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Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well and the new half term has started positively for you and your child/ren.

This academic year is already passing swiftly and positively for schools in the Ortu Trust. Again, I thank you for your dedication to forging strong relationships with staff so united we can best support the children we both teach and care for. I am writing on this occasion to share information regarding significant changes that will take place over the coming months. You are aware that over the past year very difficult decisions have had to be made, most notably the decision to pause Year 12 entry to the Ortu Sixth Form. At the time of the decision, we wrote to explain that one of the most significant factors in the decision was the financial viability of offering provision for Year 12.

It is with regret that I write today to advise that significant changes to the staffing structure at the Ortu Trust must be made if the schools are to remain financially viable and, indeed, open to the students of Thurrock. Following my recent appointment as Interim CEO of the Ortu Trust I became aware of the fragility of the Trust's financial position which is a position that developed over many years.

The proposed restructure of the staff body and changes to the curriculum has been shared with staff at our secondary schools. Between now and February half term 2025 we will work with stakeholders to finalise the future curriculum and develop transitional arrangements. I need to be clear that the decision to restructure staff roles and make changes to the curriculum are steps which are unavoidable due to the current financial position of the Ortu Trust. They are not because of the merger with The Mossbourne Federation. It was intended, when the decision to merge was first made, that the process of aligning the schools would be a much more gradual process, but the slower pace is not possible due because urgent action is needed to ensure the financial stability and future of the trust. Though this will mean new roles are created for teaching and support staff it will also mean that a number of staff roles are at risk.

The restructure of staffing will only be made possible by a very significant change to the curriculum. This means that the range of subjects on offer must change. Please be assured that there will be no change for children in Years 11 and 13 as they have embarked on examination courses which we will continue to deliver to the highest standard. It will mean, however, that for students in Years 7, 8 and 9, the GCSE courses offered to your child will change. For students in Year 11 the selection of A Level courses on offer in the sixth form will be different to those previously available. It is intended that changes to the curriculum, the timings of the school day and the academic year will take place from September 2025 and details can be found at the end of this letter. However, I must emphasise that all proposals are under review.

My aim is to ensure that the students of Gable Hall and Hassenbrook Secondary Schools, and those at Corringham Primary, are afforded a broad and balanced curriculum which is robust and is expertly delivered. Though the courses offered will change, the quality and delivery of the courses will be extremely high and in line with those taught in the best schools in the country.

We welcome your thoughts and comments in relation to the proposed changes. To enable us to ensure that all responses are captured please share thoughts and comments via the following link between 12 noon on **Friday 22nd November 2025** and **12 noon on Monday, 2nd December 2025**.

We ask that you direct comments via this link only so a full representation of parent and carer responses is obtained:
<https://forms.office.com/e/DhEPZ2SVkz>

As always, thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,
Mr Peter Hughes
Interim CEO The Ortu Trust

Years 7 -11 Curriculum Offer

Literacy and numeracy are the keys to accessing other areas of the curriculum and ensuring academic success. Therefore, the curriculum will be rooted in the basics, with considerable time devoted to English and mathematics each week. This reflects our commitment to improving outcomes in foundational subjects.

It is fundamentally important for students to understand the world around us, know where we come from, appreciate the multicultural nature of Britain and its people, and seek to understand the different perspectives of people from around the globe. This knowledge forms the heart of the curriculum, which is why all students will study science, history, religious studies, and a language to GCSE level.

Well-rounded students turn into well-rounded adults. Therefore, it is important to balance foundation subjects with a strong emphasis on the arts, which includes subjects such as music, drama, photography, and dance, among others. All students will study the arts until the end of Year 11 by taking an arts GCSE or by selecting an arts strand of in the Bourne Scholar program (see Appendix B for an outline of the Bourne Scholar program).

Additionally, students must learn how to study and work independently and so will have several periods of Prep every week to develop these important skills.

Subject	Periods per week			
	Year 7 & 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
English	4	4	4	5
Maths	4	4	4	5
Science	4	4	6	6
History	2	3	3	3
Geography	1	1	-	-
Religious Studies	2	3	3	-
Languages	3	3	3	3
PE	2	2	1	1
Drama	1	-	-	-
Music	1	-	-	-
Art/Technology*	2	-	-	-
Creative Electives**	-	2	-	-
Options	-	-	3	3
Bourne Scholar	1	1	1	1
Prep	5	5	4	5
Total	32	32	32	32

*Art/Technology: Art and technology is taught on a rotation in Year 7 & 8.

** Creative Electives: Students have the option to select two arts or technology subjects in year 9. They study each subject for half a year. This does not mean they will study the subjects at GCSE but may opt to do so from Year 10. Progression to GCSE is not dependent on choice of the creative electives, indeed, students may wish to select the same of a different GCSE subject studied in the 'Creative Electives' in Year 9.

Gable Hall School proposed option subjects

Arts subjects: art & photography

Technology subjects: food technology & textiles

Option subjects: geography, art (fine art/textiles), photography, music, drama, dance or PE.

Hassenbrook Academy proposed option subjects

Arts subjects: art & photography

Technology subjects: food technology & textiles (not currently taught or another technology subject in its place)

Option subjects: geography, art (fine art/textiles), photography, music, drama and dance (not currently taught) or PE.

PSHCE

PSHE and Citizenship will be taught during a series of dropdown days throughout the year. The model has proved highly effective at secondary schools in the Mossbourne Federation. Ofsted recognised Mossbourne's approach as a model of best practice. This approach has allowed Mossbourne to be flexible and adapt to emerging need. It also ensures all staff see themselves as teachers of PSHCE.

A Level proposed curriculum

To create a more resilient and focused curriculum, we will concentrate on subjects taught in the lower school. This approach ensures that we mitigate the risk of staffing affecting our availability to continue to deliver subjects. By having a smaller, more focused curriculum, we can achieve greater results, as evidenced by research on the best schools which suggests that a narrower curriculum focus leads to higher performance.

Additionally, this strategy is more cost-effective as it necessitates fewer subject leaders, thus lowering operational expenses. It also reduces the risk associated with reopening the sixth form, as we are not hiring specialist teachers that we only require a few hours a week. Concentrating on traditional subjects will provide greater access to a university education or high-quality apprenticeship route. Aligning our current subject offerings with Mossbourne Sixth Form's academic offer will allow for greater support and coherence.

A streamlined curriculum frees up capacity to focus on other critical elements required for students to successfully transition to the next stage of their journey, whether that be further study, work, or an apprenticeship.

Furthermore, Year 12 students will undertake enrichment on Wednesday afternoons, which will not only ensure they become well-rounded individuals but also enhance their UCAS or any other applications they may be making.

Proposed Subjects	Year 12 & 13 Periods Per week
English	5
Maths	5
Further Maths	5
Biology	5
Chemistry	5
Physics	5
History	5
Geography	5
Philosophy & Ethics	5
Drama	5
Dance	5
Fine Art	5
Photography	5

Subjects which are taught in the lower school but are not currently included above will be reviewed with a view to including them.

Proposed timing of the school day

The rationale behind the changes to the school day includes several factors. Firstly, the new schedule aims to balance delivering a comprehensive curriculum, ensuring the well-being of both staff and students, and providing ample time for co-curricular activities.

High academic standards and diverse curriculum offerings can be achieved with the model. Additionally, the change is expected to help in attracting and retaining quality staff, and creating a sustainable model that benefits both educators and learners.

The timetabled day will also enhance co-curricular programmes by giving staff flexibility to offer a wider range of activities. Coupled with the Bourne Scholar enrichment programme in Years 7 to 11 and the Creative Electives in Year 9, this initiative will significantly enrich the educational experience of students.

The timetabled secondary academy day

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Registration	8:20	Registration	8:20	Registration	8:20
Period 1	8:40	Period 1	8:40	Period 1	8:40
Period 2	9:30	Period 2	9:30	Period 2	9:30
Break	10:20	Break	10:20	Break	10:20
Period 3	10:40	Period 3	10:40	Period 3	10:40
Period 4	11:30	Period 4	11:30	Period 4	11:30
Lunch (5)	12:20	Lunch (5)	12:20	Period 5	12:20
Period 6	13:15	Period 6	13:15	End of Day or Lunch	13:15
Period 7	14:05	Period 7	14:05	End	13:45
Period 8	14:55	End	14:55		
End	15.45				

Proposed structure of the academic year

The new structure aims to reduce 'downtime' post-examinations and prioritise time prior to public exams. The academic year structure includes the academic year finishing in early July, a return to school after the August bank holiday and a one-week half-term break in October. The Autumn Term is a crucial term for students in Year 11 and 13. By the end of the Autumn Term, Years 11 and 13 have covered approximately 40% of the academic year so a week of learning in this term is crucial. The return to school after the August Bank Holiday and the reduction of the October half term to one week ensures that students can maximise their potential in their public examinations.

An increased focus on staff training includes allocating 8 INSET days per year. To ensure that training is regular and manageable, 3 out of these 8 days are scheduled as twilight sessions on Thursday afternoons. This approach allows for continuous professional development.

The end-of-year examinations are scheduled for the last two weeks of the student academic year, with no teaching taking place during this period. This arrangement ensures that students can concentrate fully on their exams without the distraction of ongoing classes.

Proposed academic year structure changes and benefits

Current	Change	Benefits
5 INSET days per year; 2 taken as twilights	8 INSET days per year; 3 taken as twilights each Thursday	Increase of 60% to INSET Regular of often training built in. Increase focus on subject specific training. Dedicated time to collaborate across schools.
End of year exams slotted into normal curriculum time	Curriculum stops 2 weeks before end of year. End of year exam completed after the curriculum stops	Students have dedicated time to focus on examinations. Examination completed in similar style to end GCSE and A level examinations. Staff have time to mark examinations as teaching has finished for the year.
INSET days are decided year by year by individual schools	A clear structure of 3 days as twilight, 1 day for federation, 1 day for Performance management and 3 days to be decided by the school.	Ensure federation and performance management time are built into rather than bolted onto the structure. School has 3 school specific days to work on individual school culture and or school specific training needs.
School starts early September	Earlier start to the school year. First day after August long weekend.	More time with examination groups. More holidays pre GCSE and A level days for staff. Less deadtime at the end of the year with non-exam groups.
Two week October half term	One week October half term	More time with examination groups. More holidays pre GCSE and A level days for staff. Less deadtime at the end of the year with non-exam groups.

Appendix A

The **Bourne Scholar programme** is a unique enrichment initiative designed to enhance students' knowledge, experience, and understanding beyond their regular timetabled subjects.

The five-year curriculum (Y7-11) has the following objectives:

- **Culture:** expose students to a wide range of cultures & ideas.
- **Community:** empower students to be informed, engaged & participatory citizens.
- **Character:** enable our students to become ambitious, articulate, and confident.
- **Scholarship:** enable our students to be independent, active learners.

The Bourne Scholar and the co-curricular programmes includes various activities and subjects such as debating, performing arts, British Sign Language, rowing, dance, yoga, architecture, coding, and more.

At Key Stage 4 the programme is designed to keep the breadth of educational experience and enrichment at a time when the curriculum traditionally narrows. It also aims to build resilience and coping strategies for the increased demands of KS4. Furthermore, KS4 sees the introduction whole-year activities, such as, Cadets, NHS Cadets, Duke of Edinburgh Award, medical bursaries, charities, campaigning, and more. Specific offering may vary from site to site depending on the local offer.

For Ortu the objectives of the programme will be the same but local adaptations will need to be made to reflect the community.

Example Year 10 & 11 Programme

Pillars of Happiness	Y10	Y11	Y10/11 whole year programmes
Serve your community	NHS Cadets	NHS Cadets	Duke of Edinburgh (Y10 only) Extended Project Qualification (L2) Cadets
	Medical Bursary Junior	Medical Bursary Junior	
	Charities and Campaigning	Charities and Campaigning	
Find your voice	Debating	Debating	
	Performing Arts	Performing Arts	
	British Sign Language	British Sign Language	
Move your body	Rowing	Rowing	
	Dance	Dance	
	Yoga	Yoga	
Make something	Architecture & Built Environment Junior	Architecture & Built Environment Junior	
	Art & Craft	Art & Craft	
	Coding	Coding	