

# St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



6 November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families enjoyed the half term break – it was a shame the weather could not have been kinder! However, the weather has been much better for us during the first week back and has allowed us to make use of our open spaces at lunchtime and before school.

As we start the second half of the autumn term, I am writing to you following the government's latest National announcement in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. As you will be aware many industries and businesses have now started a second period of closure, however, schools will remain open to all pupils. Our attendance last term was very strong from all year groups – in fact the data shows attendance figures in line with this time last year which given the circumstances is excellent. I want to reassure you that sending your child to school during this second lockdown is really important for their mental health and wellbeing and I am confident that the procedures we have in place are strong and robust.

Since the wider reopening of schools in September, we have been following a strict and rigorous risk assessment, which we are continually evaluating. An updated version following the publication of guidance for schools by the government on Wednesday will be on the website early next week. We are very pleased with how well pupils, staff and parents coped with the changes last half term, such as the individual year group bubbles, staggered entries and dismissals and a strong emphasis on handwashing and sanitising procedures.

The purpose of this letter is to give some notices and reminders for the start of this half term as we continue to offer the best possible education to your child, whilst giving the highest priority to their safety and the safety of the wider school community.

## **Face Coverings**

As you know pupils and staff in the secondary phase are now required to wear face coverings whilst in internal communal areas such as the dining room, when walking between lessons, in corridors, or going to the toilets. They will not require masks in lessons or when eating but we understand that some pupils feel more comfortable and confident wearing them most of the time and this will continue to be permitted if parents contact their child's Director of Learning. Please can I urge all parents and carers to ensure that when their child leaves home they have several face coverings with them as they are required to use a different one in school to any used on public transport. Can you also ensure your child washes their face coverings when they arrive home so they are clean and dry ready for the next morning.

## **Transport**

As per the government expectation we ask that you encourage your child to walk or cycle to the academy to avoid public transport if possible. We understand that many of you will want to drop your child to school – please try to arrive at the correct time for dropping off your child so that you do not need to wait at the gate. If you are early, please follow government guidance on social distancing.

The government have reiterated that any child over the age of 11 needs to wear a face mask on public transport so all pupils will need to have these available if travelling this way. In order to comply with guidelines and to manage pupil bubbles, we will be asking all pupils to go straight home with no more than one other person and not to visit the local shops and/or take away outlets in the area. Please could all parents and carers emphasise the importance of this expectation.

## School uniform

Standards of school uniform continue to be very high at the Academy and I thank all parents for their support with this. Any uniform infringements will be strongly challenged this half term to ensure we continue to keep the very highest standards and this also includes the requirement for all pupils in the secondary phase to wear their lanyard and ID. Please ensure your child is well prepared for cold and wet weather, we recommend a warm waterproof coat (dark blue or black only) and umbrella. As you know the importance of well-ventilated classrooms cannot be understated. Unfortunately, this does mean some of our classrooms are on the chilly side so you may want to encourage your child to wear an extra thin layer (or two) underneath their normal uniform.

## Online Learning

You will be aware that unfortunately we have required some pupils to isolate in response to positive cases. In the event that your child may require a period of isolation we ask that your child is prepared to access lessons online. Please do contact us if you have any concerns regarding access or understanding of the online learning protocols. The link to instructions can be found here: [secondary](#) and [primary](#). If you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to contact the school via your child's Director of Learning or Class teacher

## Confirmed Cases

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should remain at home for at least 10 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. They should be tested and the academy kept up to date with their condition and test result. If the test result is negative and they feel well enough they may return to school before the 10-day isolation period ends.

All other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should be taken within the home.

## Symptoms of COVID 19

- The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:
- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

We know that the latest Lockdown news will have been concerning and caused some difficulties for many families and we want you to know that we are here to help and support in any way we can. Last term it was fabulous to have our pupils back at school where they belong, learning, thriving and enjoying school again and it is important that we work together to ensure they continue to stay safe whilst continuing to receive a first class education. We will continue to communicate any updates as and when we receive them from DFE and we continue to pray that everyone in the SMA community remain safe and well during these most challenging of times.

Yours faithfully



**Ms M Baldwin**  
**Headteacher**

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