



# National Middle Schools' Forum Middle School Matters





## What are Middle Schools?

The prospectus of any Middle School will inform interested parties of the practice in that particular school. This leaflet provides a statement of the philosophy common to all schools catering for children aged 8 – 13, the middle years.

Middle Schools occupy the formative central ground in the education process. They are uniquely placed with their opportunities for creative flexibility of organisation to meet the needs of pupils through a time of considerable and wide ranging intellectual, physical and emotional development. Effective and regular liaison with first and upper schools is an essential element. This ensures that the skills, knowledge and experience which the children bring with them are acknowledged, valued and built upon.

A distinctive and valuable feature of Middle Schools is that they span Key Stages Two and Three. This way of organising children's education is unique in that the assessments at the end of Key Stage Two and the work which follows them all take place within one school, rather than at the point of transfer. It is the only system that is able to reap the full benefits for the pupil of using these results formatively and diagnostically to maximise learning.





## How do we structure Middle Schools to maximise learning?

Throughout their schooling, children need to feel safe, both physically and emotionally, before they can begin to develop intellectually. Middle Schools foster a school climate that nurtures and supports children at a time when they need it most.

- Effective practices in creating an excellent Middle School learning community include:
- Being child-centred and generally small enough for everyone to be known personally.
- Providing a curriculum which is balanced between the subject-centred and pupil-centred needs of the young adolescent, promoting self-esteem and self-knowledge and developing a foundation for life-long learning.

- The gradual introduction of specialist teaching which enables Middle Schools to maintain pupils' enthusiasm, to widen their interests and to develop their full potential.
- A teacher, or a small team of teachers, functions as the main point of contact for each pupil with guidance and support available for each pupil.
- Joint planning across the phases of the three-tier system is essential in order to deliver shared Key Stages. This has the undoubted advantage of encouraging the development of a meaningful curriculum for pupils from 4-19.
- The school is both a community in itself and part of a wider community.
- A wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities is offered in sport, music, art, drama and other areas, as well as trips, clubs and social events.

## What can Middle Schools do for you?

What can a young learner expect from a Middle School?

- High expectations for their learning, achievement and personal development
- Engaging learning
- Independence encouraged in a structured, protective environment
- Learning related to their world and issues important to their age group
- A variety of learning styles and teaching methods, for example hands-on, experiential lessons that enhance pupil engagement
- Regular feedback
- Respectful, supportive relationships valued and promoted
- Challenges to foster higher-order thinking skills



## What can a parent/carer expect from a Middle School?

- A system matched to the developmental needs of children, fit for the 21st century
- A nurturing environment which enables children to develop as happy, confident and resilient individuals
- A wealth of opportunities both within the curriculum and extra-curricular
- Children to make good progress
- Regular communication with school and supportive relationships
- Pupil needs for autonomy, career and identity exploration provided in a safe environment that is mediated by understanding adults

## What makes a Middle School teacher unique?

A Middle School teacher is epitomised by an optimistic, resilient and flexible approach to their role. They are:

- Teachers who make a conscious choice to work with children in the 'middle years'
- Teachers who collectively demonstrate a wide range of personalities, academic specialities, skills, talents and interests
- Teachers who believe that all pupils have many strengths and talents and that all pupils can learn

Therefore a teacher considering working in a Middle School would benefit from significant career development as a result of the variety of opportunities available across Key Stages and curriculum areas, including leadership experience.

The Middle School system recognises the realities of child development.





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