

Moving up to Sawston Village College

Frequently Asked Questions

Parent Questions

How do I apply to Sawston Village College?

You should have received an application pack from the local authority. You apply via the local authority and they allocate places then inform us. Full information, including deadlines and contact details, is available here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/apply-for-a-school-place/secondary-school>

I do not live in the catchment / do not go to a feeder school - will I get a place?

We take a significant number of pupils from out of catchment and from non-feeder schools each year. We anticipate being full, with 8 forms of 240 pupils, as we have been for a number of years. This means that not everyone who applies for a place at Sawston is offered a place in the first round. However, it is normally the case that everyone who wants to come to Sawston is in the end offered a place, as some people with offers will decline their offer (for example if they intend to go to a private school, or they move out of the area). So, if you are out of catchment and/or at a non-feeder school, but believe Sawston is the right place for your child, then do please apply. If you are not given an offer initially, whilst we cannot influence who is given an offer, we can offer you advice and updates as the situation evolves.

How will COVID-19 Affect the Move to Sawston Village College?

It is a strange time at the moment and I am sure that there are times when pupils are nervous and unsure about the future. We are not currently able to provide the same transition experience as normal, but we are doing everything we can to ensure it is still a smooth process and that you feel supported, known and welcome. We have already completed the transition of one year group whilst under COVID restrictions and are very pleased at how well they have settled in. So, we are confident that we have the systems in place to support you equally well, whether or not things return to normal before next academic year. We will gather the same information about pupils, from them, their teachers and you as parents. If your child has additional learning needs or support, our Special Educational Needs team will work with our primary school colleagues to find out more about this and plan appropriately.

What foreign language will my child study?

In Year 7, pupils either study French or Spanish. This depends on which main teaching group they are in. If there is a good reason why it would be better for your child to study one or the other, we try to take this into account. However, it is not always possible to do so as there are various things we have to take into account when putting the groups together. Our languages teachers are very experienced at teaching pupils with anything from zero knowledge of a foreign language up to fluent native speakers.

How do I find out about buses?

Most buses are organised by the local authority. Information can be found here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/school-transport>

Pupil Questions

How much homework will I get?

Pupils moving up to secondary school are often worried about homework. It is true that there will be more homework than you are used to. However, you will very quickly get into good routines. We don't set homework in most subjects for the first couple of weeks of term. You will never be set homework that is due the next day, so you will always have time to plan your work and ask for help if needed. All homework is explained to you in class and shared with you online, using an app called ShowMyHomework, so you will know what you have to do and when. Your parents can see this too, so they can help you stay organised. Teachers often attach resources to ShowMyHomework too e.g. help sheets, videos, etc. The best advice is to check ShowMyHomework when you get in from school and do your homework as soon as you can - ideally on the day it has been set, and before dinner, so you can relax afterwards. If you are stuck, you can ask at home or speak with your teacher the next day (you can even email them if you want to).

Will I get lost?

Sawston is much bigger than your primary schools. It will take most of you a few days to find your way around. However, it won't take you as long as you think. There are signs around the site, you will have a map, and normally you are moving from one place to the next with everyone else in your class. Any member of staff will always be happy to point you in the right direction and we understand that in the first few days you might not know where everything is, so you won't get in trouble for being late if you got lost.

Will I make friends?

Lots of you will know lots of other people moving up to Sawston. That's great. On the other hand, some of you may know no-one. However, you won't be alone. There will be other pupils who are also coming up on their own and one of the most common things pupils say they are looking forward to is "meeting new people" or "making new friends". Even people who know lots of people already will be keen to get to know others. You will be in the same teaching group for most of your lessons, so you will quickly get to know people and you will make new friends very quickly. There are also loads of clubs to join, which is a great way to find people who enjoy the same things you do.

Will I get a detention?

Most pupils will never receive a detention in their whole time at secondary school. Our rules are clear and won't surprise you, and we always want to be fair. If you are polite, respectful, organised and considerate then there is no reason why you would get a detention. The most common reason for getting a detention is not handing in your homework on time, but if you are well organised then this won't be a problem, and if you find organisation difficult then we can help you. Remember: most pupils will never receive a detention in their whole time at secondary school!

Will I be bullied?

This is a common worry. You will be moving from a much smaller school where you are the oldest pupils and where you may have been for several years. Sawston Village College has a lot more pupils, and you will be the youngest and often the smallest. I cannot tell you that bullying never happens but I can tell you that it is rare and that we take any bullying very seriously. We do everything we can not to place you in a teaching group with someone whom you or your primary school teachers have said you need to be separated from. If you ever have worries about how another pupil is treating you, talk to an adult at home or in school and we will always do what we can to deal with issues.

Will I be separated from my friends?

We ask you who your closest friends are and we spend months doing everything we can to ensure that you are in a teaching group with at least one of them. This is possible for nearly everyone. It is rare that you will be in a class without one of your requested friends, and even then you would almost certainly be with other people you know. You will also very quickly make new friends, through your lessons and clubs.

Can you tell me more about the school bus?

For many of you, this will be the first time you use a bus independently. It is a great way of building your confidence and you will very quickly get used to it. You will get information from the council about where your bus stop is and when it picks you up. It is highly likely that you will know other people on your bus, often from your primary school and maybe even one of your friends if they live near you. You will quickly get into routines, finding your favourite place to sit and hopefully make new friends. If you ever have any problems on the bus, you can always speak with your mentor (form tutor) or Head of Year and we can help you.

Will the work be too hard?

As you move through school, the work does get harder, as you learn more. This is how it should be. What you can do now, in Year 6, is much harder than what you could do in Year 3, for example. Secondary school is the same: each year, the work will become more challenging. That said, it is also important that you revise some of the things you have done at primary school, so not everything will be completely new. For example, you may find that you are asked to practice some of the maths that you learned in Year 6, to make sure you are completely fluent at it before you move on to newer things.

We will speak to your primary schools, so we will know how well you are doing, what you find easier or harder and what support you might need. Your lessons will be pitched at the right level for you and your teachers are always happy to help and answer your questions - that's our job! There may also be a Teaching Assistant who works with your class, who is another expert in the room to help you if you are stuck. If you normally need slightly different materials to help you understand the lesson, then you will also have these at Sawston.

What groups will I be in?

You will have a main teaching group. You will spend most lessons in this group. It is made up of approximately 30 pupils from various schools, all in Year 7. Your maths group will be different: we put two main teaching groups together then split these groups into two different groups of 30 pupils, based on your previous attainment in maths. PE groups and DT (Design and Technology) groups are different: DT groups are smaller, and PE groups are split by gender and by ability.

I have heard about North Band and South Band - what is that?

To allow the timetable to work, and to allow us to separate people if there are worries about you being with another pupil, the year group is split into two halves - North Band and South Band. Both halves of the year have the same break and lunch times, but your teaching groups never overlap - you have completely different timetables.

What is the difference between a mentor group, a teaching group and a form group?

A teaching group is the group you are in for lessons. This is made up of roughly 30 pupils, all in the same year group. A mentor group is a group of 20-25 pupils, 4-5 from each year group. In normal circumstances, mentor groups meet in the morning every day, for notices, competitions and assembly. With the adaptations for COVID 19, we are not currently meeting in mentor groups, as pupils from different year groups need to be separate wherever possible. "Form group" can mean different things. In some schools, it is what they call mentor groups. At Sawston, a form group is a group of pupils, all of the same year group, who meet in the morning for messages and so on. We used to have form groups before we moved to having mentor groups. COVID19 has meant that we have reintroduced form groups, in place of mentor groups.

What house will I be in?

Everyone is in one of four houses. If you will have a brother or sister at the college when you move up, you will be in their house. Otherwise, it is random. Everyone in your mentor group, including the members of staff, are in the same house. In teaching groups, it is a mix of different houses. There are competitions between houses and, in normal circumstances, house celebration assemblies every few weeks. Your uniform will include your house name under the school crest.

I hope this helps to reassure you. We always invest a huge amount of time to help Year 6 pupils move up to Sawston. Although we have to do things differently this year from normal years, we will still take the same amount of time and care over it. When you do join us, we will, always, support you and I am confident that you will thrive.

If you require any further information or have any questions please contact me by email at0 (transition@sawstonvc.org).

Mr A Sutton

Assistant Principal

Sawston Village College