

11 March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

It has been nothing but a delight to have all the children back this week – thank you for trusting the processes and procedures that we have in place and embracing the return to school so positively! Attendance has been amazing and when we have been in classrooms this week it has been a joy to see all of the children focus so well on their learning.

There has been lots of talk in the press about schools ensuring that they respond to children’s social and emotional needs rather than their academic needs and I just wanted to share my own views on this in context. At Marksbury Road we are so aware of the importance of looking after the children’s SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) needs, but we view this aspect of their development as being intrinsically linked with having high expectations of their educational outcomes. In my mind, nothing will give our children better emotional well-being and good mental health than having the ability to access a full curriculum which will in turn open every door they might want to tap on, both now and in the future. Access to the best education and access to all of life’s opportunities as a result of this brings good emotional well-being. There is so much research to support this. I certainly don’t view the two elements as separate strands. As an academy we are looking to ‘recover’ the high expectations and brilliant outcomes in a well-considered and nurturing culture and in a holistic curriculum offer. We will not be putting pressure on the children, and as a staff we will not be talking to the children about ‘catching up’. Instead, we will continue to prioritise high standards, we will prioritise a curriculum which meets the social and academic needs of the children, and we will prioritise meeting the children where they are after lockdown. My vision for the academy remains the same as it did before the pandemic started – the way we deliver that vision may take a few different turns, but as a staff we are completely determined to strive for the best for every single child. And I know I say it regularly, but the children here couldn’t have a better bunch of cheerleaders making sure they reach their full potential every single day.

And now, a few lighter day to day messages and reminders for the week ahead ☺

Website

The admin team are working with the teaching team to make sure that from the end of next week (Fri 19th March), weekly updates will start being published again – I know this is always so well received and an element of classroom practice that children love sharing with you! We will continue to develop the website throughout this year and look forward to sharing updates with you.

Boxes

Thank you to everyone bringing in boxes for Year 2’s Tudor house project – if your child does bring them in, please ask them to take them to the Year 2 classrooms in the mornings where the staff will gratefully take them off their hands! Thank you also for all of the junk modelling donations brought in and for the wildlife area contributions. It’s always amazing to see how much we can achieve when we work together!

Principal – Clare Robinson

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Morning drop off

Please remember that drop off time is between 8:30 and 8:45am. The gate is locked at 8:45 and learning then starts promptly. Children who are late not only add additional risks to our office staff by passing through the front entrance, but they are also missing out on really valuable learning. Please make sure your children are ready for learning in their classrooms by 8:45am.

Afternoon pick up

As we are having to limit numbers on the playground at pick up time to adhere to social distancing protocols, please queue along the side of the academy so that it is a fair system. I know this will be frustrating if you are walking from the other direction, but it is the only fair way to manage the pick up time. This is not an issue in the morning as there is a pretty free flow of children entering the academy, but does become an issue in the afternoon. We will start this on Monday. The gate will then be locked at 3:30pm which is the end of the pick up window (3:15-3:30pm). We will then ring the bell on the playground at 3:35pm which is when all families will need to be off-site. It feels a bit mean to be so strict, but we do need to ensure we are not encouraging socialising, and I also need to be mindful that staff have meetings after school too. Thank you in advance for your understanding on these points.

Symptoms

Just a reminder – although we can start to see the light at the end of the tunnel in terms of the pandemic, please remain vigilant over symptoms and do let us know of any symptoms or tests that are taking place in your families so that we can take appropriate action. Our staff are lateral-flow testing twice a week to help limit the spread of asymptomatic cases. Thank you to all of the parents and carers who are wearing face coverings on the playground at pick up time. I know it's something we can't mandate, but thank you for co-operating in a shared responsibility to protect each other.

Breakfast and Afterschool Club

Our lovely Geri and Sarah have been on furloughed leave during this lockdown but we are so excited to welcome them back next week! As of Monday 15th March Breakfast and After School Club will be back up and running. These sessions can be booked on MCAS and I know they have lots of fun planned for the children in the coming weeks and months!

My heart is as full as the academy is this week – and so delighted to have us all back exactly where we belong!

As always, thank you for your ongoing support.

Clare