

Age Range Changes. So what does it mean?

The Regional Schools Commissioner approved the business case to extend the age range at Tudor Grange Academy Redditch (TGAR) to an 11-18 secondary school with a Sixth Form. This means that from September 2016 there will be a year 7 intake of students (children aged 11) into TGAR as well as a year 9 intake of students (for two years only).

These changes now provide parents/carers and students in Redditch a choice of either a secondary education from the age of 11 or continuing in middle school education until the age of 13, when they would choose in September 2016 and 2017 either to apply for a year 9 place at TGAR or choose a high school.

It is recognised that change always brings with it some degree of uncertainty and the Governing Body see it as their duty to keep parents/carers and stakeholders informed in order to reduce any uncertainty and anxiety. Since the announcement parents/carers have been asking a series of questions in order to seek clarification and understand the next steps. The questions and answers (Q&A) below reflect the enquiries and concerns to date. We thought it would be helpful to share these with both current and prospective parents/carers.

Q. How can I apply for a year 7 place and who could apply? How many places will be available?

A. Applications can be made any time from September 2015 until 31st October 2015. The Admissions Policy for September 2016 is on the website and the admission criteria are exactly as stated for year 9 applications.

The admission policy criteria are unchanged from those published this year; they simply apply to both year 7 and year 9 applications.

Parents/Carers with children in the current year 5 may want to consider secondary education as an option.

The Published Admission Number (PAN) for September 2016 for the first year 7 intake is 180 as outlined in the consultation.

Q. What information will be available to support our decisions?

A. In September 2015 there will be a parents/carers evening for prospective year 7 parents/carers and another for prospective year 9 parents/carers. Students are encouraged to come to these evenings with parents/carers/carers.

At the year 7 information evening we will present details of the year 7 curriculum and extra curricula activities. We will also outline the extensive pastoral and attainment support in place. At the year 9 evening we focus on the year 9 curriculum.

There will also be an opportunity for you to come and visit the school during the day and observe the high quality teaching and learning, speak with students within the Academy and hear first-hand about their experiences. The information evenings for both year 7 and year 9 will be supported by information packs.

You can however arrange to visit the school at any time. Some parents/carers have already been to find out what happens here at TGAR.

Q. I have two children. One would be eligible for a secondary school place from year 7 and my other child will be leaving middle school seeking a high school place in September 2016. Can I apply for both a year 7 and year 9 places?

A. Yes, on each form indicate whether it is a year 7 or 9 application.

Q. Can my child apply to join year 7 from middle school or only from a primary school?

A. You can make an application for year 7 entry from either a middle school or in the final year of primary school.

Q. When I put my child into middle school they said I had enrolled into a 4 year programme of study covering KS2 & KS3. Will it be detrimental to my child's education to leave at the end of KS2?

A. Absolutely not. The majority of children in England join a secondary education system at the age of 11, the end of their KS2. The additional time we believe will be advantageous.

The benefits of joining TGAR in Year 7 is that children will be enrolling into a 5 year programme that is specially designed to enable them to develop the skills, knowledge, emotional maturity and resilience to cope with the new and highly demanding GCSE. It also allows us to immerse students in a range of extra-curricular experiences to broaden their horizons.

The ability to teach years 7 and 8 will allow us a greater chance to prepare students for the increased demands of the new GCSEs and to work with children and families to support those that have specialist needs. This increased time allows us to bridge the inevitable gaps in students' knowledge and skills because the new curriculum contains subjects that they will not have been taught in KS2.

This time is also invaluable in helping us to understand the most effective way to engage a student allowing them time to develop key relationships with teaching staff before they undertake the most important leg of their education- their GCSEs. We believe that given the GCSE changes, it is vital that we have time ensuring that students will master the requirements of the new curriculum.

Starting with us in year 7 means that all children will have an additional GCSE year of study because they will commence their GCSEs in year 9. As said this is crucial given the forthcoming changes which will make the GCSE much more demanding.

Q. The business case said that you will reduce your Year 9 Published Admission Numbers (PAN) from 280 to 180. When will this happen?

A. During the consultation we agreed to defer the first intake of year 7 until 2016 and as a result to defer the consultation on the reduction of our year 9 PAN until 2018.

Any consultation regarding the year 9 PAN will not occur before October 2015 and will be in line with the statutory guidance. However before we proceed with any consultation regarding the PAN we will work with the local authority to ensure that basic needs are met.

Q. My child has autism. Can they apply for a place in the Mainstream Autism Base (MAB) in year 7?

A. Yes. We believe that children having an additional 2 years in the MAB will benefit hugely. We will be able to utilise the time in years 7 and 8 to support students and their families over the two years. This will give the child greater chance of settling in and developing key skills and strategies to cope with the high demands of GCSE's. The increased time to develop those supportive relationships will be particularly important for vulnerable students.

Q. Will you have enough classes and teachers to support the year 7 and 8 students?

A. Yes. The current capacity of the existing buildings is 1150. If the consultation regarding the reduction of the PAN is successful then the total number of students including the 6th form students will be 1120. We do not require any further new buildings. If we need expansion we have 10 unused classrooms.

We do have adequate numbers of teaching staff and have again increased our staffing for 2015/16 in the core subjects of maths, English and science to provide the capacity to prepare for the forthcoming changes to GCSE's and to develop fully the KS3 curriculum.

As the numbers on roll increase to meet the total capacity we have investment plans to continue to increase staffing in key areas.

Q. What will happen if in September 2017 you do not get a full 180 applications for year 7 places?

A. We understand that change takes time and in our business case we make provision for a range of scenarios including not having a full 180 year 7 intake in September 2017. Financially we can support this without any detriment to our existing educational provision.

Q. Will the students currently in the school be adversely affected by these changes? Will the teachers be too busy to work with them?

A. The curriculum for 2015/16 is already under development and staffing plans in place. These plans will not be disrupted by any preparation for the new year 7 students.

Q. What will be needed for the new year 7 intake of students? How will you ensure that everything is in place?

We have built in additional planning time for key specialists to work on developing a high quality year 7 education at TGAR. Our sister schools are very experienced in year 7 & 8 educational provision and there are key staff in those schools who are already working with us to develop these plans. All our teaching staff are secondary school trained subject specialists and in our recent recruitment we have appointed staff with specific experience in building plans for the new KS3 curriculum.

Q. So when will you stop accepting year 9 students?

A. The last intake of year 9 students will be September 2017.

Q. How can you make sure during these changes that students have an effective transition into either year 7 or year 9?

A. The head teachers of all the local schools are very clear that we have a duty of care to support parents/carers and children irrespective of their educational choices. We are professionals and as such will work together in the interests of students.

We have already spoken with our two main feeder middle schools regarding the transition for prospective year 9 students in September 2015.

Q. What after school clubs will you have for the year 7 students?

A. We have a very proactive after school provision. The range of activities change on a regular basis to meet the needs and interests of our students. The after school activities include clubs most nights, the opportunity to complete homework in the library every night, homework clubs in departments, revision sessions and a wide range of sporting fixtures. The clubs will be expanded to include specific activities for the new year 7 students based upon their interests. With the exception of fixtures, the clubs usually finish at about 4.20. p.m.

Q. What time does the day start? Can my child arrive early?

A. The day starts from 08.50. However breakfast is available from 08.00. a.m. and students can work in the restaurant or Atrium Café area.

Students who are in the MAB can attend the MAB early to settle for the day.

Q. My child is currently year 5 in middle school so will be eligible for a high school place in September 2017. I want to send my child to TGAR because all my children have attended high school there. Will their education be compromised if I do this?

A. We will continue to take year 9 applications up to and including September 2017. We have a highly effective year 9 transition in place and this will continue. We will also continue our current support systems to ensure that we support the educational needs of any child joining as a high school student. The options process will still allow all year 9 students to take their options. Year 9 students joining us in September 2017 will have the additional benefits of the increased support structures, currently being enhanced and put in place in TGAR.

Q. Will you make year 7 students undertake a test as part of the admissions process?

A. We are committed to a comprehensive school intake. We do not envisage having to introduce 'fair test banding' which is in place in other schools.

It is not part of our plans. Any such proposal would be subject to consultation in line with statutory guidance.

If any parent or carer has any concerns or would like to raise any questions then please do not hesitate to contact principal@redditch.tgacademy.org.uk . If you would like to arrange to visit the academy then please contact office@redditch.tgacademy.org.uk.

Rose Rees Principal

