

St Matthew Academy

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

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



10 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I write this letter during the penultimate week of the autumn term at the Academy. It has been a different but interesting preparation for the festive season at SMA with a range of virtual and face to face events being planned. As is tradition, primary pupils and staff across the school will be donning their Christmas jumpers on Friday to raise money for Save the Children Charity and once again our staff Giving Tree has seen many generous donations from staff - these will be distributed to local families by the Salvation Army. Pupils in the primary have been polishing off their performances for the Early Years and KS1 Nativity and the KS2 Christmas Carol Service. I am looking forward to watching these events virtually this year and hope that our parents, friends and families will enjoy these too from the comfort of their own homes.

Next week the catering team are preparing a traditional Christmas dinner over the course of three days. All pupils and staff are invited to take part in this event free of charge, and we look forward to pupils being able to pull their crackers, wear the party hat and sing along to a range of festive songs in their year group bubbles with staff watching over from a 2m distance!

You may be aware from media coverage that on Tuesday the government shared a last minute announcement regarding the end of term for schools. In consultation with governors we have decided to adopt this advice so instead of pupils finishing for Christmas at lunchtime on Friday they will **now finish on Thursday 17th December**. I apologise for the late notice regarding this change but I hope you understand the reason why we have only been able to inform you today. Pupils in the primary phase will finish at the normal time on Thursday and pupils in the secondary phase will be dismissed between 2.15 and 2.30pm. If these arrangements will result in childcare challenges for you on Friday, please contact your child's class teacher or form tutor so that we can support with alternative arrangements.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of a number of changes we are making to start and finish times for pupils at the Academy. Since the wider reopening of schools in September, we have been following a strict and rigorous risk assessment, which we are continually evaluating. We have been very pleased with how well pupils, staff and parents/carers have coped with the changes such as the individual year group bubbles, staggered entries and dismissals, minimal movement during the day and a strong emphasis on handwashing and sanitising procedures. Now that these procedures are embedded into everyday routines we feel we are in a position to start to align the school day for all pupils - this will support parents and older siblings with drop off and pick up; in the secondary phase allow us to start the day with form time/assembly for all pupils and also enable us to bring back more intervention, enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The table indicates the start and finish times we will be adopting from Tuesday 5th Jan 2021.

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Successful, confident learners High expectations, outstanding achievements Inclusive, caring, Catholic community Nurturing talent, cultivating ambition Excellence for all

Year	Start time	Dismissal time
Reception	9.15am	3.30pm
Year 1	9.15am	3.30pm
Year 2	9.15am	3.30pm
Year 3	9.00am	3.15pm
Year 4	9.00am	3.15pm
Year 5	9.00am	3.15pm
Year 6	9.00am	3.15pm
Year 7	8.35am	2.55pm
Year 8	8.45am	3.05pm
Year 9	8.35am	2.55pm
Year 10	8.45am	3.05pm
Year 11	8.50am	3.10pm

Please could I urge all parents and carers to ensure their children arrive on time for school. Traffic remains a challenge in the local area so it is vital that pupils leave home with plenty of time to spare. Where possible pupils should walk or cycle to the Academy however we realise that many of our pupils must access buses and or trains to get to school. The wearing of face coverings is compulsory on public transport (and should also be worn while waiting at the bus stop) and these coverings must not be used on the school site and instead stored safely for use on the journey home. In order to prevent unnecessary bus use in the morning secondary pupils will not be permitted to use the bus stop outside the bowling alley in Lewisham as it is only two stops to our site. Like-wise at the end of the day only those students needing to use the 54 bus to go beyond Lewisham should use the bus stop opposite St Joseph's Vale. Pupils will be asked not to use the 89 and 108 buses as these only travel two stops and terminate in Lewisham.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of reports of anti-social behaviour in the local community involving some of our pupils over the last half term. The vast majority of pupils follow expectations and behave in a responsible and sensible manner to and from the Academy. When staff are out on patrol this is overwhelmingly what they see – pupils that make them feel very proud. However, there remains a small group of pupils that are continuing to bring the reputation of the Academy into disrepute due to their behaviour in the local area, takeaway shops and on the buses. I expect all pupils to go straight home after school and would like to remind you that, as in previous years, pupils should not be using Blessington Road as a short cut through to Lee High Road. Please could you ensure that your child is not in Lewisham town centre after 3.45pm. Of course this is of vital importance given the current Tier 2 restrictions we are all living under.

Finally, I am really pleased to report that we will not be saying farewell to any of the teaching staff at the end of this term. This means your child will be returning in the New Year to the same teachers they have been working with this term. This is a fabulous position for us to be in and it is very unusual for a school not to have any teachers moving on. This is great news for SMA pupils and I believe it is because of our hardworking, polite and well behaved pupils that we are in this fortunate position.

We do however say goodbye to one of our primary teaching assistants – Maria Bertos-Rubio. I would like to thank her for everything she has done to support our primary pupils. I would also like to welcome Melissa Pink to the SMA team – she will be joining the secondary RE Department and brings with her some strong experience from a local secondary school.

As we approach the end of term and the end of 2020 I am sure parents, carers and pupils will want to join me in thanking the amazing staff team at SMA. This has been the most difficult of years for everyone but I could not be prouder of the staff at SMA. Their professionalism, care and commitment to the pupils they teach has shone bright during challenging times. Pupils return to **the Academy for learning on Tuesday 5th January 2020** but in the meantime, please look out for edition 3 of our SMA News published on Friday and letters for each year group and for primary pupils with more details regarding the specific changes next term for your own child.

Wishing you a safe, restful Christmas and peace throughout the year.

Yours faithfully,



Ms M Baldwin
Headteacher