

MAPLE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ST. ALBANS

4th September, 2018

Dear Parents,

The staff and I were pleased to welcome your children back to school today, after what I trust has been a relaxing and enjoyable Summer break. We hope that the academic year ahead will be a happy and successful one.

Staffing appointments

Following the successful completion of her post-graduate teacher training course, we welcome Miss Nikki Dowsell to the teaching staff (she will be teaching Year 3). We also welcome Mrs. Shanti Johnson, an experienced teacher, who will be returning to teach at Maple (she will be teaching Year 2J).

We are pleased to welcome the following new teaching assistants:

Fatheha Salam (working in Year 1); Oksana Yazdi (working in Year 3); Claire Hanscomb (SEN and mainstream) and Lucy Drummond (working in the Hearing Impaired Unit). All will also be undertaking lunchtime supervision duties.

Key dates for the term

A list of Key Dates for the term is attached to this letter. Further information about the various forthcoming events will be sent out in due course, as appropriate. Start of term newsletters from the class teachers, giving information about the work to be covered this term, along with general class-organisation arrangements, will be e-mailed to you on Friday this week (7th Sept).

Start of academic year Parents' Meetings

The times / dates for our traditional start of academic year parents' meetings are as follows:

Mon 10 Sept	Year 2 parents	2.30 – 3.10 p.m.
Tue 11 Sept	Year 4 parents	2.30 – 3.10 p.m.
Wed 12 Sept	Year 1 parents	2.30 – 3.10 p.m.
Thur 13 Sept	Year 5 parents	2.30 – 3.10 p.m.
	Year 6 parents	7.00 - 9.15 p.m.
Fri 14 Sept	Year 3 parents	2.30 – 3.10 p.m.

The parents' meetings will give you an opportunity to meet with your child's new teacher/s, find out more about the class routines and the year ahead; and ask questions.

Attendance

You will no doubt understand that as the Head Teacher I have a duty, along with the school governors, to promote the highest attendance levels possible. The school's attendance data is regularly scrutinised by the Local Authority and Ofsted and is one of the factors by which they measure the success of the school.

The academic progress of a child, whatever his/her level of academic ability, will be adversely affected if they miss school. Obviously if a child is clearly unwell then they should not come to school, but if, in addition, they have other time off school, then this will definitely have a detrimental affect on their progress. Children can also sometimes be quite unsettled upon their return to school after any time off.

For these reasons, taking holidays or days off in school time is not permitted except in exceptional circumstances. If you believe your circumstances may be exceptional, then please discuss your request with me before making final plans. I will review each request for absence carefully,

consulting with the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Officer where necessary, and give you my answer as soon as possible.

If a child has to miss school for a special family event, then ideally the time when they will miss the least academic work is during the last week of a term. Please note, however, that I am not advocating children being taken out of school early, as there are many special and enjoyable events taking place at the end of each term, although the detrimental impact on their academic progress will be lessened.

The overall attendance record of the vast majority of Maple pupils is excellent (last academic year for the whole school it was **97.10 %**), and I very much appreciate your support in respecting and adhering to the school's policy on attendance.

Class Assemblies / Presentations

Class Assemblies will be held by each class during the Spring or early Summer Term. The assemblies will usually take place on a Friday morning and you will be given advance notice about the dates.

The Yr 1 and Yr 2 Infant classes will be performing a Christmas Production for parents on the 11th, 12th and 13th of December; and the Reception class will be giving a Christmas Presentation to parents on the morning of 13th of December.

Our traditional Christmas Carol Service will be held at St. Peter's Church, on the afternoon of Monday 17th December at 2 p.m.

The Year 5 and 6 pupils will be taking part in an end of Summer Term musical production (July 2019).

Parent / Teacher Consultations

This year's parent/teacher consultation sessions will again be held in the weeks before the October and February half-term holidays.

This term the consultation sessions will be on Tuesday 23rd and Thursday 25th October and next term on Tuesday 12th and Thursday 14th February. The consultation sessions will all begin at 3.30 p.m. and end at 8 p.m. The final appointment on each evening will therefore be at 7.45 p.m.

Parents will have a third opportunity to meet formally with the teachers, if they wish, at the end of the academic year, to discuss the annual written report.

Parents of children who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs), due to their children's special educational needs, will, in addition, be invited to meet with the teachers on a termly basis, to review the progress their children are making with their IEP targets and to set new targets.

As I hope you are aware, we very much encourage an open door policy at the school, so if you have any queries or concerns during the course of the year, then do 'pop in' and see the class teachers or myself, or make an appointment if that is more suitable. It is usually more convenient to meet with the teachers after school, rather than just before school. Please do not arrive in a classroom to speak to a teacher at 8.50 when the school day starts, as they will be busy with registration in order to make a prompt start to lessons at 8.55. They are usually in their classrooms from 8.40 onwards. Please note that we have a weekly teachers' meeting after school, on either a Tuesday or a Thursday, so please try to avoid those days after school if possible.

Supervision of classes

If a teacher is out of school attending a training course, or is unexpectedly absent (e.g. due to ill health), then in the short-term her class will usually be taught by one of our Teaching Assistants

acting in the role of a Cover Supervisor. If a Cover Supervisor is taking the class, there will often be another Teaching Assistant present in the room as well.

As most of the cover for an absent teacher will be undertaken by staff at the school, or by one of our regular supply teachers, there will probably only be a few occasions, if any, when your child is taught by an adult they do not know; and this will hopefully ensure consistency and the maintenance of high standards in the classrooms.

As I explained in my letter at the end of last term, each teacher receives regular non-contact time, known as Planning, Preparation and Assessment time (PPA time), equivalent to approximately 10% of their regular teaching commitment. Details of the days when the teachers receive their PPA time, and the name of the teacher or Teaching Assistant covering the class during their absence, were given in my end of Summer Term letter. The teachers will confirm these arrangements at the parents' meetings and in their start of term newsletters.

Payment for class trips

During the course of the year the teachers may organise various class trips for the children, relating to aspects of each particular year group's work. They are usually very beneficial and enjoyable occasions. These trips are, though, dependent on voluntary contributions being paid by parents in order to fund them. (The school does not seek to make a 'profit' from the trips.) However, I appreciate that, on certain occasions, some parents may find difficulty in paying the full amount for a trip. If this is the case, then please feel free to discuss the matter with me, in confidence, prior to the trip taking place. This policy also applies to the Summer Term residential visits for the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

For those families on low incomes who are entitled to Pupil Premium Funding, the cost of trips will be paid for by the school, using this funding.

Re:Play Breakfast and After School Club

Re:play Breakfast & After School Club is based in the school dining hall. Due to strict safeguarding & OFSTED requirements, whilst Re:play are in operation (either before or after school hours), we kindly ask ALL parents/carers & children not to walk through the Dining Hall, but instead to walk round the building to access classrooms. Your help is very much appreciated in this matter.

Parents dropping off and collecting from Re:play may park in the school car park before 8 a.m. and after 4.30 p.m. but should not use the car park in-between these times.

Collection from After-School Clubs

Parents are requested to collect their children from Re:play and the other after-school clubs by the Junior Entrance door in the playground and not from the Main Reception entrance to the school. The club leaders have been advised to hand over the children to parents by the Junior entrance door, or to go to the door to advise parents when they can come to the hall to collect their child. Please therefore wait by the Junior entrance door when collecting and not by the doors to the hall.

Pupils with allergies / special diets

Please remember that if a child has an allergy (or develops one) which will affect the food they can be served at lunchtimes, it is the parents' responsibility to provide the school with information and evidence regarding their child's needs. Medical evidence could be a letter from a GP or a consultant confirming the condition. You will need to provide the evidence to Herts Catering Ltd via their website. Please speak to the office if you require further information.

General reminders

Please note that school starts at 8.50 a.m. when the whistle will blow for the children to enter school. Please ensure that your child is in the playground at this time, allowing sufficient time for your journey to school, so that a prompt start can be made. However, as the playground is not supervised before 8.40 a.m., I would ask that children do not arrive at school before this time. If it is a rainy day, then Mr. Meek, our Site Manager, or I will open the doors at 8.40 a.m.

Any children arriving late after the whistle has blown, (after 8.50 a.m.), need to enter school via the main school office and their parents/carers must sign them in, giving a reason for their lateness.

For safety reasons, please do not allow your children, or any pre-school children, to play on any of the climbing apparatus / outdoor gym equipment or to go on the field, either before or after school. From 3.15 p.m. onwards the children are not supervised, unless they are attending an after school activity. Please therefore collect your children promptly at 3.15 p.m. and do not let them play unsupervised in the playground after school. Older children who are walking home by themselves should leave promptly at 3.15 p.m. and not play unsupervised in the playground.

If an older child walks to school by themselves then they may bring a mobile phone to school which should be handed in to the class teachers at the start of the day. Such phones are expected to remain switched off at all times, including in the playground before and after school.

Children may play on the Top Playground using tennis balls (not footballs) between 8.40 and 8.50 a.m. They are not allowed on there after school, however, unless attending an after-school club.

For health benefits and due to the congestion in the roads around the school, we strongly encourage parents and pupils to walk to school wherever possible. Children may also use cycles / scooters and leave them in the cycle racks provided. The children are welcome to use the perimeter running track for an early morning jog before school starts, if they arrive in sufficient time.

Please do not allow your children to walk through the car park on their way into or from school. Children should access the school only through the two pedestrian gates. This is particularly important, as there are a number of taxis, for our unit pupils, entering and leaving the car park at the beginning and end of the school day.

Due to the very limited space available, parents should not park in the car park, unless they are coming in to help in class or attend a meeting. Parents must also not drive into the car park at the beginning or end of the school day to drop off or pick up children, or use it for turning cars round. If you do park in the car park, it may well be necessary to 'block' someone else in. If that is the case, please advise the office staff of the situation when you arrive. All parents visiting school must sign the visitors' book when they arrive, to ensure we always have a precise record of who is in school at any particular time.

A reminder that if the Junior children bring in a mid-morning snack it should be a healthy one and consist of a small plain biscuit, a piece of fruit or something similar. Crisps, chocolate biscuits and sweets are not acceptable. The Infant children will continue to receive a 'free' piece of fruit or a vegetable at break time each morning - with any leftovers being given to the Juniors the following day. No food containing nuts should be brought into school, either for a mid-morning snack or for a packed lunch.

If the children have notes/envelopes for the school office, these can be handed to their class teacher at the start of the day, rather than the children coming in early to go to the office. Envelopes for the office can also be placed in the postage box in the entrance lobby. Please ensure that all envelopes are clearly labelled (name + class).

When paying for activities or other bills, we would strongly encourage you do so using our School Gateway on-line payments system. If, however, you have to make a cash payment, then this must be delivered in person to the office, rather than cash being given to the class teachers, and a receipt will be issued upon request.

If your child is unwell please always inform the school office by 9 a.m. This can be done by e-mail if you wish. The address is admin@maple.herts.sch.uk. Mrs. Stanley or Mrs. Doidge will check the e-mails shortly after 9 a.m. The Local Authority's School Health department advises that if a child has been physically sick and/or has had diarrhoea, he/she be kept at home for a period of **48 hours**, to prevent the spreading of infections. Children should also be kept off school if they show any flu' like symptoms.

We will endeavour to contact the parents of any pupils who have not attended school, and for whom we have not been notified of their being absent, soon after 9 a.m. Therefore, please let the office staff know of any absence before 9 a.m. to save Mrs. Stanley or Mrs. Doidge from having to make a call.

The year ahead ...

Finally, the staff and I very much look forward to working in partnership with you this year. We hope that your child makes good academic progress, develops his/her social skills and, most importantly, enjoys school.

I will quite often be in the playground at the beginning or end of the day and I look forward to meeting many of you on these occasions, at one of the October consultation sessions or at the Christmas Production performances.

Yours sincerely,

Timothy Bowen
Headteacher