

The 'Next Step': Year 7 at British School Muscat

<p>How can I help my child to be less nervous about the first day/new term/new school?</p>	<p>Firstly please tell your child that everything will be ok. BSM is a very welcoming school with students from all over the world and many diverse backgrounds. When other staff meet our students they always comment how 'kind' they are and essentially that is what we aim to achieve, students who respect each other and can work together to succeed as much as possible. All other students, whether from BSM Primary or from other schools, will be in the same position of being new to senior school. Students should be reminded that it is not an experience to be worried about but one to be excited about as they not only will they get to meet new people but new teachers and new parts of the school also. Students should also be reminded that there will be lots of people to help them settle in, whether that is their form tutor, year leader, key stage leader or the rest of the teaching staff and other students. They were all new once and they are more than happy to help students settle in.</p>
<p>How will my child know which class s/he has and how to get there?</p>	<p>When students arrive at BSM for the new academic year they will be guided to the Sports Hall by staff where Mrs Megnin, the head teacher, will lead an assembly welcoming them to BSM. At the end of this Year 7 tutors will collect their tutees and take them to their tutor room where they will complete a selection of activities, ranging from understanding the timetable and the layout of the school to ice breaker games so they can get to know their classmates better. The school is well sign posted and all students will have a map which will help them become familiar with the location of classrooms quickly. Furthermore if a student is ever unclear about where they should be or how to get there they simply need to ask another student or staff member who will be understanding and help them find their way.</p>
<p>What will my child notice is different in Year 7?</p>	<p>There are many differences between primary and secondary school. The most obvious is the structure of the day. Whereas Primary school students will only leave their main classroom for a few specialist lessons senior school students will move between classrooms for all lessons. For example, having Science Period 1 in a science lab and then English in Period 2 in a dedicated English room in the next building. Students will also have a tutor who is primarily responsible for their pastoral care (in addition to a dedicated year leader and Mr Hughes as Head of Key Stage Three) who they will see after second break each day. During this time they will complete weekly administration tasks but also team building exercises, learn about current affairs and carry out activities set by the tutor, Year Leader and Mr Hughes designed to help them grow as a person. The final big difference is that, to ensure a broad curriculum, the senior school follows a two-week timetable so students will follow one set of lessons during week A and then another set week B before returning to the structure of Week A again.</p>
<p>How the curriculum, classes and pastoral care differ from Year 6.</p>	<p>At BSM students follow a diverse curriculum which incorporates 13 subjects in addition to PSHE. Information about all subjects can be found in the Year 7 Curriculum Overview Booklet and Year 7 Study Guide on the BSM website. In Year 7 only PE and Mathematics are taught in sets and these are based on student performance which means at the end of each term there is an opportunity for students to move up sets for more challenge or down for more support.</p>
<p>What are the main objectives the school aims to reach at year 7?</p>	<p>At BSM we have a Learning Ethos and set of Thinking Skills which are based on the values, attitudes and attributes that we want students to aim for as they complete their educational journey with us. To summarise for Year 7, it would be for students to be comfortable with their new surroundings and to understand and begin to flourish in the diverse range of subjects they will be</p>

	studying. We want students to be curious, resilient, confident and reflective as they build the fundamental knowledge and skills which they will need as they continue to GCSEs in Years 10 and Year 11.
How can my child ensure they are organised?	When students start Year 7 they are assigned a locker, given a planner, a homework timetable and subject timetable. The homework timetable and subject timetable will be copied into their planner and should be used every day to support student organisation so they know what lesson they should have and what homework or other assignments are due. By keeping all books not required for homework in their locker they can also ensure that they do not leave anything required at home. Tutors will regularly remind students of key events and will check student planners at the beginning of each week but it is imperative that parents check it weekly and sign to show that they have seen any staff communication and also to support their child's time management of assignments. Having a copy of your child's timetable at home and making sure they check and pack their bag the night before is also good practice to ensure there is not a last minute rush in the morning where they may forget something. I would recommend checking your child's planner each day to see what homework is set and the due date so that you can both plan when it can be completed to ensure students leave enough time for other activities such as sports, music and downtime.
How will my child cope with the new routines?	The beginning of any new school year can often seem hectic due to new routines however by keeping their planner up to date students will soon get used to the two week timetable, the requirements of the different subjects and teachers that they have and will soon feel comfortable. Ensuring that students arrive at school calmly, by leaving the house in sufficient time to not rush to school, will also mean that they can begin their first lesson with a positive mindset and be ready for the day.
I heard there was a grace period for the uniform change, how long is this grace period? And how important is the change in shirt?	The aim of our Uniform Policy is that it is smart, practical, comfortable and inclusive. We have recently updated our Uniform Policy to ensure that the Primary and Secondary Uniform expectations are easy to understand, readily available, and parents, students and staff are fully aware of the correct uniform to wear from August 2020. <u>COVID UPDATE:</u> We do not want you or your children getting anxious if you are not able to meet our uniform expectations when we re-open. If this is the case please do not worry, please contact your year leader via the Senior office to explain your situation.
What subjects will my child be learning?	Year 7 students study 13 subjects (Arabic, Art & Design, Computing, Drama, Design & Technology, English, French, Geography, German, History, Mathematics, Music , Physical Education, PSHE, Spanish.) including 2 languages.
How high are expectations of learning?	BSM has very high expectations of student behaviour and learning. We pride ourselves on having the reputation in Oman of being the most rigorous school when it comes to attaining high grades for our pupils (2019 GCSE 99% A*-C). However, we understand that not all students are of the same ability and as such teachers differentiate work to support those with needs and those with an recognized SEN are given extra provision to support their learning. Students at the other end of the ability spectrum are also given extension tasks to extend their learning.

On a scale of 1/10 how hard are the tests?	It is difficult to answer this question as for each student the perception of the difficulty of tests will be different. BSM is a HPL (High Performance Learning) school and as such we challenge students to achieve the best they can. To ensure this teachers differentiate work and provide assistance and extension tasks. BSM also has a dedicated Inclusion team which offers additional help to students that need further support.
What educational methods/teaching and learning styles does BSM utilise?	All teachers at BSM have their own unique teaching style but are UK trained and as such have a firm belief in guiding students to discover their own learning rather than the rote system prevalent in other curriculums. In essence this means asking challenging questions with a great deal of support and providing students with the tools and strategies to think for themselves. We have been awarded HPL status (High Performance Learning) which is a set of Values, Attitudes and Attributes and Advanced Cognitive Performance Characteristics designed to ensure we support students progress so that when faced with any challenge they have the skills to meet it.
Can you let us know more about the British exam system e.g. Curriculum, expectations, GCSEs and A Levels?	See question re: subjects plus GCSE in Year 9-11 (some students take them early) A Levels are Y12-13. Students currently sit all their exams at the end of the course e.g. Y11 and Y13. GCSEs and A Levels are recognized globally and have allowed our students to be given places in North America, Australia, Asia and Europe.
What are the GCSE examination boards.	At the end of Year 11 students will sit their GCSE exams. Departments at BSM follow a range of examination boards chosen to best support and provide opportunity for students. The main examination boards are Edexcel, OCR and AQA. (Some students may sit exams early in Year 10 for example in a native language or Mathematics)
What type of assessments will my child have to complete?	Students will usually complete 6 assessments for each subject over the course of the year. Some of these may be in exam conditions at the end of a Key Topic, such as in science or mathematics or may be more informal as in DT or Art where the finished product is designed and completed over a number of lessons. Students will always be notified of when work is due and given ample time to prepare and complete. Some subjects sit formal end of year examinations but not all. Please see the Curriculum Overview booklet for more details about specific subjects. For subject assessment students will be informed in class about their results along with feedback on how to progress next time. Over the course of the year there are also reports which are published to parents. These consist of an attainment grade and an effort grade. At the end of each year the final report also includes a written summary from the subject teacher and tutor also.
How are subject classes chosen?	Only in PE and Maths are students in sets. These sets are determined by teacher judgement and subsequent assessments in the case of PE and based on student attainment in the CAT and PTM tests and subsequent assessments in the case of Maths. In all other subjects apart from Languages students will be with their tutor group.
How are tutor groups chosen?	Tutor groups are chosen with the best interests of each child in mind. After language choices have been taken into consideration (in Year 7 each child will choose 2 languages to study) Year 6 teachers and the Key Stage Leader will make a judgement of whom will work best with whom to create a balanced and productive group where the abilities of students are

	spread across the year group. If possible student preferences will also be taken into account with the aim that each student will be with at least one person that they want to be with, with no one being left out.
How can I ensure my child is with her friends/Can I request they are with their friends/What can I do if my child is unhappy with her tutor group?	Year 6 teachers will know the friendship groups prevalent in Year 6 and will take this into consideration when analysing whom will work the best with whom. If deemed necessary, parents can make requests to move a child from one group to another however, decisions are made in the best interests of the child and as such may not be acted on. If your child is unhappy with their tutor group we would first ask them to complete a month of secondary school to see if those feelings remain as usually relationships at this age are very fluid and in our experience students are generally comfortable and have found a good friendship group by this stage. During this time the tutor and year leader will work closely with your child to support them. If a child is still unhappy and it is affecting their learning or well-being a meeting will take place to look at potential options.
Are ECAs still offered for senior school students?	Yes, at the beginning of each term students and parents are invited to sign up for that term's Extracurricular activities. This year we had over 250 ECAs on offer.
Participation in school sporting teams	Our aim is to have 100% of students participating in ECAs. Some activities are more selective than others however there is a wide range of sports to choose from. To give an example of the opportunities on offer the U13 BSME ECA holds trials and then a squad is selected who will then train specifically for the event. Whereas Mr Hughes' U12s football is open to all Y7 students in term 1 and then when the football season starts a U12s squad is selected whilst all other students are invited to continue with Recreational football which is held at the same time.
What kind of Musical after school activities are available ?	At BSM we are very proud of the hard work and time the Music department puts into providing a huge range of opportunities for our students. Whether that is performing in our very own Oryx Theatre or the Opera Galleria in Al Sarooj, a list of the groups students can join are below which is in addition to single instrument tuition: Orchestra Junior Wind and Brass group Intermediate Brass Group Advanced Brass Group Swing Band Senior Choir Junior Choir Sing Out Club Music Theory/Music Tech School Production
How does the school deal with issues like bullying?	Unfortunately bullying occurs in all schools. BSM has a strict no bullying policy and any incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. To prevent potential issues before they may occur all students are informed of our positive behaviour policy, sign a

	RESPECT charter and issues of bullying, including cyber bullying, are addressed in assemblies in tutor time so students understand what bullying is, why it is wrong and what to do if they see it happening. All students are encouraged to report any incident, no matter how minor, ASAP to a member of staff.
How is "bad" behaviour dealt with, do you include the child in the decisions and discussions.	When a student 'misbehaves' there is usually a reason for this and as such BSM looks to find the root cause of this rather than simply react to the behavior. As a consequence, when there is an issue the teacher involved will discuss with a member of the pastoral team (Tutor/Year Leader/Key Stage Leader) how best to move forward positively and find a solution that means the student's behavior is not repeated. The student will be included in these decisions and discussions and the action taken will conform to BSM's Positive Behaviour Policy, which can be found on the BSM website.
How can my child improve their confidence and motivation?	The most effective way to improve student confidence is to practice. Practice breeds competence and competence breeds confidence. During tutor time and year group assemblies students will be provided with many different activities which will enhance their knowledge of the world and open their minds to the multitude of options that they have. By taking part in these in a communal setting it will allow students to eventually act in front of larger audiences or on larger tasks with more ease. With regards to motivation sometimes students can feel overwhelmed. Setting small measurable goals, celebrating results and providing a comfortable environment without distractions with the promise of a small reward at the end can all help students to be more motivated.
How can my child improve their academic performance (specifically in Maths and English)?	On the BSM website there are a multitude of resources to prepare and support students. For example, ' BSM The Next Step: Activities ' provides advice to prepare for each subject at BSM. Although students are not obligated to complete these they will help them feel more prepared and more at ease when they arrive in September. The activities are designed to be fun and interesting rather than difficult and laborious. When students arrive at BSM and complete their first pieces of work they will be given targets by their teachers. These are specific for each child and by working on these will help your child progress. By reflecting on our child's Year 6 report and working on the targets set by his teachers over the summer it will also mean that your child is preparing the best he can to start Year 7. The other resources mentioned are the Curriculum Overview Booklet and Y7 Study Guide which give an overview of topics to cover and actions to take if joining the school midyear respectively.
How will my child cope with learning two foreign languages?	Young minds are much more malleable than older ones and as such Year 7 students usually find it quite comfortable to learn two foreign languages. However, if a student is struggling and teacher interventions are not having the required impact it <u>may be</u> possible to only study one language and receive extra support in another subject. However, this is <u>not the norm</u> and will involve a process with the inclusion department. Please be aware that if your child wishes to change subjects in the first month of the year this may involve moving tutor groups.
How will my child cope with the increased home works and assessments?	Students are given a homework timetable at the beginning of the year which should mean they have no more than 2 homeworks to complete a night which should be no more than 30 minutes each. This should allow students to manage their time effectively so that they can take part in all their other activities. If students are struggling then extra support and extensions can be given.

	With regards to assessments students are informed well in advance of when they are and are given sufficient support to successfully prepare and complete. Subject teachers are always prepared to support students as much as possible. Communication between home and school is key however to ensure staff are aware of any difficulties if they arise.
What kind of extra support can the school provide to achieve better results?	As per the last question subject teachers are always prepared to support students as much as possible. Additionally the inclusion department and tutors/year leaders/key stage leader can be approached with any specific enquiry. At the end of each report cycle any student with a low effort score or attainment grade will be invited to the monitoring and mentoring process which is designed to provide targets and advice for students needing extra support to progress.
Are there any useful web links to support transition?	Please see the 'Year 7 study guide' .
How can I help my child?	Talk to them. The more you know and understand their experience the better placed you and we are to support them. Ask them about which subjects they like and find hard, ask them about their homework and assessments. If you feel you cannot support them then please let us know what more we can do. Also provide them with a space to concentrate away from their computer consoles and phones so that they can focus on learning. Check their planners and encourage them to be more organized. Just because they are in senior school does not mean they will suddenly be more organized they will still need support but hopefully less as the year goes on. For more subject specific advice please see the Y7 study guide .