

St Matthew Academy

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

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



10 May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families remain well and that you are enjoying the improving weather and the opportunity to be out and about a bit more. I would like to thank the parents and carers of secondary phase children that are regularly using the Covid 19 self-test kits at home as this is helping us all to keep safe. Your child can collect additional kits from school and families can access tests by following the instructions [here](#). As you know the Government is now encouraging everyone to take these tests. This is helping everyone in the community to stay safe and will speed up the easing of restrictions.

The pupils have made a great start since returning back after Easter and it is very pleasing to see that everyone is following the latest advice: Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air. The wearing of face masks for secondary pupils will continue until at least May 17th. However, I do have a couple of concerns regarding slipping standards of uniform from some pupils and also levels of punctuality across the Academy and I wish to address these in my letter today.

When pupils returned to school after the recent lockdown there were a number of pupils who had grown out of their uniform and with the shops still shut it wasn't as easy as normal to go shopping for new items. We therefore gave pupils some leeway, however, it is now time to re-establish our high standards of uniform for all. SMA pupils are known for wearing their uniform with pride and visitors to the school always comment on how smart and well-dressed our pupils are. Please could I ask all parents and carers to support with our drive to ensure pupils have the correct uniform: in particular, our primary phase pupils should wear plain black trainers or shoes only and summer dresses should be blue checked. In the secondary phase pupils should arrive at school in their blazers wearing their lanyards and IDs and girls choosing to wear black trousers must ensure they are of a loose fitting, tailored style. Now the weather is getting warmer coats are not normally necessary however pupils should not wear a hoody or tracksuit style top instead. Please see our latest newsletter for more detailed expectations regarding uniform.

Further to my letter dated 22nd March we have not noticed much of an improvement in traffic in St Joseph's Vale. Roads in the area are becoming increasingly busy as are the buses now that other businesses have now reopened. As well as the difficulties this causes outside of school it is also leading to an increase in the number of pupils arriving late to school. Please be aware of the following key messages that will help keep everyone safe:

- If pupils live a short distance from SMA, we are encouraging all to walk or cycle to and from school wherever it is possible and safe to do – this means no pupils should be catching a bus to school from central Lewisham as it is much quicker and easier to walk up Belmont Hill
- Avoid sharing a car with anyone outside of your household or support bubble and if you must drive please park with respect to other drivers and pedestrians
- If you or your child is using public transport, plan ahead and allow more time for your journey – buses are frequently delayed and gridlocked in the area so set aside an extra 30 minutes
- When you are travelling by public or dedicated school transport, don't forget to:
 - Wear a face covering (unless you are exempt – including if you are aged 11 and under) - it is important they are worn for the entirety of your journey, including inside a bus or train station
 - Social distance where possible
 - Wash or sanitise your hands regularly
 - be considerate to fellow passengers and transport staff.

The new Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza recently launched [The Big Ask](#) – the largest ever consultation with children aged 4 to 17 in England. It aims to find out children's concerns and aspirations about the

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future, so that we can put children at the heart of our country's recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. All pupils at SMA will be taking part in the survey and in return we will be sent a special report for St Matthew Academy, as well as helping in the National effort. Parents, care leavers and those working with children are also invited to complete the adult survey to share their views about the future for children and young people today, and what they think is holding young people back. I would be extremely grateful if you could also take part in the survey [here](#). The results from both surveys will help the Children's Commissioner identify the barriers preventing children from reaching their potential, put forward solutions and set ambitious goals for the country to achieve.

Unfortunately, there have been some shocking stories at a national level in the media about sexual abuse and harassment in different parts of the country. At SMA we have a highly skilled and praised Child Protection and Safeguarding team. If you have any concerns please find more details and contact numbers on our [website](#). The NSPCC has also asked schools to remind you of the dedicated DfE helpline set up just before Easter. This is designed both to give reassurance and counselling to young people affected by sexual abuse or harassment, and also to allow them to report criminal acts that have occurred against them. Details about the helpline are available [here](#).

We are aware that in many St Matthew Academy families the main income earners have not been able to work or have been made redundant as a result of the Pandemic. If you need any support in applying for Free School Meals or if you need support with financial issues please do not hesitate to get in contact with the school office (info@stmatthewacademy.co.uk) and someone will get in touch with you to find out how we can help. Please note that not only do you benefit from free school meals, but the school also receives additional money to support the learning and care for your child in school.

We break up for the holidays on Friday 28th May for a week long half term and the second half of the summer term begins on Monday 7th June. **Pupils in the secondary phase will have an early close on Tuesday 8th June** to enable our secondary teachers to finalise year 11 Teacher Assessment Grades before submitting them to exam boards at the end of the week. **Pupils will be dismissed at 1.50pm**. If this causes difficulties for any parents and carers please email the school office (info@stmatthewacademy.co.uk) and we will then make arrangements to supervise them on the Academy site.

Thank you again for all of your ongoing support.

Yours faithfully,



Ms M Baldwin
Headteacher