



THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

FINCHLEY COUNTY
GRAMMAR SCHOOL



FINCHLEY COUNTY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

"THE MIDDLE SCHOOL"

A booklet written
for
Third Form pupils
and their parents.

March, 1968.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS.

Your child has now spent almost three years in this school and has, we hope, grown to feel quite at home as a member of our community.

Being a small school we are able to exercise a good deal of patience on behalf of those who find it difficult to acclimatize to new surroundings, but in the main all have accepted our rules of dress and behaviour, though without necessarily realising what purpose they serve.

On the academic side all pupils have followed a common course without any specialisation, for we believe that an acquaintance with the basic ideas in every subject is the best foundation for future studies. They have been introduced to new subjects and have had the opportunity to develop skills - probably with greater success in some directions than in others. Homework has been varied and, we hope, not too arduous.

In short we have tried to treat them all alike, but in the Middle School this pattern will change.

MIDDLE SCHOOL.

The most obvious differences in the Middle School - Years 4 and 5 - are on the academic side, where our aim is to provide for each pupil a course tailored to his or her individual needs.

And having said this, let us make equally clear the areas in which we do not permit individuals to deviate from the accepted pattern. Briefly, these are that we insist that pupils arrive at school on time, that they are correctly dressed, and that their homework is handed in punctually. Reasonable demands, one might think, but even so there are some pupils who feel we are set on crushing their individuality, and on ensuring that they all conform to a pre-determined pattern! Of course, they conveniently overlook the many matters which we leave them to decide for themselves - whether or not to remain indoors at Break, or to eat a School lunch, or to take part in the activities of the many school societies - even to form a new one of their own if they wish!

Contrary to what they feel about themselves, these are not the grown-up ones, the ones who have come to terms with reality: rather they are the immature ones who have not yet realised that whatever their eventual station in life they will always be part of a community which has its own code of behaviour. Not that we expect any longer a blind acceptance of our various rules - for one of the signs of increasing maturity which we welcome is the desire to test the opinions of others before accepting them - but we know they will eventually agree that some framework of rules is necessary in any society, even though they may not admit it publicly.

Our task then, as parents or teachers, is not to try to combat this desire for independence, but rather to harness its tremendous drive and, by inculcating a corresponding awareness of the needs of others, to channel it in socially-acceptable directions.

You will find that the rest of this booklet concerns the way in which we ask Middle School pupils to select their own courses for the next two years, and in this we can certainly claim that we treat each pupil as an individual - no mass-production here!

But although we permit this freedom of choice, Homework will not be optional! In fact there will probably be more of it, and it must be said that homework not done in the 4th Year will affect external examinations over the next four years. Careers, and even salaries, may depend on the quality of tonight's homework!

And this thought underlies most of our thinking about the Middle School. For when pupils deliberately ignore some instructions given by a member of Staff, it isn't the member of Staff who suffers (as some pupils seem to think!) In the long run they will hurt only themselves.

For the Staff are not tyrants, whom only a daily offering of chemical formulae and irregular verbs can placate. Education is an activity in which we all work together - parents, pupils, staff. And if our 4th Formers forget everything else, let us hope they will remember this one thing - that we, the Staff, are on their side, working with them and hoping for their success.

COURSES AVAILABLE.

Many schools start by deciding what courses they will provide, and then asking the pupils to choose one of these courses; however, we feel it is better to start by ascertaining the pupils' requirements, and then arranging courses to cater for these requirements. While such a system has obvious advantages, it places a much greater onus on the parents to help their sons and daughters to choose wisely, and on the school to give any necessary assistance and advice.

Almost all our pupils have four more school years ahead of them and during that time we must

1. Provide them with a good general education.
2. Widen their horizons.
3. See that they obtain the qualifications needed for the careers they eventually choose.

Subjects chosen now will be taken in public examinations within the next two years. After that there will be further choices, for we encourage all of our pupils to remain at school in the Sixth Form - most of whom, but not all, to undertake Advanced Level work - and in two years time you will receive a booklet with details of the courses open to them at that level.

HOW TO SELECT A COURSE.

You are now called upon the help your son or daughter to make the first of this series of very important choices - choices which will affect the rest of his or her life.

How can you help?

Basically, there are three ways in which pupils decide what subjects they wish to continue to study

1. Do I like it?
2. Am I good at it?
3. Will it help the careers I have been considering?

If they are lucky enough to find agreement between the answers to all three questions, there is no problem. But what if each question gives a different set of answers?

The difficulty is that we are not merely trying to provide answers to these questions at the present time; we need to know what the answers will be in two or four years time, and for this reason the answers to question (2) seem the most important, for whereas thoughts of possible careers may well change with the years, and attitudes towards subjects may be influenced by the personality of one's present teachers (who will not necessarily be the same next year) it is probable that one's ability in a given subject will be a more constant factor.

So, early next term your child will be asked to fill up a BLUE sheet similar to the one at the back of this booklet on which we ask which SEVEN subjects he or she would study if given a completely free choice. It is important to realise that this indication of choice is not binding on either pupil or school at this stage, but it is merely to give an indication of the probable demands for each subject in order that the construction of the time-table may proceed.

It should also be stated that there may be reasons why a completely free choice will not in the end prove possible. Of these reasons the two most important are firstly, that with 60 people all making their choices we shall in some instances have to arbitrate between conflicting demands, and secondly, that if we feel that a particular combination of subjects represents an educationally unbalanced course, we shall say so.

As a result of the information on the BLUE sheets the framework of the time-table will be constructed, and towards the end of the Summer Term you will receive a more detailed YELLOW sheet on which the subjects will have been arranged in groups, the subjects in each group being selected in such a way that as far as possible all the combinations required are available. You will then be asked to make a final selection on the basis of the information on this sheet.

THE SIXTH FORM.

You may find it surprising that a section on the Sixth Form should be included in this booklet, and yet it is vital that you should understand the nature of the next step before taking this one. Because in the Sixth Form the number of subjects is cut still further - to three in most cases - and at this level not all subject-combinations are equally useful, and it would be unfortunate if a choice made casually now meant that in two years' time a particular Sixth Form course proved impossible because of the lack of one vital subject.

Of course, your child may decide not to stay on into the Sixth Form - though with the wider range of activities we are planning we hope this will not be so - but it seems a fundamental piece of common sense to keep all doors open for as long as possible in order to preserve flexibility of choice.

There are two types of academic qualifications for which pupils in the Sixth Form may be working:

- (a) general e.g. a teacher may study almost ANY two subjects (not necessarily to 'A' Level).
- (b) specific e.g. a doctor must have 'A' Level passes in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

The 'specific' qualifications tend to require groups of subjects which are recognisably either 'Arts' or 'Science', but there are certain mixed groups, notably those involving Economics or Geography.

From what has been written above about leaving doors open for as long as possible, you will deduce that a prospective teacher (who might possibly want to study medicine) MUST include Biology, Chemistry and Physics in his choice - so that both careers are still possible - and in general you should assume that your child will require a 'specific' rather than a 'general' qualification.

SUMMARY

1. Decide your SEVEN best subjects (with a reserve).
If in doubt, choose those which seem most likely to lead to the kinds of career you are considering.
N.B. Exam percentages in one subject are NOT necessarily comparable with those in another.

2. From this group of SEVEN pick THREE which you might like to study in the Sixth Form. Consult your Form-teacher and other members of Staff to see whether
 - (i) this is a group of subjects likely to be useful as a 'specific' qualification.
 - (ii) you have included in your SEVEN any ancillary subjects in which an 'O' Level pass will be needed to back up your possible 'A' Levels.

3. Check that your group of SEVEN is a balanced group.
(If we find that you have not included at least ONE Arts subject - History, Geography or a language - and at least ONE Science subject, we shall probably want to know why).

4. Fill in your provisional choices on the ^{BLUE}~~GREEN~~ form in this booklet - this is your copy which you will keep for reference when you fill up the one you have to give in at the beginning of next term.

INDICATION OF DEMAND FOR SUBJECTS.

1. Discuss this with your parents and anyone else who may advise you.
2. Read the page preceding this in the booklet 'Middle School'.
3. Tick SEVEN boxes and put a question mark in one more as a 'reserve' subject.
4. Put a ring round the THREE subjects which are the most likely ones for you to study in the Sixth Form.

REMEMBER THIS IS FOR OUR GUIDANCE ONLY: IT IS NOT YOUR FINAL CHOICE FOR NEXT YEAR.

Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemistry	<input type="checkbox"/>	German	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cookery	<input type="checkbox"/>	History	<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>
English	<input type="checkbox"/>	Latin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodwork	<input type="checkbox"/>
French	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Types of career I have been considering (if any) :

Form Signed(pupil)
 Age(at July,1968) y m Counter-signed
 (parent)

CONSULTATION

As a school we believe in the maximum contact between parents and Staff, and at no time will this be more important than now.

Accordingly, all those who teach the Third Forms will be available on the evening of

Monday, May 6th, 1968

between the hours of 7.0 and 9.30 p.m. for discussion of individual problems and assessment of future promise. You will probably find that you will not need to speak to more than half of those who teach your child, but even so we hope you will limit the length of your enquiries if there is a long queue behind you.

The Careers Advisory Officers of the Borough will also be present on that evening.

The second copies of the ^{BLUE}~~PINK~~ forms will be issued immediately before that date, and should be returned within three or four days.

PARENTS' EVENING

It may help you if your son/daughter fills this in for you to save your time looking for people.

Form Teacher

<u>Subject</u>		<u>Staff</u>		<u>Notes</u>
Art	:		:	
Biology	:		:	
Chemistry	:		:	
Cookery	:		:	
English	:		:	
French	:		:	
General Science	:		:	
Geography	:		:	
German	:		:	
History	:		:	
Latin	:		:	
Mathematics	:		:	
Music	:		:	
Physical Education	:		:	
Physics	:		:	
Religious Knowledge	:		:	
Technical Drawing	:		:	
Woodwork	:		:	