

## Frequently Asked Questions

This Q&A has been prepared to provide parents and carers with clear background on the recent changes. The changes were developed following research, direct feedback from students, parents and staff, and pilot trials during the last academic year. They also reflect national best practice that is now common in schools across the country and are designed to support a calm, safe and positive learning environment so every student can enjoy a successful day.

### 1. Daily Routines and Transitions

#### **Why do students start tutor time outside when the weather allows?**

Starting outdoors creates a calmer, more predictable beginning to the day and reduces pressure before entering the school.

#### **Why are line-ups taking place at key moments?**

Line-ups help us start positively, celebrate successes, reinforce expectations, and allow quick, discreet pastoral check-ins - supporting a calm, safe and consistent environment.

#### **What happens when the weather is poor?**

All routines move indoors to keep students safe and comfortable during inclement weather.

#### **Why is music played during lesson changeovers?**

After the bell, gentle music guides punctual, calm transitions. Students should be in class and ready to learn when the music ends. Our behaviour policy regarding punctuality which all students and parents know and are aware of, has not changed.

#### **What happens if a student arrives late (between 8:30 and 8:50)?**

They should use the late door, complete a brief reflection form, and then meet a member of the Senior Leadership Team for any important notices, or necessary support, before heading to lessons.

#### **What happens if a student arrives after 8:50?**

They must sign in at main reception, where their attendance is recorded. A member of staff will then escort them directly to their lesson.

### 2. Breaks and Meals

#### **When is breaktime and what's available?**

Break lasts 20 minutes (10:50–11:10). Snack food continues to be available for purchase from our bistro kiosk. Students can also eat their packed lunch and snacks from home during breaktime and/or lunchtime.

#### **How long is lunch and how is it structured?**

Lunch is 35 minutes. Each year group has a 12-15-minute calm, seated slot in the canteen, then extra time in the canteen or MIZ if still eating. No child will be rushed with eating if they have not finished their meal.

Before and after eating, students can relax in their year group area or join enrichment activities. Year 7 enjoy a separate lunch with full canteen access for the 35 minutes of lunch, if needed.

**Will my child get lunch if they're in detention?**

Yes. Students in lunchtime detention eat during the session. Anyone without a packed lunch receives a complimentary sandwich, fruit, and water.

**What food options are in the canteen?**

We offer hot and cold meals, including vegetarian, meat, gluten-free, and lactose-free dishes. We're expanding the menu based on student feedback to further improve our dining experience.

**Why are no drinks sold in the canteen?**

To help families save money and reduce waste. Jugs of water and water bottle refill stations are available around the academy and in the canteen, with students encouraged to bring in a dedicated water bottle for refills throughout the day.

**Can my child go to the toilet during break and lunch?**

Absolutely! Students have access to toilet facilities during break and lunchtime, as well as during lesson time.

**Can my child sit with friends in the canteen?**

Yes, if in the same year group. This is actively encouraged.

**3. Facilities and Resources**

**Can students use the toilet during lessons?**

Yes. If needed, students go during lessons with a staff escort to ensure safety around the site. Private, single-use toilets are stocked with sanitary products.

**What if my child has a medical need for urgent toilet access?**

Students with a GP-confirmed medical need are prioritised. Staff support them without requiring a physical pass. If they do not have a pass or medical condition, they just need to inform the teacher who will ensure there is an escort to take them

**Is the 3G pitch available this year?**

Yes. We're rolling out access with year groups rotating use. It's a valued part of school life, and we're excited to see it in action!

**Is the library still open?**

Absolutely. It's open before and after school. During lunch, students may use it by application. If students would like to use the library, please email [info@cowesec.org](mailto:info@cowesec.org)

**Can my child access a locker?**

Year 7 and Year 11 students have lockers in their year-group areas. We're also about to pilot outdoor lockers for Years 8–10, which will be available at the start and end of the day, as well as during break and lunch.

#### **4. Year Group Provisions**

##### **Why does Year 7 have its own area?**

To ease the transition from primary school. Year 7 have a calm, predictable space with nearby pastoral staff, helping build routines and reduce stress.

##### **Why does Year 11 have a common room?**

To recognise their maturity and support exam revision. The space offers independence, hot drinks, and close access to key staff. Year 11 also have access to the library as an extended study area during lunchtime.

##### **What privileges do Year 11 have?**

They enjoy more independence, with no line-ups, access to the sixth form canteen hatch, and trusted time-management responsibilities.

#### **5. Behaviour, Culture and Support**

##### **Why has a new uniform been launched?**

The new uniform is more affordable, comfortable, and practical - softer, quick-drying, breathable, and easy to wash, prioritising student comfort and family convenience. We are really pleased with the positive response so far.

##### **Why do some staff wear purple hi-vis vests?**

All staff support student wellbeing, but those in purple hi-vis are certified Mental Health First Aiders, making them easy to identify if students need additional emotional or mental-health support.

##### **Can my child access First Aid?**

Students can request first aid support at any time. Certified First Aiders are on duty before and after school and during break and lunchtime. If a student needs help during lessons, staff will summon an on-call First Aider, who will attend promptly.

##### **Why has the academy introduced new posters?**

The posters feature inspiring quotes and student photos to create a bright, positive environment. Classrooms now use knowledge organisers instead of wall displays to reduce overload and support learning. We have aimed to make our environment much brighter than the previous wall displays.

##### **Why has detention moved to lunchtime?**

Lunchtime detention lets students reflect and reset immediately, so they can continue the rest of their day positively in lesson. It also enables staff to address concerns and provide support promptly, reducing anxiety or stress.

##### **Why is reception closed to students during the school day?**

To encourage student responsibility for tasks like managing PINs and timetables. Pastoral staff, tutors, and teachers are available in dedicated spaces to offer support, whilst reception staff focus on essential tasks.

## **6. How are students with SEN supported by these changes?**

Our routines create a calm, predictable environment. These changes have been made with all students, and particularly students with SEN, at the centre. Key benefits include:

- Consistent line-ups with daily staff check-ins to embed familiar routines to reduce anxiety and to provide pastoral checks
- Class-group transitions to reduce overwhelm and build confidence by forming familiar relationships
- Dedicated year-group spaces to avoid sensory overload
- Quieter canteen areas, no queues, and a designated SEN zone
- Priority toilet access, calm supervision, and medical adjustments
- Lesson transitions with a bell and calm music to aid executive functioning and reduce overwhelm
- Rapid SEN team response, regulation spaces, and discreet signals
- Sensory-friendly uniform options

## **7. What changes are being made in response to feedback?**

We're listening and refining systems: longer lunch eating time, an overflow canteen area, more toilets at peak times, a wider food offer, extra doors open at the end of the day, an outdoor locker pilot scheme and consultation with Year 11 on their common room.

## **8. Additional Reminders**

To ensure that students are ready to embark on a positive, productive school day, they should remember to:

- Bring their school jumper and coat, especially in poor weather
- Bring their phone pouch to avoid delays when storing mobile phones
- Use the toilets during break and lunchtime where possible
- Bring a refillable water bottle with them

## **9. What evidence do you draw on to support decisions and changes to the school day?**

Our decision around being a smartphone free school is underpinned by extensive research which was summarized in Schools Week [here](#).

Our changes to the routine and structure of the school day have been based on feedback from children, parents and pupils, school level data and underpinned by extensive research including:

- 1) The [Department for Education's Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff](#).
- 2) The [Education Endowment Fund's Improving Behaviour in Schools](#) guidance report.

This is all consistent with, and underpinned by, the Ormiston Academies Trust's, behaviour policy.

We've also undertaken a number of visits to successful schools locally and nationally and observed strong practice in this area.