community again, away from the restrictions of COVID bubbles. This is because the additional 10 minutes will be added to the current lunchtime – increasing the lunch break from 30 minutes to 40 minutes. This will allow us to return to a shared lunchtime across the whole school, rather than the split lunchtime we have been operating due to COVID bubbles. This provides many advantages for students' wellbeing as it ensures students and staff have a meaningful break to eat and refresh and provides opportunities for increased extra-curricular activities which cannot always successfully take place due to the shorter lunchtime.
2. The shorter Wednesday will remain with school finishing at 2:20pm as this allows our staff the opportunity to work as departments to share best practice and ensure teaching and learning is always of the highest quality to ensure the best outcomes your children are entitled to. This is important as it allows staff time to engage in their professional development to ensure their planning, marking and assessment has a clear impact on outcomes. The value of this is self-evident as following the move to the condensed Wednesday in September 2017, academic progress continued to increase. The last set of externally assessed GCSE grades in 2019 highlights that pupils' progress at Pensby High School is higher than national and that pupils make more progress against their starting points than most schools on the Wirral. Our boys make more progress based on their starting points than boys in all Wirral boys' grammar schools and the girls make progress in line or just behind the girls' grammar schools. This progress is the result of the focus on teaching, learning and standards we have at Pensby. To remove it would have an unclear impact on students learning therefore we will retain the current Wednesday 2:20pm closure.
3. We currently teach the allocated amount of time for lessons however the government are consulting schools about increasing the length of the school day. This does not include increasing the planned learning hours. The extended day will bring us in line with current government recommendations that the school day should ideally be 32 ½ hours or more a week.

The same consultation is also taking place with staff and will be dependent on consideration of the collective views following the consultation. Please note that all changes are on the proviso that current bus services will remain in place to ensure students can use school bus services if they currently do so.

It is important that we hear your views on the proposal. If you wish to comment on the proposed changes to the school day, please send your responses in via email to consultation@psf.wirral.sch.uk Comments should be received no later than Friday 6th May 2022. Attached to this letter is a series of FAQs which you might find useful.

Once the consultation process is completed, the Governing Body will decide whether the changes to the school day will take place with effect from the start of the September 2022 academic school year. Parents will be notified once a decision has been made.

We believe that these proposed plans are in the best interest of our school and ultimately our pupils. Our pupil attainment and progress remains our top priority and we are confident that these proposals will allow us to ensure that we provide the best possible education for students at the school.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Flanagan', written in a cursive style.

Mr K Flanagan
Headteacher

FAQ

Why do we need to change the school day?

The government is currently consulting schools regarding the length of the school day. This is not a consultation regarding an extension to the learning hours, as we already fulfil the recommended learning hours, but an extension to the overall length of the school day. Extending the day for 10 minutes at lunchtime four days a week would ensure we fulfil the proposed government guidance.

Why don't we increase the day on a Wednesday instead?

The early finish allows further improvements in teaching and learning through extensive and effective professional development. The impact of our high quality training programme for staff has already led to rapid improvements in teaching and learning and subsequent outcomes for students. Many good and outstanding schools adopt this as a strategy because the pace of change from central Government demands a host of new initiatives to be introduced without allowing for additional professional development time. Despite our excellent progress across the recent years we must not be complacent about securing continued improvement. The time gained for staff training is used for a wide range of staff development and as a result our students benefit as it allows our staff to:

- Share more of the good and outstanding practice now seen around the school
- Share the good practice for marking and moderation through thorough book trawls
- Focus on developing teaching strategies to use in the classroom
- Share resources, lesson plans and ideas between staff

Similar to this consultation, we consulted parents regarding the current Wednesday early finish in March 2017 when this was agreed.

Who has been involved in the consultation process?

The consultation process involves all parties who will be affected by the changes. This includes, Wirral LA, the Governing Body, parents/carers, staff and students.

Will the buses operate at the end of the school day at 15.25pm?

We are currently working with Merseytravel to ensure that we secure transport home for all students.

Will there be an increase in the learning time?

The increased 10 minutes will be added to lunchtime, not lessons, as we already teach the recommended learning hours. As previously mentioned, the timing will allow us to return to a shared lunchtime as a school community, moving away from the COVID bubbles and allowing staff and students time to eat, refresh and play.

I am at work; can my child stay in school after school hours?

Pupils who unable to leave school at 15:25pm (14:20pm on Wednesdays) can participate in an extra-curricular activity. The extra-curricular schedule is on the website.

I have concerns that haven't been addressed so far, how can I tell you formally?

You can put your comments in writing via the email address consultation@psf.wirral.sch.uk