



2nd October 2020

Dear Year 6 Parents and Students

George Stephenson High School Virtual Open Evening 2020

<https://www.gshs.org.uk/parents/open-evening-2020>

I want to start by saying how sorry we are that we are unable to have our normal Open Evening this year because of the Covid-19 restrictions. This is a real shame because I know this night gives students and parents a real taste of how exciting it is to be a student at George Stephenson High School. There is a lot of information on our website, including a virtual open evening. Please take the time with your child to explore everything that is on there.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about George Stephenson High School which I would normally do in my introduction at the Open Evening. Our school has an extremely positive ethos, with very strong pastoral and academic guidance and a real emphasis on learning. We believe that the support, care and welfare of our students are second to none. This school is, and will always be, fully inclusive and puts the students at the very centre of all that we do. We believe that it is a happy, safe and enjoyable place to be with a purposeful atmosphere. Students are encouraged and supported throughout their time at George Stephenson High School to achieve highly and fulfil their potential in all aspects of school life.

At George Stephenson High School, we believe we offer the best education possible for all of our young people, as well as a warm and friendly atmosphere. We value the individual differences of our students, encourage them to succeed in everything they do and help them to become caring, confident and responsible young people. We strive to achieve this through providing excellent teaching, fostering the very best relationships, having a personalized and enriched curriculum, having the highest aspirations for all of our students and developing strong partnerships. We also want the school to be at the very heart of the local community and to be the school of choice of all who live here. We are a popular, inclusive and oversubscribed school that is central to our community. The roll has grown from 850 in 2010 to over 1200 today. We are delighted that we were oversubscribed again this year (for the fifth consecutive year) and have welcomed 228 new students into Year 7 in September.

The level of communication with and support from parents is excellent. We have a regular and well-attended Parents Forum and a wide range of evening Parental Engagement events are held. Attendance at Parents Evenings was over 80% last year – this figure has increased every year for the last five years. Over 500 parents filled in the survey we administer on these evenings and the results were very positive indeed. 97% feel their child is happy here, 98% feel they are both safe and make good progress, 99% feel they are well taught here, 98% feel the school is well led and managed and over 95% would recommend our school to another parent. We are delighted that so many parents are choosing our school and are so positive about it and we believe that this shows a great deal of support from our local community.

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Our most recent Ofsted inspection was in November 2019 and we are delighted to report that they judged our school to be Good overall, and indeed Good in every single category. We believe that this is a real testament to our students and staff and to how hard we have all worked and how committed we are to providing the best possible educational experience for all of our students. In the report, Ofsted say that **“staff have high expectations for pupils and each other. This is a key ingredient of the school community. During lesson visits, pupils were attentive and respectful. There are strong relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils have achieved better examination results in a wide range of subjects since the previous inspection”**. The care, guidance and support that we provide for our young people was again praised, with Ofsted saying that **“staff are well trained to look after and care for pupils. They understand the school’s safeguarding procedures. They are aware of the need to share any concerns with appropriate people. They do so in a timely manner. Pupils know there is always somebody to talk to when they need help. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe.”**

Ofsted also said lots of positive things about the relationships in our school, saying that good relationships and mutual respect exist between students and staff and that our young people are keen to learn and behave well. They also said that the behaviour of students is good, that they manage their conduct well, both inside and outside of the classroom and that they know what is expected of them. As we have always said, our students are a credit to us all and we continue to be immensely proud of them. Inspectors also stated that the care and guidance we offer our students is strong and that we prepare students well for life after school. As a result, the percentage of students going onto successful careers or further education is well above the national average. Personal development, behaviour and welfare were all identified as real strengths of the school.

Indeed, Care, Guidance and Support at George Stephenson High School have been graded as good or outstanding in our last four Ofsted inspections. This is a result of our pastoral guidance systems in school, the aim of which is to support the learning and development of each individual student through the encouragement of regular attendance, punctuality, good study habits, good behaviour and a positive attitude, and by the monitoring of progress, regular target setting and celebration of achievement. The school is organised into year groups which are split into a number of separate tutor groups. Each year group has a full time non-teaching Guidance Manager who stays with the year group from Year 7 to Year 11 and so gets to know every student very well. Guidance Managers are generally the primary point of contact for parents wishing to discuss progress or problems with the school. They support the work of the form tutors and deal with difficulties referred to them by the tutors or subject staff, as well as recognising and rewarding all positive aspects of students’ life in school. The tutor groups, under the leadership of the Guidance Manager, remain together with the same form tutor through years 7 to 11, meeting for registration periods daily, and in some subjects are taught as a class group in the younger years. A strong sense of coherence and team working is developed over these years. The form tutor has day to day responsibility for our students’ welfare whilst they are in the school and have a very important role to play in helping them to settle into their new school. They also closely monitor and track their academic progress, support them to reach their targets and help detect and solve any problems which may arise.

I hope that you will find the information on our website helpful as you consider your choice of secondary school for your child. More detailed information and guidance will be included in a booklet for parents of incoming students in the summer term. I hope you will decide to join us as we continue to go from strength to strength.

Yours sincerely



IAN D WILKINSON - Headteacher