

Abingdon's New Timetable from September 2011

Abingdon School has completed its comprehensive review of the structure of the week and its curriculum offering and we can now fill out in more detail how the timetable will work. We are tremendously excited about the benefits this change will bring to the boys' experience at Abingdon and the increased opportunities there will be for academic and Other Half extension.

Template timetables for each year group are available on our website alongside the new timings of lessons (which are common across all year groups). The teaching timetable for next year has largely been written but, as is always the case at this time of year, we are still in the process of filling in the finer detail of Other Half staffing.

An overview of changes in four key areas of school life is below:

Academic

Abingdon's academic curriculum remains largely the same in terms of subjects on offer, with the following notes and adjustments:

- In Lower School (years 7 & 8) we have, with 'creativity' in mind, created more time for the practical subjects (Drama, Music, Art and DT) so that all boys have a full experience of these subjects for the entire year.
- Lower School boys will now have one period per fortnight in the Library with the Librarian, who will work with them to encourage range and depth of reading habits.
- Across years 7 to 9 (1st to 3rd year) we have balanced the Humanities (History, Geography and RS) to give them each the same amount of curriculum time.
- At GCSE level, we have removed RS from the compulsory curriculum and put it into the option blocks. From now on RS will have the same time allocated to it as other GCSE option subjects; under the present arrangements RS has had half the time.
- At A level, we have added Psychology as an option.
- We have prioritised time during some of our extended lunchtimes for academic extension/catch-up work. We anticipate that boys will be able meet with teachers during these times for a variety of extension additional classes (e.g. with Oxbridge application in mind) or for clinic-based subject catch-ups where they have been struggling to keep up with particular topics.

Academic lessons will be 55 minutes in length with 5 minutes of travelling time between them.

There is a variety of period allocations per subject across the year groups but a typical GCSE subject is allocated five lessons a fortnight and AS and A2 subjects 9 or 10 lessons over a fortnight.

We will be working on a fortnightly cycle so boys will be required to plan across that period of time. Week A will differ in its timetable from Week B though the structure of each day will be consistent from week to week.

One of the many benefits of the 55 minute period will be the greater opportunities teachers have to develop the Assessment for Learning principles which have been a focus of INSET for the past couple of years. We want boys to be more involved in the progress of lessons and to take more control of their own learning.

Our academic liaison with St Helen's is unaffected by these changes. We have ensured that arrangements for joint subjects will continue to operate as well as they have done previously.

Pastoral

There is no change to the House and tutor groups system and boys will still meet their tutors for a short period at the beginning of each day and for an extended period of time during the week.

Some changes we have incorporated in the new structure are:

- The Lower School will be following the 'Be The Best' programme (linked with the 2012 Olympics) which is designed to "inspire, engage and empower" young people to achieve their potential. This will occur once a fortnight.
- Years 9 & 10 (3rd and 4th year) will have separate PSHE lessons in small groups of around 10-12 boys. They will be following a programme which used to be delivered by tutors but will now be in the hands of chosen specialists. By doing this we expect to free tutors up for more of the one to one academic and pastoral support that we wish to encourage, such as the 'Talking with Crocodiles' programme, and the topics of the PSHE programme will be in the hands of experts in the area.
- Chapel services and assemblies will not be at the beginning of days – they will take place during our extended lunchtimes.
- The extended lunchtimes will give tutors and boys more opportunities to meet on a one to one basis to pursue individual issues.

Other Half

Most of the lunchtimes are longer which will bring a multitude of benefits:

- Many activities will take place during lunchtimes as well as after lessons, giving boys more opportunities to participate in Abingdon's Other Half programme. Our range of activities is already very extensive but we wish now in particular to increase the number of times that boys are able to participate in them.
- All boys have year group sport twice a week. These times for undertaking physical activity are timetabled into the weekly timetable and occur at the same time each week. Wednesday afternoon continues to provide an additional session for these activities. The Middle and Upper School provision for sporting opportunities has been significantly increased. Much of this time uses the daylight hours better than the current model.
- Team practices and matches continue to take place on Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays.
- Music priority time is after school on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, and the extended lunchtime provides opportunities for smaller ensemble work.

Overall, the new timetable will extend boys' ability to participate in the Other Half, will make much better use of our facilities and will give senior boys an increasing autonomy over how they organise their time as they prepare for university life.

Boarding

The removal of Saturday lessons has given the boarding staff an excellent opportunity to rethink our whole weekend provision. The boarding housemasters have been working on a detailed plan to enhance the experience of our boarding community who, we are determined, will remain at the heart of Abingdon's identity. Governing this programme are the following principles:

- Giving boys a better balance between highly necessary recreation at the end of our busy weeks and an organised programme of trips, activities and study opportunities.
- The creation of a more integrated sense of a boarding community which sees itself both as part of the larger Abingdon picture but also has a unique identity and community within that picture. Devoting more time to 'boarding' activities, without the distraction of Saturday lessons, will enable us to concentrate on these more pastoral and essential aspects of boarding life.
- Giving more opportunities for boys to access English language support from the EFL department without compromising their academic lessons.

The detailed week by week programme will be available to boarders in due course but a flavour of the proposed activities provision is below:

- **Trips.** Half-day trips to Oxford to visit the Ashmolean, the botanical gardens and the Bodleian Library. Full-day trips to places of interest further afield, such as Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the British Museum in London. Evening trips to see productions of plays and operas.
- **Sports & Activities.** Access to Abingdon's fabulous Sports Centre for activities such as swimming, basketball, badminton, squash, climbing and fitness training. Trips off-site to such events as a morning's sailing, to a golf driving range and ice skating. Access to Abingdon's Music School for instrumental practice.
- **Events.** Formal dinners and dinner debates, quiz and film evenings and thought-provoking lectures (in association with the Edmund Society) given by outside speakers, such as local politicians and experts.