General Information for Applicants



**West Hill School**

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# Our Mission

Aiming High for:

Our Pupils by:

* Encouraging them to reach the highest standards in everything they do
* Developing their personal responsibility, respect for others and the environment

Our Parents by:

* Providing the highest quality teaching and learning for their child's individual needs
* Working in partnership with them to celebrate success and monitor their child’s progress

Our Staff by:

* Providing the best resources available
* By developing their professional expertise so they can build upon their teaching achievements

Our Community by

* Promoting the school as a local centre of excellence for all
* Working with local business and industry to prepare our pupils for the world of work

Our School by

* Promoting new opportunities for learning
* Constantly reviewing our progress to ensure we meet our own expectations and targets

# What do we believe in?

Our aim is for each pupil to leave West Hill having achieved his academic potential, having discovered new talents in himself, and being able to deal confidently with the challenges and opportunities of his post-16 world.

One of our great strengths is our sustained high expectations of our pupils, the commitment and expertise of our staff and the support of parents. We expect pupils to work hard and behave well at all times so that we can create a well ordered and secure community in which learning can take place. We match our focus on academic achievement with an equally strong emphasis on personal and social development. Each pupil is valued as an individual and we provide an extensive programme of curricular and extra-curricular activities to support their development.

The standard of behaviour and appearance of the boys at West Hill is high. The ethos of the school is one of caring and mutual respect, and relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Visitors to the school usually comment on two things; the warmth of the welcome which they receive and the politeness of the pupils.

# The Tameside Area

The Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council was formed in 1974 on the reorganisation of local government and consists of two parts of what used to be Lancashire and Cheshire. It lies to the east of Manchester being bounded by Stockport to the south, Manchester to the west and Oldham to the north. To the east are the Pennines and West Yorkshire. The Borough is geographically, socially and culturally diverse. Its rich environment includes pretty Pennine villages close to the Peak National Park, as well as typical suburban areas and modern housing developments of many kinds. The town centres contain a blend of Victorian public buildings and modern facilities for shopping and recreation, whilst the industrial districts are dominated by firms active in mechanical engineering, textiles and the food industries. An ethnic and cultural richness has been brought to the area by residents from Eastern Europe, South and East Asia and many other countries which is much valued and used by our schools in the education of their pupils. Tameside has its own cinemas, theatres and galleries and there is also ready access to all the cultural and leisure facilities of the city of Manchester. The area is generally well served by good motorways and inter-city rail networks. Manchester airport is thirty minutes away.

# Background to the School

West Hill is an 11-16 all boys school with approximately 840 pupils on roll and the school is always oversubscribed. The intake is varied and includes boys from a wide range of homes and backgrounds. Due to the popularity of the school some of the pupils travel relatively long distances to attend. The intake is usually composed of boys from over 35 primary schools.

The school is set in pleasant surroundings and is an interesting mixture of buildings; a converted mansion house and specialist newer buildings. The school governors and staff believe strongly in self-determination and have constantly sought school status which reflects this. Thus, West Hill has been consecutively Grant-Maintained, Foundation and now a converter Academy.

Since becoming self-governing, both governors and staff have made continuous efforts to improve the situation both academically and physically. Over the years we have, like many schools, grown proficient in submitting bids for resources.

In September 2003, the school opened its new £1¼ million Sports Hall for pupil and community use, the result of a National Lottery Sports bid.

A climbing wall was installed in the Sports Hall in 2011, upgraded in 2012 and a fitness suite added in 2014. A new technology room and two general teaching spaces opened in July 2013. The main block roof and windows have recently been replaced and a new storage area constructed. More recently, in summer 2015, we opened a new, purpose built 11 classroom block.

The school operates a remote access system for staff and pupils to access work folders and applications from home.

**Management**

There are currently 54 members of the teaching staff, supported by an excellent team of administrative, technical and educational support staff. The school also employs its own staff for catering, cleaning and grounds management.

The Senior Leadership Team consists of the Headteacher, two Deputy Headteachers, three Assistant Headteachers and the School Business Manager. All have a general responsibility for staff and pupil welfare, as well as any individual responsibilities. Each senior manager is a team leader, accountable to the Headteacher for specific aspects of the management of the school. Senior staff are also leaders for appraisal in the departments within their remit.

The management and organisation of the school is directed towards giving staff responsibility and accountability for making decisions and shaping the school’s future. In most major areas (e.g. staff training and development, capitation, academic development) staff decide upon priorities and are allocated finances accordingly. A comprehensive Management Information System (SIMS) exists to help staff with the provision of required data.

Such a devolved system requires a carefully synthesized School Improvement Plan (SIP) to prioritise allied objectives, and this forms the main platform of school development each year. Annual budgetary information is fed into the SIP and training needs then develop from the published SIP document.

# Academic Organisation

The academic organisation of West Hill is subject based, managed by Heads of Departments. Each department is responsible for its own finances, expenditure and training. The timetable operates on a 25 period week, giving a lesson allocation of one hour. Year 7 pupils are placed into teaching groups based upon ability from the first day with placement determined by the results of Key Stage 2 tests and their work in primary school. That year is divided into two equal ability halves. In most subjects half year groups are organised by ability so that pupils are taught in sets suitable for them. Pupil progress is carefully monitored and movement between sets takes place when it is considered appropriate by the subject teacher. Years 8 and 9 reflect this pattern also. Heads of Department have considerable freedom to group pupils as they see fit.

The school follows the traditional range of National Curriculum teaching subjects in KS3 with emphasis given to English, Maths and Science. In Key Stage 4 the school offers a full range of subjects leading up to GCSE. Traditionally we have offered pupils a wide range of options at 14+ and the level of pupil satisfaction with the choice of GCSE subjects has been high.

We aim to provide relevant and engaging pathways for our pupils – academic and vocational. As well as the school itself a small number of our pupils attend other places of education for teaching, either on day or block release programmes. The high standard of teaching also benefits from full participation in initial teacher training as we believe we have a duty to contribute towards educating the next generation of practitioners. Trainee teachers are drawn from several training institutions.

The school is committed to providing pupils with a first class technological experience. The building and grounds are covered by a comprehensive wireless network. All classrooms have a teacher pc with an interactive whiteboard; pupils have access to several ICT suites as well as a variety of mobile devices in classrooms.

# Individual Learning Needs

We try to treat all pupils as individuals recognising their differences as something to be celebrated. Some, from the most to the least academically able, will receive additional support during their time with us. Able and talented pupils will be provided with additional opportunities to challenge and stimulate them. Those with learning difficulties will receive a range of assistance from the Learning Support Unit. This may include individual tuition, classroom support or additional study sessions. It is our aim from the outset to make the whole curriculum accessible to all pupils. All pupils are entered for GCSEs or other accreditation where possible.

# Curricular Enhancement Activities

The pupils at West Hill have many opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. We are actively engaged in a number of Enterprise Projects and Citizenship activities. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is well established at Bronze and Silver levels and the Three Peaks has a growing presence around school. Pupils manage an extensive Peer Group Counselling Programme. There is a comprehensive range of local and foreign trips, visits and exchanges and a full two weeks work experience programme involving Year 10. The school also has an excellent reputation throughout the North West region for sporting achievement. During the year we organise a number of themed weeks and an Activities Day which sees all pupils engaged in a plethora of trips, visits, residentials and other educational pursuits and experiences.

# Pastoral Organisation

We believe that much of our academic success is due to the secure and supportive pastoral framework provided for our pupils.

The school is divided into five year groups with a Head of Year and team of tutors allocated to each year group. A member of SLT is also linked with each of the year groups. A Behaviour Intervention Manager and a Behaviour Mentor work closely with the year heads. Form Tutors have daily contact with pupils and are responsible for their general welfare, developing personal skills and creating a spirit of cooperation within the group. Form tutors are the first point of contact for parents and can normally resolve day to day matters quickly and effectively. Pupils remain in the same mixed ability tutor group throughout their stay at West Hill so that its members can develop as a social and competitive group.

Weekly tutor periods provide opportunities to deal with issues which directly affect the pupils at their particular stage of progress through the school.

The Form Tutor is backed by the Head of Year who monitors pupil progress and behaviour and provides an additional link between home and school. All pupils also have a Learning Mentor (usually their form tutor) who holds regular one to one meetings with individual pupils to discuss academic progress, personal development, achievements and other interests. In these meetings, pupils are set short term targets to help their progress.

Reward and praise feature high in our priorities and every opportunity is taken to celebrate the successes of our pupils. Prefects have a very high profile and play a major role in supporting the school’s ethos. Election as a member of the School Council is seen by the pupils as an important and prestigious role that provides an opportunity to make a difference. Sports captains also play an important role in supporting teachers organise extra-curricular activities. Everyone, regardless of their ability or skill, is eligible for Reward Points, a system of awards which recognise personal effort and success. Those who have continued success in the award scheme become eligible for gift vouchers and other special rewards. These provide strong incentives to do well. The achievements of our pupils regularly feature in the local press.

# Community Links

We are proud of our community links and these continue to expand both locally and overseas. We are actively involved with local primary and tertiary educational providers and maintain links with a wider network of schools . The local community makes full use of our new Sports Hall in the late afternoons and evenings. The school has a Parents’ Association which as well as fund raising for specific projects holds a number of social and activity events throughout the year.

We have recently been awarded the IAG Gold Award and Specialist Schools Cultural Diversity Quality Award at Silver standard.

We also engage in promoting health in our school by participating in the Sports Partnership with other schools in the locality.

**Our staff**

West Hill School is an organisation which values all its members; the teachers, the support staff and pupils. The governors wish to appoint people who are well qualified, have high expectations and who have the necessary skills and motivation to work in a way which allows the school to continue to achieve high standards, thereby maintaining its good reputation. New members of staff can expect not only a warm welcome but a systematic induction programme designed to meet their individual circumstances.

New entrants to the profession can expect a reduced timetable, a teaching mentor and full support from the Head of Department as well as the school’s Professional Tutor. They will be expected to participate in the local NQT network group set up specifically for discussion of subject and other related professional matters. In their second year of teaching RQTs will be encouraged to continue with additional subject and professional development. A July starting salary may be available to NQTs joining us in the September of any year.

Other new staff to the school will benefit from the support of a collegiate staff who share similar attitudes and support the traditions associated with West Hill. They will be given support and time to settle in to their new surroundings and a full induction programme based around individual needs will be organised, enabling each person to meet key contacts within the school and the LA. Those staff taking up managerial positions can expect a detailed programme designed to ease them into their new roles. Staff at West Hill increasingly share good practice and are constructively self-critical. Those appointed to managerial positions must feel confident about their ability to share in this process.

# Standards at West Hill

The ability profile of the intake of West Hill is above the national average. In every year we can expect some exceptionally able boys and some who demand the very best learning support we can offer.

The great majority of our pupils are cheerful, open and friendly: many of them are talented and a source of pride to us. The pupils are regularly praised by visitors and when on trips and activities. The majority of our pupils go on to further education or work-based training. Every year a number of individuals attain exceptional results.