

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> August

Dear Parents & Carers,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the advice I have received from educational and psychological experts regarding the return to school in September.

From conversations I have had with families and staff, it is clear that whilst the majority of children are looking forward to September, many are feeling anxious and almost all will find the transition back to school to be unsettling. It isn't unusual to be nervous, both as a pupil and as an adult working in school, in the final days of the summer holidays – but this year the experts say we shouldn't underestimate the magnitude of the transition. Few children will skip through our doors on Thursday (3<sup>rd</sup> September) without a care in the world – there will be a transition period for all. This may be two or three days, a couple of weeks or even months.

In addition, we can't simply say "Lockdown's done and everything is back to normal" because it isn't. We shared our plans, via the website, back in July to enable you to prepare for the changes and talk through the details with your child. Psychologists advise:

*"The less uncertainty they have, the less they will worry. It's a bad idea to promise that all will be back to normal in a few weeks because it won't. We need to teach them to tolerate uncertainty."*

So, what can we do to help them prepare?

- 1) Talk to them about their worries and reassure them – promote a sense of hopefulness: all things pass and every life has highs and lows.
- 2) Get out there and see the world as it is now; let them see people in masks and the Perspex screens and hand sanitising stations in shops.
- 3) Look for opportunities in the last days of the holiday for children to separate from their main caregiver – gradually increasing the time. If they can meet up with relatives and friends face to face for a few hours this will help ease them back into separating from family members. Some children will have been at home with parents every day of lockdown and may find socialising with others to be a challenge. Reward 'brave behaviours' and prevent avoidance. Acknowledge it's difficult, but not so difficult that they can't do it.
- 4) Expect to see behaviour changes – even in children who can't wait to return to school! Emotions will be running high – tearful, snappy or sullen responses are normal. Talk through worries, teach them to take deep breaths, write down their feelings in a journal or change their mood through exercise or music.
- 5) Back to routine! Start readjusting sleep patterns before September. Have a consistent wake-up time and bedtime – maybe bring bedtime forward in chunks over a few days? If your child has got used to unlimited drinks and snacks, talk to them about drinking water and only having a mid-morning snack. Perhaps the biggest challenge and potential trigger will be reducing screen time. Discuss the need to balance 'gaming' with actual interactions with humans! Avoid screens in the hours before bedtime and look into parental controls and revising rules about where/when they can have technology.
- 6) Although it may be hard at first, children do adapt quickly. They may feel 'rusty' – both socially and academically, but they will recover lost skills. Encourage daily reading and try exercising their handwriting muscles – perhaps making lists or writing down feelings.

We know that they will all respond in different ways and hopefully the benefits of being back in school with many familiar sights and sounds will ease the 'bumps in the road.' Children

who came back to school in June and July initially looked very nervous, but quickly settled into the new routines and even had fun – supported by the adults around them.

We are excited to see everyone and will do everything possible to create a sense of calm and positivity – with a focus on kindness. Please help us to achieve this by following the guidelines we have put in place and ensuring children arrive at the right door at the right time, wearing either their uniform or games kit (starting from Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020) and carrying their packed lunch and water bottle. All of these details can be found on the class pages of our website.

If you have any additional questions or information to share with staff, please contact the office via email or telephone, but bear in mind that we have 360 pupils and 90 of those are starting a brand new school. It will take time to adjust to the 'new normal' and we must accept that some things may be imposed upon us and be beyond our control. Only by working together will we succeed in building our children's resilience and they will look to the adults around them for how to react.

Thank you, in anticipation of your support,

P A Swift  
Headteacher