



Pride in ourselves,  
pride in our school,  
pride in our community.

High Street  
Arlesey  
Beds  
SG15 6SL  
Tel: 01462 732002  
Email: GMA-Office@bestacademies.org.uk

03 September 2020

Dear Parents,

We cannot wait to welcome your children back on Monday!

It's unusual to be writing to you out of term time but I'd like to address a few points which will help us kick the new school year off smoothly and safely.

I'd like to start (other than with the enthusiasm of my first sentence) by saying that I'm confident that what my staff and I have put in place for Monday means that it is safe enough for your children to return to school and resume their educational development. This aspect of their lives is crucial to their life chances and I am so pleased that we are in a position to resume their physical, creative and academic education. However, this will come second to supporting the wellbeing of the children after such a long period of absence. This period of absence will have been emotionally challenging for many children in many different ways so, with the support of our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator and Family Support Worker, we will be assessing any difficulties that may present themselves and planning to address these in partnership with you.

I think that we're lucky being a school for primary aged children as I believe that a lot of the measures that we need to put in place were already implemented during our lockdown provision from March and as a result of our partial reopening in June. We certainly won't face as many challenges as our secondary colleagues. As you can imagine, we will be following the Government's guidance strictly and will have the support of our Trust, BEST, in implementing these measures.

The following is a useful page which outlines to parents the Government's guidance for reopening [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term](#).

All arrangements that we put in place will be reviewed daily by the Senior Leadership Team for the first fortnight and then weekly after that. We have aimed to provide a safe environment with rigorous systems of cleanliness and hygiene which also does not impact learning and the smooth running of the school. This is no easy task though so we might have to change our approach as we go. We are confident that we have done what we need to so that the children will be safe to return but there will be processes and schedules that may need to be changed to improve our educational provision or the smooth running of the school.

#### How we have grouped children (bubbles)

As the government has released further guidance and instructions for the reopening of schools, the senior leadership team have deliberated at length how to group children at Gothic Mede Academy. Our aim was to keep children isolated in 'bubbles' as small as possible but, against this, we had to balance the practical implications and educational impact. With the size of our school, the staffing structure we have, and the way that we deliver our curriculum, grouping children in year group bubbles is the best way to minimise contact between children and staff and also deliver a smooth running school and high quality offer of education. This is the DfE's guidance on the matter:

"if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around the school, they can look to implement year group sized 'bubbles'"

#### What happens when a child or adult displays symptoms?

Again, on the matter of responding to any infection in the school community, we will strictly follow the government's guidance. There are clear flow charts displayed in school outlining this process which will be referred to by trained school staff should the need arise but the steps that we will take can be found at this link: [System of controls](#) under the section "Response to any infection".

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Acting Vice Principal: Amy Morris  
Chair of Governors: Jo Graves



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### Face masks in school

Under the same section of the guidance from the DfE, there is guidance on the use of face masks in school (point 2). We will be following this guidance, including where they state that, "Primary school children will not need to wear a face covering."

### Drop off and pick up times

As stated in the letter that I sent out at the end of the summer term, I include the timings for drop-offs and pick-ups below.

Class	Arrival	Arrival	Pick up	Pick up
Acorn	08:50	Back	15:20	Back
Ash	08:40	Back	15:10	Back
Oak	08:40	Front	15:10	Back
Beech	08:45	Back	15:15	Back
Elm	08:45	Front	15:15	Back
Willow	08:50	Back	15:20	Back
Maple	08:50	Front	15:20	Back
Sycamore	08:55	Back	15:25	Back
Chestnut	08:55	Front	15:25	Back
Birch	09:00	Back	15:30	Back
Hazel	09:00	Front	15:30	Back

At the back of the school, you will come into the Youth Club Playground through the gate marked 'ENTRANCE' on the floor and walk down to the crosses at the end of this area. These crosses are two metres apart. Children on the row at the front, when received, will be able to walk down to the gate where they will be greeted by their class teaching staff and taken to line up on the inner playground before the whole class, at the end of their five-minute slot, will be taken to their classroom. Parents should then walk to the right hand side of the playground and around to the gate marked 'EXIT' on the floor.

At the front of the school, we have much less space so we will need to be prompt with our timings of dropping off. You will see a set of crosses that indicate two metre makers and you should line up this way, away from the school. Please be considerate of those going into BEST Nursery. You will bring your child to the front door where they will be greeted by their class teaching staff and taken into the hall before the whole class, at the end of their five-minute slot, will be taken down to their classroom.

If you have children in different classes, all of them can be dropped off at the earlier drop off time, in the one location. The exception to this is Acorn Class. Please can all Acorn children be dropped off at their gate by the play park. You can do this between 8:50 and 9:00.

For all other classes, **it will be really important that you drop off and pick up your child in the 5 minute window that has been set for their class.** This is to avoid large groups gathering at any time and to enable staff and pupils to move to their classes, within their bubbles, avoiding contact with others. If you are early for a drop off you will be asked to wait for your child's allocated time and if you are late for a drop off there may be a chance that you will be asked to wait until the last drop off when there might be staff available to escort your child individually to their class. Please aim to not arrive early at the school site (or near the school site) and please leave the school site as soon as you have dropped off/picked up your child. We have been asked to pass on any concerns about gatherings of parents/visitors around the school site to the authorities if these end up taking place.

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### Uniform and kit (CHANGE TO POLICY!)

When they return, your child will need to be in their school uniform, bring in their book bag, and have a basic level of understanding of social distancing and hand washing.

Over the summer we reviewed our policy on PE kits.

**Reception: please can your child bring in their PE kit on Monday.** Children changing themselves is part of the Early Years curriculum which we have to deliver and assess, and it is always helpful to have a change of clothes for each child in Reception.

**Years 1 to 4: we now ask that your child does not bring in their PE kit on Monday but comes into school dressed in their PE kit on days when they have PE.** You will be informed of these days in the coming week or so. This is to reduce the risk of the virus spreading by avoiding busy cloakrooms of PE bags and through avoiding the transference of the virus between home and school.

Our policy on book bags remains the same: children should only bring in a Gothic Mede Academy book bag. This is so that it will fit in their drawer, out of the way.

### Labelling items

Please can you make sure that everything that your child brings into school is labelled. We are a large school of little children so things will go missing! Having items labelled will mean that they're more likely to return to you as soon as possible.

### Water bottles

Please can your child in with a water bottle so that they can stay hydrated throughout the day. We ask that this only has water in it as spillages (which will inevitably happen) are a lot easier to deal with and less sticky! If your child has a special educational need or disability which includes sensory problems, meaning that they are unable to drink water, please could you send an email into the office, marking it for the attention of your child's class teacher and this can then be passed onto all relevant staff.

### School dinners

We will be returning to providing hot school dinners for the children. These will be distributed by kitchen staff (who will be following 'Guidance for food businesses on coronavirus') to children who will stay at tables in the hall, in their bubbles. Ordering these for your child will happen in the same way as before.

### Messages about changes to pick up arrangements

Please can you contact the office by phone to inform them of any changes to pick up arrangements at the end of the day. The office staff will then confirm this with you. They will be reducing their movements around school so they will contact staff at lunchtime to inform them of these changed arrangements. We know that there are sometimes emergencies which require a last minute change but please can you inform us as soon as possible to help us with reducing unnecessary movement around school.

### Visitors to school

To protect our pupils and staff, we will continue to operate a policy of no unplanned visitors to school. This will include a prohibition on anyone 'popping in' to the school office. Please contact us through 01462 732002 or [GMA-Office@bestacademies.org.uk](mailto:GMA-Office@bestacademies.org.uk)

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I'd like to conclude by thanking you all again for the support that we have received since March and for the support and understanding that I'm sure we will continue to enjoy from our community. This doesn't mean that we don't want feedback on anything we're doing though so please, please, please contact us if you want to give any feedback - positive or otherwise - through the normal channels of communication. We find that more can be done when we're contacted directly rather than comments made on Facebook etc.!

Yours sincerely

Mr Thomas Clarke – Principal

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