



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO, SOUTH LOOP
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

Middle School Guide

2020-21 Entry



Developing a Love of Learning

Whilst each year group presents an exciting stage of development for students, the Middle School years are a time when students experience physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. At BISC South Loop, Middle School students further develop their interests and learn new skills while also encountering new challenges. The Middle School curriculum responds specifically to the needs of students aged 11 to 14 by enabling independence and interdependence through discrete subject learning and themes, as well as more traditional subject-based learning.

The Middle School curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects our goal to create students with experience of a wide range of subject disciplines. BISC-SL Middle Schoolers are musicians, artists, actors, engineers, and dancers. They are sportsmen and women with a clear sense of who they are in the world they are growing up in. They have a firm grounding in English, Math, Science, Languages, and Social Studies and are provided with opportunities to explore the world around them. They are ambitious, empowered, humble, and kind. They are curious, risk-takers, confident when working independently, but also learn from and collaborate with others. They work hard, they join in, and they are kind – they are the leaders of the future because of the education with which they have engaged. When they graduate from Middle School, our Year 9 students are self-confident, socially conscious, and ready for High School life.

The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 can feel challenging, and our staff do all that they can to ensure a smooth passage in which children feel confident. The Primary and Middle School staff work closely to ensure that the transition from Primary to Middle School is as easy for your students as possible.

We are passionate about learning and ensuring that every student has a school experience that will develop a love of learning and the skills and knowledge necessary for success in High School and beyond.



Middle School Pastoral System

The Middle School is divided into three year groups, each with a Head of Year who acts as the pastoral and academic leader for that year group:

- Head of Year 7: Mr. Jack Bartlett - jack.bartlett@bischicagosl.org
- Head of Year 8: Ms. Laura Towell - laura.towell@bischicagosl.org
- Head of Year 9: Mr. Sam Cosgrove - samuel.cosgrove@bischicagosl.org
- The Middle School is lead by Ms. Nicola Able - nicola.able@bischicagosl.org

Each year group is divided into four advisory groups based around the school House system. There are four Houses: Great Wall, Pyramids, Rushmore, and Stonehenge. Throughout the year your child will receive house-based rewards, have the opportunity to attend team building activities in Houses, participate in House competitions, and make their contribution towards the coveted 'House Cup'.

Every day, your child will start their day with their advisory group and their tutor. Their tutor will check that their uniform is correct and that they have everything they need to be successful. They will take them through the Daily BISCUIT - our Middle School notices - and will ensure that they are ready to learn.

The role of the tutor is to be a primary point of contact with home - they will contact you when your child experiences successes or with any concerns they may have about your child's well-being or progress. They will also lead on the delivery of our PSHE (Personal, Social, and Health Education) curriculum which takes place on Wednesday afternoons. In addition to PSHE students will have weekly Head of Year and Middle School assemblies where they will come together as a Year group or school.

Some students may at times require greater support than that which can be offered through their tutor and Head of Year. To support students we have a Learning Support Manager, a Guidance Counselor, and four House Leaders who work as mentors across the Middle School.



Middle School Curriculum

The Middle School curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects our goal to create students with experience of a wide range of subject disciplines. Students study the five core subjects (English, Math, World Languages, Science, and Social Studies) for three lessons per week. The remainder of their timetable is compiled of a broad range of subject disciplines outlined below.

New for 2020-21 is our Year 9 elective program. In Year 9, students will begin to follow honors programs in English, Math, and World Languages and will receive two World Language lessons per week to reflect this change in course. Students in Year 9 will be invited to select one elective from Performance, Arts, or Engineering to enrich their Year 9 program of study and begin to prepare them for their pathway choices in High School.

English

English skills empower students in all aspects of their schooling and adult lives. As well as communication, grammar, and analytical skills, English provides students with an opportunity to enhance their ability to think critically and make evaluations. Through their study of English, Middle School students develop their formal essay writing, problem solving, presentation delivery, and persuasion. English is a challenging and rewarding subject that allows students to experience classical literature along with contemporary texts. In this sense, English is less a set of rules to be followed, and more a way of developing empathy by exploring culture, places, and people. Methods of assessment include creative writing, formal analytical essays, discussion with peers, speeches, and presentations about writers' skills and techniques. The study of grammar is embedded in all areas of the curriculum, and our goal is to foster students who reflect on their targets and evaluate the effectiveness of their choices. From the start of Year 7, students are allocated to ability groups that are continuously monitored and reviewed against progress and assessments.

Mathematics

Mathematics is taught holistically covering algebra, number, geometry, and statistics. Focusing on these four topics throughout Middle School means students can consolidate and extend their learning. The course also incorporates investigation work and real-world applications. The curriculum is enriched by participation in both U.S. and U.K. math competitions, which take place in and out of school. From the start of Year 7, students are allocated to ability groups that are continuously monitored and reviewed against progress and assessments.

World Languages

Learning a foreign language is a gateway to different cultures and countries. It helps students develop awareness of their own languages, cultures, and customs, encouraging them to become sensitive to others and developing confident communication skills. Students are expected to effectively use the target language beginning with everyday conversation and spanning to more intricate and developed subjects, deepening their knowledge of culture and grammar along the way. Aside from grammatical rules, which are explained in English to ensure full clarification, World Language teachers primarily instruct in the target language using a communicative approach. Teachers also employ a variety of creative resources and activities that appeal to all learning styles, while encompassing the four key skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We offer a number of language options: German, Spanish, French, French and Spanish Dual, and Mandarin.

Science

Science is an essential skill and an inspirational subject that sets students on paths to a broad spectrum of opportunities. The enthusiastic nature of our approach to Science is one of the school's most exciting features.

Unlike the majority of schools in America, we do not select blocks of single Science courses. Instead, all students sit a rigorous and well-produced integrated course that builds from year to year. Beginning in Year 7, students embark on a course that contains the foundations of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.



Social Studies

Geography

The study of Geography has never been more relevant, and careers connected with Geography have never been more plentiful. Geographers become cartographers, climatologists, geographic information systems specialists, meteorologists, real estate developers, surveyors, and urban planners. Geographers think critically and globally, a key skill that employers seek. Students have the chance to apply their knowledge and understanding of Geography through a series of fieldwork studies at a local and regional level. Previous fieldwork studies include beach profiles, urban transects, and environmental surveys.

History

History focuses on the core skills of interpretation, cause and consequence, change and continuity, and significance. The development of these transferable skills helps students gain meaningful understanding of the past and become independent, inquisitive historians. This course covers the prehistoric era to the 20th century, with a focus on international and American history. Students delve into fascinating periods with a broad chronological and international scope. Focus is placed on writing throughout the course with the intention of developing literacy skills, building confidence and preparing students for an external examination, should they choose to take History in High School.

Civics

New for 2020 is a Middle School Civics curriculum. Civics aims to support students in better understanding the world around them. Topics include U.S. History and Government, World Religions, Philosophy, Law, Crime and Punishment, and an understanding of the Holocaust, Bystanderism, and the importance of peacekeeping in today's world. By studying Civics alongside History and Geography, we aim to educate students on the world around them in a way that prepares them for life beyond school. Students will take the Constitution Test during their Middle School Studies.

Performing Arts

Dance

Dance is the comprehensive study of the performing art in physical, artistic, aesthetic, and cultural context. In addition to helping students acquire subject knowledge, the curriculum promotes in collaboration with The Juilliard School a sense of creativity, fitness, teamwork, character, leadership, and performance. Middle School students take part in units on performance recall, research, and choreography across six styles: Contemporary, Ballet, Hip Hop, Jazz, STOMP, and African dance.

Drama

From imagination and empathy to solid communication, Drama teaches skills that students can apply in all school subjects and their lives outside of school. The benefits of studying Drama are considerable, so Middle School students take part in one Drama lesson each week. Students cover a wide range of topics, learning technical elements and vocabulary across genres, styles, and famous works. Students work in a variety of group sizes and regularly create performance work during their lessons. Many elements are also cross-curricular and support learning in more than one subject.

Music

Music plays an integral role in students' education, and we are proud to offer The Juilliard-Nord Anglia Performing Arts Program. As part of our Juilliard collaboration, students are drawn into a Juilliard-curated repertoire of 12 core works that encompass a wide range of musical genres and styles, opening doors to different cultures and historical periods. Research shows music skills are transferable to many other subjects, and the techniques and disciplines students learn in the Music course further our goal of creating innovative, ambitious learners. In Middle School, students develop the skills they already have and also learn exciting new skills. Students explore Music through a variety of creative practical lessons. Music lessons are weekly and consist of: instrumental music making, areas of study, and music theory based on keyboard skills.





Visual Arts

Art

Art is an important element of the curriculum, as we aim to nurture students' creativity and ability to express and communicate their ideas. The goal of the curriculum is to develop independent, inquisitive and resilient learners, active researchers, and team players. While creating their artwork, students learn about a range of cultures and traditions and also develop transferable skills: making observations; experimentation; and critical and contextual studies.

Engineering and Design

Students will cover one topic per semester to incorporate a cohesive approach to the integration of a range of engineering and design skills in the projects we teach. Projects include CAD CAM, Jumping Bug, F1 in Schools, Micro Controlled Music, Stereo Amplifier, and Forces and Structures.

All student work will be documented in online folders and available to be presented for continued assessment by the teachers at any time. Assessment of student work is ongoing each week through the projects and takes the form of both classwork assessment of skills as well as homework activities.

Information and Communications Technology

The study of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is unique because of the ever-changing subject matter, as software evolves at a rapid pace. ICT introduces students to the fundamentals of programming, data analysis, and visual design. Middle School students work under three umbrellas of learning that build in complexity each year: Digital Literacy; Programming; and Digital Design Graphics. Students learn how and why a task is completed to understand the significance of the practical activities they perform. Learning is based on individual projects through which students are assessed on their written understanding and practical skills. Students develop and improve skills through practice. They creatively demonstrate their skills to ensure that they can adapt them in real-life situations and build upon previously acquired skills, which encourage confident use of computers and other technology tools. We also discuss related real-world topics such as digital divide and home and leisure.

P.S.H.E

P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, and Health Education) curriculum takes place on Wednesday afternoons and explores issues such as global citizenship, mental health and wellbeing, internet safety, personal development, sex and relationships education, and social skills. P.S.H.E. helps students acquire the knowledge, understanding ,and skills needed to manage their lives now and in the future. The wide-ranging curriculum prepares students to manage the most critical opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities they will face and helps them connect and apply the knowledge they gain in all school subjects to practical, real-life situations.

Athletics

Our Athletics courses provide students with opportunities to learn about personal health and fitness, and develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Each week, all Middle School students take part in Physical Education and Games, resulting in three hours of physical activity. Both courses are designed to give each student a chance to explore a variety of activities. Physical Education is assessed on academic reports, while Games is not. Physical Education is assessed on students moral, social, and physical skills.

Topics include: badminton, baseball, basketball, cricket, gymnastics, indoor rowing, soccer, softball, swimming, track and field, volleyball, pop lacrosse, yoga, rounders', kinetic wellbeing (personal fitness), sports leadership, field hockey, and rugby.



Collaboration Projects

Middle Schoolers are provided with a number of opportunities made possible through our partnerships with world leading providers. Our students are given opportunities to participate in a range of activities linked to our collaboration projects including our summer term drop down program that immerses students in projects connected to world learning, MIT, Juilliard, Enterprise, and Sports.

UNICEF

In collaboration with UNICEF, BISC-SL students have their social consciousness raised so they care more deeply about the world and the people in it. Students will research, develop, and debate challenges facing our society, and take action to address them. Through special activities and events with UNICEF, students will be equipped to make their voices heard on the world stage and to make a lasting, positive difference. Together with UNICEF, all Nord Anglia Education students are challenged to participate in projects on the Sustainable Development Goals in their schools. The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 goals set by the United Nations regarding social and economic development issues that we hope to collectively achieve by 2030. Every year, UNICEF challenges students at Nord Anglia Education schools to raise awareness of these goals through creative projects and activities. Whether it's a recycling project for sustainability, turning plants into bio-fuels, fighting against poverty in their community, or other meaningful activities based on the 17 goals, our students are challenged to lead change.

MIT

By tackling real-world challenges across the subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM), your child will develop transferable skills such as flexibility, creativity, and communication. They will be encouraged to experiment rather than wait for instructions, and will learn that collaboration and critical thinking can solve even the trickiest problems. Nord Anglia Education is also working with MIT to introduce your child to this innovative way of learning the STEAM subjects which encourages creativity, experimentation, and teaches them how to apply their skills to real-world situations.



Juilliard

Your child's learning of the performing arts will be enhanced using a repertoire of core music, dance, and drama works encompassing a wide range of genres, styles, and cultures designed and hand-selected by Juilliard. Teachers will use the Juilliard Creative Classroom, an extraordinary online collection of educational resources that have been designed to enhance and supplement our performing arts curricula. Juilliard designed teaching materials, creative activities, historical information, rehearsal strategies, and professional development resources lead students through explorations of core works of music, dance, and drama and emphasise building students' personal artistry through their own creativity.

Global Campus

The Global Campus enables all of our students to be part of more than just one school. We are a family of international schools and, as such, we are able to harness the power of the group, offering supplementary regional and global learning activities for students beyond those provided in their own school. The Global Campus therefore extends students' learning by connecting schools and students across all Nord Anglia schools through common curriculum experiences. These experiences, among other things, include in-school challenges, expeditions, and collaborations with world-leading organizations, supported and showcased via our online Global Campus platform. As a global family of schools, we are able to give students the benefit of learning as part of a global community so that they can achieve more than they thought possible. Students can participate in activities in one or all of three main areas: in school, worldwide, and online. These activities have been designed with teachers in our schools to support key areas of the curriculum, and to support students' personal, social and academic achievement.



Questions?

Head of Middle School

Nicola Able

nicola.able@bischicagosl.org

Head of Secondary School

Andrew Gilhooly

andrew.gilhooly@bischicagosl.org



BRITISH
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO, SOUTH LOOP
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

Be Ambitious!