

St. Michael's School



Form 5  
Information  
for Parents

September 2009

## **Moving into Form 5**

Form 5 is an important year in your child's education as many children are preparing for the 11+ examination at the beginning of Form 6 in November. There will be a meeting for parents on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> September to explain the outline of the curriculum for Form 5 and to share our expectations. In the meantime, this booklet will explain some features of the year and how parents can best support their children as they enter Form 5.

## **Secondary Schools**

It is important that early consideration is given to future schooling options and that you begin to investigate the different possibilities whilst your child is in Form 5. The Secondary Schools will be holding a number of Open Days and Evenings in the first half of the Michaelmas Term. At St. Michael's we will be holding our annual Education Fair on Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> September in the Hall. There will be representatives from about 12 local Secondary Schools present and there will be an opportunity for parents to view literature, meet with the representatives and discuss possible future schooling options. It can be a useful way of narrowing down which schools to visit. Form 5 parents are warmly invited to this event.

## **11+ Selection Test**

It is a parental decision to enter children for the 11+ and parents should not feel under any pressure to do this if it is not their choice. It is very important to consider all your options and whether a Grammar school environment is right for your child, bearing in mind that not only do they have to gain a place but they also have to be able to maintain it and benefit from it when they are there. More advice can be given about this nearer the time but the final decision rests with yourselves. It should be noted that the outcome of the selective process is completely independent of ourselves and is solely dependent on the child's performance on the day.

Although the application form will not need to be completed until early November in Form 6, it is essential that you inform us at the beginning of that Michaelmas Term if it is not your intention to enter

your child for the 11+ selection test.

The current format of the 11+ is that it consists of three separate tests; one in English (40 minutes), one in mathematics (35 minutes) and one in verbal reasoning (50 minutes). There will be a verbal reasoning familiarisation paper of 10 minutes before the start of the actual VR test. The familiarisation questions will not be marked.

Verbal reasoning is worth 50% of the total marks, with English and maths worth 25% each.

The English paper consists of a single comprehension passage and associated questions. Punctuation, vocabulary and spelling questions will be based on the comprehension passage. The maths test is set at National Curriculum levels 4 and 5. Candidates can expect some more searching questions to test problem solving abilities and depth of mathematical understanding. The verbal reasoning test is multiple choice and is also designed to demonstrate an ability to solve problems.

VR includes some of the following types of activities:

- Anagrams
- Codes (with letters or numbers)
- Sorting by alphabetical order
- Continuing letter sequences and patterns
- Use of timetables
- Sorting items into categories
- Finding the odd one out
- Finding missing digits in sums
- Continuing number sequences and patterns
- Identifying words with a similar or a different meaning
- Reordering sentences to make sense
- Finding words hidden within other words/sentences
- Sequencing according to size, position or rank
- Finding comparisons.

To tackle VR questions confidently children benefit from:

- a good general knowledge      3
- a broad vocabulary

- a secure knowledge of multiplication tables and number bonds
- being able readers
- working with sustained concentration
- being able to apply skills to new situations
- working at a steady pace
- showing working out when necessary.

## **Preparation in school**

Preparation for the 11+ is part of the on-going process of how the children already work. Whether or not your child is going to sit the 11+, the preparation for it is extremely worthwhile and a valuable preparation for their future schooling as they go through Form 5, into Form 6 and on into Form 7, at whichever Secondary School they attend.

From September, Form 5 will have an hour's VR lesson as part of their timetable in their two English groups, with another member of staff to support the second group. From the beginning of the Summer term they will have half an hour's VR homework a week to help to reinforce the techniques they have learnt and to develop speed and independent working. An extra half-hour of support for VR after school will be offered to those pupils who will most benefit from it, from after half-term in the Summer term and will continue through the Michaelmas term.

In maths, the pupils will work in three ability groups for the first two terms of the year. From the beginning of the Summer term the children will be re-grouped into two groups for maths, as they would normally be from the beginning of Form 6. This will help to put the children in a Form 6 "frame of mind" a bit earlier than usual so that they are used to the change before September. Three staff will still be available for the two groups so that there will be additional support for the second group. From May, pupils needing additional support in maths will be invited, by their maths teacher, to attend a maths group at lunchtime on a Tuesday to help address any specific areas of difficulty, led by Mrs. Blaney. This session is open to everyone, however if invited, it is expected that pupils attend. This session will continue into the Michaelmas term. Different children will be invited to attend by their maths teacher, each week, depending on the focus of the session.

In English, the pupils will work in two ability groups from September, with

additional support available for the second group. For those pupils who need further support, Mrs Long runs a “Literary Lunch” one lunchtime during the week for Form 5 for the last few weeks of the summer term and this activity will continue into the Michaelmas term. The focus of this activity is oral comprehension and vocabulary, rather than written answers.

From the Summer term there will be a focus on the core subjects for homework, with the addition of VR homework. This is not to belittle the foundation subjects in any way and they will retain their well-deserved place within the curriculum. Obviously, exceptions will need to be made to this from time to time and in the run up to the end of year exams.

Before the 11+ takes place in Form 6 the children will have done two complete practice sessions under exam conditions and strictly timed. Some children will be considering entrance to a school which has its own entrance exam, such as Brentwood. Whilst a lot of the 11+ preparation is in common with other entrance exams, there will be opportunities to look at some specific preparation before these entrance exams. However, it will be important that we know which schools you are planning to apply to.

## **Support at home**

As a school, we value the partnership between home and school and there are many ways in which parents at home can support children at school.

One of the key ways in which parents can continue to support their children as they go up into Form 5 and later into Form 6 is by hearing children read at home. This should carry on as children move up through the school. Reading can still be a shared activity; hearing your child read, reading with them and to them. Reading is fundamental to their learning and the more fluently and widely they read, the better. Their comprehension will improve, as will their vocabulary and general knowledge. It is also an essential part of maths and verbal reasoning.

Verbal reasoning is often a mystery to parents but there are many ways in which children can be encouraged to develop the skills necessary, besides doing the inevitable practice papers! These overlap with the skills necessary in English and maths.

Some of the ways children can be supported in VR, as well as reading are:

- Playing word games such as Scrabble, Boggle, Upword
- Doing crosswords, anagrams, word searches etc.
- Using bus or train timetables
- Doing number puzzles and games, practising multiplication tables.

## **Homework**

One of the best ways in which parents can support homework is by giving the children a routine so that they know when the homework should be done and have a quiet place in which to do it. We would ask that parents check that homework has been completed before signing the homework diary daily. Staff will mark in red in the homework diary if homework has not been completed so that it can be seen clearly that work is outstanding. It is then expected that it will be completed. Children will be given a new homework timetable at the beginning of the Summer term to include VR and the focus on the core subjects. Reading and spelling should happen regularly and it is expected that homework will take up to approximately an hour of focussed working each evening, excluding time to read and learn spellings. If your child is regularly spending considerably longer than this, please tell the Form teacher. If children miss work through unavoidable absence, please try to ensure that they catch up on any missing or outstanding work, wherever possible.

Please resist the temptation to do your child's homework for them or to correct it for them. This does not give staff a true indication of how your child is getting on. This does not mean they may not have any help but help given should be minimal so that it really is the child's own work! It would be appreciated if you could reserve any written comments for your child's homework diary. It is important that we all start to encourage the children to become more organised

themselves and to increase their level of independence, without taking away all their support.

If you have any queries about work, either classwork or homework, please clarify this with the member of staff concerned.

## **Expectations**

By the end of Form 5 at St. Michael's it is anticipated that most children will have achieved the following expectations in terms of independence, personal organisation and self-discipline:

### ***Independence***

- To record homework independently and consistently
- To ask for help independently
- To adapt to different staff expectations
- To attempt to solve problems themselves

### ***Personal Organisation***

- Always have the correct books and equipment for lessons
- To need some support from staff in organising their work
- Maintain a smart appearance without constant reminders and to wear school uniform with a sense of pride
- To be able to listen to and act upon more than one instruction
- To take responsibility for catching up missed work
- Always give in homework on time
- Not to have to return to school for forgotten items

### ***Self-discipline***

- Not to need the toilet in a lesson
- To understand what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour
- To show a greater awareness of the needs of others
- Always to show respect and consideration to others
- Always to respect and care for their own and other people's property

## **Extra-Activities**

It is important that consideration is given to the number of extra activities that your child undertakes. This certainly does not mean that

they should give everything up but if they are out every night of the week they are going to struggle to maintain the level of work expected! Not only that, they will be absolutely exhausted – it is a question of balance.

## **Key Dates**

Below is an outline of some of the key dates and events for pupils going into Form 5.

Friday 11th September: 3.45 p.m. Meeting for Form 5 parents re: F5/6 Curriculum and Secondary School transfer.

Tuesday 15th September: 7.30 p.m. Education Fair at St. Michael's for F5/6 Parents.

Thursday 22nd October: 5.30 p.m. Form 5 Parents' Evening with Form Tutors.

Wednesday 16th December: Full end of term report.

*Secondary Schools will be holding various Open Mornings and Evenings throughout the Michaelmas Term, as outlined on the Date List.*

*Dates and events for 2010 and 2011 are provisional at this stage.*

Parents' Evening for Form 5 Parents with Form Tutors and Specialist Teachers.

Friday 26th March: End of term summary report.

**Summer Term 2010**

Parents' Evening for Form 5 Parents with Form Tutors.

Thursday 15th July: Full end of term report.

**Michaelmas Term 2010**

September: Education Fair for F5/6 Parents.

October: Parents' Evening for Form 6 Parents with Form Tutors and Core Subject Staff.

Late October /  
Early November: Closing date for applications to Secondary Schools.

Late November: 11+ Selection Test.

December: Full end of term report.

*Secondary School Open Mornings and Evenings are likely to be held throughout the term.*

**Lent Term 2011**

Parents' Evening for Form 6 Parents with Form Tutors and Specialist Teachers.

End of term summary report.

**Summer Term 2011**

May: Key Stage 2 SATs.

Full end of term report.

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