

26 April 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

### **New build update**

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to update you on progress with our new buildings and some related matters.

I am pleased to report that building works on the high school site have been progressing very well over recent months and we remain on track to take our place in them from this September. Students at QE are already benefitting from being able to use the new all-weather 3G pitch along with the six court multi-use games area to the north west of our site, and the feedback from them and the PE staff has been very positive indeed.

Below is the most recent aerial view of the works, which gives you a sense of the progress being made and how things are taking shape.



Having had a recent tour of the facilities myself, I can report a palpable sense of excitement at how wonderful they will be for our pupils, staff and wider community. This [short film](#) will give you a further insight into what is to come. The transcript from the film is appended to this letter. Later this term, as the works come to fruition, we'll film and share new footage to give you a further insight into the intended arrangements.

### **New logos for QE and HMS**

The move to co-location in our new facilities has prompted us to update the logo of each school. Working with a local design agency and their project lead, a parent of former pupils, and getting input from pupils at both schools, we sought to determine an outcome that acknowledged our past and looked confidently to the future. Below are the final iterations, incorporating key elements of our heritage including our Latin motto, *spes durat avorum* – the hope of our ancestors endures. These new logos will feature on school letters, our websites, publications and the school uniforms from September. Thank you to the pupils who participated in the focus groups.



### **Uniform**

The new logos will be used in the uniform of the schools next year. Other than this change, the HMS uniform will remain as is. Existing pupils can continue with the current logo on their sweatshirts for as long as necessary, with only new year 5s expected to wear the updated sweatshirts. The QE uniform is changing for new year 9s who will be joining us in September.

We will write to new and existing parents with more specific details on uniform before the end of term. In the meantime, the websites of the uniform supplier to both schools, Michael Sehgal & Sons Ltd, have been updated with details of how to order new items – see [here](#) for QE and [here](#) for HMS. Please note: new items of uniform should not be worn before September.

### **Staffing**

One aspect of preparing for our move to our new facilities is to adjust our staffing structure, particularly in relation to leadership, so that we take full advantage of co-location – maintaining the distinctive nature of each school's identity whilst ensuring consistency and coherence across common elements. I will write with full details of this ahead of the new academic year, but for now I am pleased to inform you that Mr Watters has been appointed as Head of School at HMS from September. Congratulations to Mr Watters on his well-deserved appointment.

### **Departing the HMS site**

The existing middle school site has a special place in the hearts of both our schools, given that they evolved from the grammar and secondary modern schools that were located on the site before the move to comprehensive education half a century ago. To recognise this significant development in

our shared histories, we intend to hold an event at the school later this term, working alongside our wonderful PTA, so that we properly bid farewell to our home of the past five or so decades. Further details to follow in due course.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Atkins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Graeme Atkins  
Executive Headteacher

## **Appendix – Transcript from short film about new HMS facilities**

Next year, Hexham Middle School moves into brand new, state-of-the-art facilities on the site of our partner school, Queen Elizabeth High. Feeding off the iconic, grade two listed Hydro building, which itself is being fully refurbished, will be the new middle school and high school buildings, which will form a wonderful cloistered quad at the heart of the site.

Maintaining each school's distinctiveness, we will establish a clear sense of progression through the different phases of a young person's educational journey, providing each individual with a "home of their own".

Middle school children will have their very own facilities, separate to the high school. Their own route to their building from the central boulevard, their own assembly hall, dining hall and sports hall, their own library, SEND department and pastoral base, and a dedicated multi-use games area and separate playtime facilities.

Our children in years 5 and 6 will have an experience very similar to that provided by our existing Orchard Block on the current middle school site, where they will have their own classroom area, separate from the year 7 and 8 classrooms, and separate to the high school. In this way, our younger children benefit from a small school within a school that will ease their transition from first school.

The facilities for our middle school children will be exceptional, and will include high quality classrooms and learning spaces, the aforementioned halls, use of two all-weather pitches as well as a grass rugby pitch, and access to the site's woodland garden. Year 5 and 6 children will have dedicated rooms for practical subjects, while children in years 7 and 8 will access the site's subject-specific specialist facilities in art, music, design technology and science.

This will be an inspiring and purposeful learning environment for our middle school children, that will serve them and future generations of pupils very well for many years to come.