

Admissions

Do many students join from schools outside the catchment area?

Yes – every year we have a large number of students who join from outside the catchment area, many of whom may be the only one coming from their primary school. We offer a dedicated transition meeting for these students and their families, and we find that they usually integrate really well with our other students within the first week and beyond.

If my child has a sibling already at the Minster, would this help with admission?

If your child has a sibling already in the school then their application will be prioritised within the admissions band that you have applied within. So for example, if you live in catchment and have a sibling, you will be prioritised above other catchment places. If you do not live in catchment but have a sibling you are prioritised above other non-catchment applications.

Do you communicate with every school including out of catchment for students who are moving up to The Minster School?

We will communicate with every school from which a child applies to find out more about them and help them settle in.

When do we find out if we have secured a place?

1st March is the national offer day when you will find out where you have a place. This will be communicated to you by email or post, according to the preferences you selected when making your application.

School provision

Do you set your classes by ability?

The majority of our subjects are taught in mixed ability groups right up to GCSE. We believe that this is the best way to motivate and teach students and to help them to achieve the very best of their capabilities. Our Maths classes are taught in ability bands from Year 8, and students regularly move within these groups based upon their progress, as we feel that this gives the most bespoke support for our students. Our languages groups are banded in some years, based upon ability and prior experience of the subject. All of our other subjects are taught in mixed ability groups, from Year 7 all the way through to the GCSE and A level study.

How much homework is set per week?

We use a staggered approach for homework at the start of Year 7, with a period of a few weeks where no homework at all is set while students settle in to school. After this we will introduce a range of subjects, where students will receive homework for each subject but not all at the same time. Once students have settled in to school they will receive homework of around 4 hours each week, with more time expected for revision and independent study as students prepare for exams further up the school.

How is the school's Christian ethos delivered?

Our school has a large number of students, some of whom enter based upon a foundation place request and many of whom attend because they live within our catchment area. We have a strong Christian ethos and our values of Wisdom, Optimism, Resilience, Kindness and Service are distinctly Christian and run through everything that we do. Students attend assemblies twice a week to explore these values and also undertake acts of worship through 'Thought for the Week' and reflection activities in tutor time. We worship together in more formal services at the end of each term and offer regular communion services which all students are encouraged to attend. We have a dedicated Chaplain who is a wonderful resource and support to our students, and work closely with the Minster cathedral to uphold our strong Christian values throughout our work.

What kind of extra-curricular activities do you offer?

We have a wide range of extra-curricular activities which change throughout the school year – at the busiest time, we offer around 20+ clubs for Year 7 which run on a variety of nights of the week. We have late buses which run to most areas within the school catchment on three nights of the week to allow students to travel home after their clubs. These include:

Sport – anyone can join in with any club. Our clubs include the usual sports (football, netball, rugby, hockey) plus some others which your child may wish to try out (dance leaders, dodgeball, trampolining, gymnastics etc.)

Music – we have a large choir, a full orchestra, ensembles for each orchestral section and ability level, plus songwriters' clubs, performance opportunities and many exciting new projects throughout each year. There is also an annual school musical which students can audition to perform in or support as technical assistance.

Drama – We run the Shakespeare schools project/connections project annually, in addition to Key Stage 3 Drama club, other production and plays

Subject-based – A number of our other subjects run after-school clubs throughout the year, including: History mystery club, drone club, Science club, coding club and christmas cake club.

Other – Chess club, Magic the Gathering club, Dungeons and Dragons, Duke of Edinburgh (Year 9+) and many more!.

Is there more than one team for each sport?

There are a range of teams which run at different times through the year, as part of a rotation. The number of teams who are able to compete depends upon local opportunities for teams to enter. In the past this has included football, netball, tennis, rugby, basketball, swimming, hockey, boccia and athletics, but this can change every year depending upon which competitions are offered. For most sports which represent the school we do not usually have more than one team and teams are selected and organised by the member of staff leading that team. However, for all PE clubs including training, any student who wishes to join is able to do so.

What visits will my child take part in?

Visits are a really important part of our provision – we believe that learning through experience is a vital part of a child's education. This starts with our Walesby camp for all Y7 students, which is a transition-based 2-day residential. We offer lots of day visits – including Warwick Castle, Dovedale, Places of Worship, Twycross Zoo and Holdenby House for all Year 7 to 8 students in a usual year, and lots more for other year groups such as visits to the theatre. We also run a number of residential visits further up the school, including to London (History) France, Spain, Germany and the Ski trip (Switzerland). These are open to any students who meet the age requirements. Later in the school we also

Other further afield – e.g. Washington and New York (History and Politics), Iceland (Geography) and month=long voluntary work expeditions to incredible destinations such as Borneo and Costa Rica.

Can my child undertake music lessons?

Yes – we offer tuition in voice and a huge range of instruments ranging from the flute to the harp and everything in between. We have one of the highest rates of instrumental tuition in the county and are very proud of our performing arts opportunities. Music is a huge part of our school and we have large numbers of students participating in our clubs and opting to study Music/Technology at GCSE and A level. Our music teachers lead the Nottinghamshire Music Hub. You can sign up for instrumental lessons before your child starts – either paired or individual, which will take place once per week within school time – details are released in June before each September cohort starts at school. You can continue music tuition that you have already undertaken or start from scratch in any of our offered instruments or voice.

From a music perspective; alongside your strong provision for traditional learning, do you support those wishing to explore electronic music and music technology?

Yes we have lessons at Key Stage 3 which use the music IT facilities and software. We also offer GCSE and A Level Music Tech programmes.

What careers education do you offer to students?

Our careers advice is mostly delivered through our pastoral programme from the start of school. As students approach their GCSE and post-16 options, we deliver independent information from a range of options which help them to make the right choice for them. This includes lots of information about university, but also about newer routes such as degree apprenticeships. Students have access to an independent careers advisor and can request to meet with them if they feel they need any advice.

Do you have whole school gatherings/ assemblies/ acts of worship?

We do have occasional whole school gatherings, usually as a brief celebration event at the end of the school year, which are often tied in with larger events such as our Sports Day or carnival. In addition, we regularly have house based or year based acts of worship with 2-400 students present at each event, in school and at the Minster cathedral.

How many pupils are at the school?

There are around 1,600 pupils at the school, which includes up to 400 in sixth and 40 in our Junior School. In any given year group, we admit around 240 children, who are taught in between 8-10 classes at a time, depending upon the subject.

Transition and pastoral care

What transition activities do you offer?

We run a huge transition package which runs from Easter and well into Year 7. This includes visits to your child's school (in most cases) from our staff and existing students, day visits to the school including some taster lessons, a package of bespoke care for Y7 students when they join the school, a dedicated Pastoral Support Assistant for new students, a 2-day residential at Walesby and much more.

How will you decide which class to put my child in?

All Year 7 students will be placed in to a vertical tutor group containing a mixture of students from Years 7, 8 and 9, and a main teaching class of Y7s. Students will be placed with a friend in their teaching class, which is where they spend the majority of their time. Classes overall are balanced with respect to ability and gender. However – when your child joins The Minster School they will make lots of new friends and acquaintances as they meet new people!

I read that you have a vertical tutoring system, what does this mean?

Our students are usually in a vertical tutor group, meaning that once a day they are part of a group who meets to worship and undertake tutor time activities with students from a range of year groups. We find that this helps Y7 students to settle in and get to know some of the other students from older year groups straight away, which helps them to integrate with the school community. This also allows our older students to act as role models, and to support younger students through e.g. choosing their options subjects or developing good interview skills. Our younger students enjoy knowing some of the older students as they settle in at school, with our older students often acting as 'siblings' to the younger ones while they find their feet.

What is the House system and what House will my child be in?

Houses are assigned to students before they start – if you have a sibling in a house, you will be placed into the same house. Students' ties have a stripe of their house colour and staff (and students!) are very loyal to their houses. Our houses are Clumber, Rufford, Thoresby and Welbeck. House identity runs through a lot of school activities, for

example a child's tutor group, celebration assemblies for each house, end of term competition days and worship opportunities.

Community, charity and competition sit at the heart of our House system and students enjoy volunteering, raising awareness and fundraising with the rest of the school. A number of leadership opportunities also exist within our House system, such as our House Leaders in Y9, House Captains in Y11, our school council who campaign and consult with the school on new initiatives and student voice. Competition exists throughout the year in the form of house competitions, reward points which are allocated to each house, quizzes, sporting events and much more.

Will younger students interact with any older students?

Students will see other students from other year groups around the school, including being with some Year 8 and Year 9 students in their vertical tutor group (in usual years). All students within a year group will have break and lunch at the same time and in the same place, and our staggered lunch times usually mean that several year groups have their break or lunch at the same time.

Individual needs

I have read the SEN Information but please can you advise about provision for a child with specific medical or behavioural need. Who should I contact?

We have several students with diabetes in the school and work with the students, their parents and other professionals to ensure that this is well managed and has as little impact as possible on their school experience. We would ensure that there is a suitable plan in place and that this followed for any child with needs. This provision is specifically designed to meet any individuals needs. We will liaise with primary schools, parents and the students themselves to arrange provision. If you need to discuss your child's needs, please contact our SENCO, Mrs Jo Woodhouse – j.woodhouse@minster.notts.sch.uk.

What provision do you have for gifted and talented children?

As a school we aim to stretch and challenge all our students. We identify those who we feel are more academically gifted or talented in specific ways and support them to further their abilities and talents throughout school. This includes extra-curricular groups and additional opportunities in addition to individual support from teachers throughout their learning.

What support is available for children who are a little behind target levels?

We track student progress throughout their time with us and put in intervention where it is required. In Year 7 students will take CAT tests and reading tests to help identify where more support may be required and more about how each student learns. There are a range of interventions available including booster sessions, reading support and work from individual class teachers within lessons. As the majority of our classes are taught in mixed ability sets, our teachers are adept at providing work that is accessible for all ability levels, and there is always an opportunity for progression.

Parent and Carer engagement

How does parental engagement work at The Minster?

value and welcome parental engagement at our school. We carry out parental surveys regularly to find out and explore parental views on a wide range of issues. We encourage an open dialogue at all times. Form tutors are the first port of call but each year group also has a Pastoral support assistant who is available should you wish to talk about any

concerns. We have yearly parents' evenings and reports as well as interim assessment point data. There are also opportunities for parents to help us to raise funds for the school through the MSPTA.

What options do you have for parent governor positions?

There are parent governor positions which are filled periodically when they become available. In situations when the number of parents wishing to become a governor exceeds the number of positions, an election is held. We communicate these opportunities to all parents via our newsletter or school email system when they arise.