

Transition to the Senior School

How to prepare for a seamless transition from one educational phase to another

The School Day

- The school day is longer in the Senior School. Most students arrive at around 8:20 am in order to prepare for the first class
- Most students leave at around 5pm every day except Wednesday and Friday as we have a comprehensive extra-curricular programme
- Students are mixed at all subjects with the emphasis on a whole year integration.
- This is in an effort to depart from the “Base Class” model.

First Year Timetable

- Each student's day is governed by a timetable grid. All lessons are given a time allocation of 40 minutes per lesson. Lessons are also known as periods. There are 42 lessons in a week
- Each subject has a different time allocation governed by the amount of content required for coverage of each course.

The Curriculum

- The Curriculum can be divided into three distinct sections: **Core Subjects**, **Options** or Elective subjects and **Languages**.

The **Core** Subjects are as follows:

- Irish: 5 periods
- English: 5 periods
- Maths: 6 periods
- Science: 4 periods
- History: 3 periods
- Geography: 3 periods
- SPHE: x 1 periods
- CSPE: x 1 periods
- Physical Education x 2 periods
- Total 30 periods

Option Subjects

- Option Subjects are designed to foster and nurture particular skills. Options should be chosen with this mind. Some subjects should be started in First Year others can be picked up later in the Senior Cycle.
- Interest and ability or natural proficiency should determine choices not career at this stage
- There are two option blocks. Options change every year in order to meet the needs of each year group, but we always try to provide a balance of subjects and give students the opportunity to pick disciplines that reinforce or complement each other.

Option Blocks

- There are two option Blocks A and B: Students must choose one subject from Option A and one from Option B. They cannot choose Music or Business twice.
- Option Subjects are allocated 4 x lessons per week

Option A: Art **or** Business **or** Music or Computers

Option B: Technical Graphics **or** Business **or** Home Economics **or** Music.

- Students can sample each subject before finally arriving at their choices. The sampling period is usually completed by mid-September.

Languages

- The Students sample French, Spanish and German
- They decide at the end of First Year which language they wish to concentrate on
- All students who do not have an exemption study Higher level Irish
- We currently do the Oral Option in our Languages to maximise potential grades of all students

Extra Curricular

- An outline of the Extra Curricular programme is attached
- Team sports are emphasised
- All students who wish to be part of a team can do so
- Wednesday Afternoon is dedicated to extra curricular.
- Hockey, Badminton, Spikeball, Volleyball, Basketball, Tennis and Soccer are the sports we compete against other schools in.

Junior Cycle Student Award

English, Science, and Business Studies will be subject to change for your sons and daughters.

The key elements of change are:

- A shift from terminal examinations to continuous assessment.
- A shift from content coverage and regurgitation of learned material to more considered and extended assignments
- An introduction of key skills that are much broader and embrace numeracy, literacy, ICT awareness, well-being and social development.

JCSA (continued)

- The planned implementation for the September 2017 cohort is to include Modern Languages and Art but we are awaiting direction on this.
- By 3rd Year your Sons and Daughters will be examined on Classroom Based Assessments one in 2nd Year and One in Third Year
- These will be assessed internally. The SEC will examine the Learning by means of an assessment Task worth 10 percent as well as the Terminal exam worth 90 percent.

JCSA

- The Junior Cycle award will have 2 sections to it
- One will be a profile of achievement
- The other the outcome of Terminal examination
- When we reach clarity on this we will have a further information session to outline

Assessment

- We have 4 formal written reports during each academic year:
 - October mid-term interim report
 - Christmas - largely an examination based report,
 - Spring mid-term interim report
 - Summer – again largely examination report.
- In addition Parents are invited to one formal Parent Information Evening in September and one formal Parent Teacher Meeting in January. However, all parents will be in regular email contact with the Head of Year
joanne.hanratty@sps.ie

Exemptions and Support

- The Senior School is recognised by the Department of Education. Therefore students are required to meet exact criteria to qualify for support or exemptions:
- Learning Support requires an up to date psychological report – please make an appointment with the Learning Support Department nuala.fee@sps.ie
- To apply for an Irish Exemption procedures must follow revised rule 46 from Circular M10/94. If you have an exemption this will be carried over into the secondary school

Other Issues

- Students from the Intermediate School are always very prepared for the transition
- Organisational issues pose the greatest challenge – lockers, timetables, homework and revision for exams are the key challenges. These areas are worked on in the Form Period and SPHE lessons
- Developing relationships and changing friendship groups are monitored regularly by teachers, the Head of Year and you as parents. We do have a counsellor who can be contacted at jenny.ryan@sps.ie
- 1st Year Induction Day takes place on Wednesday 17th May 2017 and all new Senior School entrants (including 1st Years) attend an additional Induction Day at the commencement of term