

St Matthew Academy

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

Headteacher: Ms Miranda Baldwin

Head of Primary: Ms Joanna Chick



14 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As we come to the end of the final term of 2019/20 we will look back on this academic year as being the strangest of a lifetime. If told at the start of the year there would be a global shutdown of school systems across the world that would last for many months, I don't think any headteacher would have believed it. If then told that GCSE, A Level and KS2 SATs were going to be cancelled every headteacher in the UK would have said 'it will never happen!' How wrong we all would have been.

Without a doubt it has been a roller coaster of a year. It started when, for the 2nd year in a row, our year 11 pupils outshone their peers in Lewisham by achieving a fabulous set of GCSE results. Our year 6 pupils did not want to be outshone either – we were so proud of the writing scores that placed SMA top of the primary progress league table and in the top 10 for maths. Next came the long awaited Ofsted in October – we were one of the first secondary schools in the country to be inspected under the new more challenging framework and were so pleased when our judgements were validated by Ofsted and we were finally recognised as a 'good' school after 3 years of intense work. SMA was a school that never closed but school life from March 16th became very different when the government introduced shielding for some. We officially closed to all pupils except vulnerable children and the children of critical workers on Friday March 20th and in the last 13 school weeks and a further 3 school holiday weeks' life at SMA has been far from normal. However, some things have not changed. Firstly, the commitment of our staff team at SMA has been unstinting. Secondly our pupils have continued to keep us motivated and smiling – both in the virtual world and when they have returned to school. Their resilience, commitment to remote learning and desire to continue to get involved in school life has been a joy. Parents have given us amazing support, sending messages of appreciation and trusting us to keep their children safe and the commitment received from governors regarding the decisions we have made remains as supportive but challenging as ever.

Plans for the new academic year are now in place and we cannot wait to have all pupils back on site in a safe and secure environment. For the last two weeks all staff have been working at the academy and this has given us the chance to review all the protective measures and make improvements based on staff feedback. As you know we have also taken the opportunity to have every SMA pupil attend the Academy for at least part of a day – this has been a great opportunity to check in with pupils, review home learning and offer wellbeing support. Of course it also means that when pupils come back in September they will be familiar with some of the new protective measures in place and this should help ease any potential anxieties.

School in September will be different for us all: pupils, staff and parents. The DFE guidance for full opening of schools makes it clear that we **must** *minimise the number of contacts that a pupil has during the school day*. This means there will be staggered starts and finishes for all year groups; lunches will be staggered; KS3 pupils will be taught in the same group throughout the day and secondary pupils will remain in zones within the building. We are adamant that we are not prepared to compromise the education our pupils will receive so they will continue to study the full range of subjects with some adaptations and our cycle of assessment and progress checks will go ahead as planned.

At the end of this letter you will find full details of the system of controls that will be in place at SMA to reduce the risk of transmission and to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff. You will also be receiving another letter regarding the detailed provisions for each pupil depending on their year group – this will outline the arrangements for starting school in September and also for the new times of the day for each year group. Please ensure you read this letter carefully and contact the school if there is anything you are unsure of.

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Normally at this time of the year we would be busy with the full range of school activities: performances, reward trips, celebrations events, end of year services and Mass, sports day and so on – the list is endless. I'm pleased that much of this is still taking place albeit mostly in the virtual world. Do take time to watch the year 6 performance - I haven't seen it yet but am eagerly awaiting the first screening tomorrow! It will be followed by the year 6 family picnic - all socially distanced of course. For the first time ever in the history of the Academy we will have over 85% of our year 6 pupils moving into year 7 – I am so delighted that SMA families are demonstrating their confidence in us as the perfect place for their child's secondary education. For the second year in a row our year 7 cohort will be full with 180 pupils and an ever growing waiting list. Likewise, admissions into the reception phase at SMA are also booming – Ms Chick is over the moon to have two full reception classes joining us in September!

At this time of year in schools we say farewell to staff that are moving on. Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to say congratulations and farewell to Ms Simpson, Religious Education teacher. Ms Simpson is retiring this summer after giving over 40 years of service to education in a range of schools across London. SMA was very lucky to have her during the last 4 years of her teaching career and we wish her all the best for an exciting and well-travelled retirement. Sadly, Ms Jones – PE teacher will also be leaving us after 3 years at SMA. She has secured a well-deserved promotion to a Director of Learning position in a local school and we wish her all the best in her new role. Mr Hopkins and Mr Atkins, two of our current house leaders are also moving on. Mr Hopkins joined us as an Art NQT two years ago and has now secured a promotion to another London school and Mr Atkins is relocating out of London after 3 years at SMA. Three members of staff – Miss Looker, Miss Nwanokwai and Mr Brown have successfully completed their teacher training courses with us and will be spending time teaching overseas or relocating. Ms Chandler will not be returning from maternity leave having made the decision to spend more time at home with her young family and in the primary phase Miss Pedersen our year 1 teacher is moving to another London school. Parents and carers will be pleased to know that although we have a few teaching staff leaving we will start the new academic year in September 2020 fully staffed. Once again I am delighted we have been able to recruit high quality staff eager to join the SMA team on our exciting journey to being a *great* school at the heart of our local community.

At the end of another successful, albeit very different school year I am sure parents, carers and pupils will want to join me in thanking all the staff for their continued hard work and commitment to ensure all pupils at SMA '*let their light shine*' and are the best they can be. I wish all of our families a safe and restful summer break and look forward to all of our pupils returning to school in September – we can't wait to have everyone back!

Yours sincerely



Ms M Baldwin
Headteacher

The system of prevention controls in place at SMA follow the DFE Guidance for the full opening of schools and can be found [here](#). Essentially they can be summarised as follows:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

What is a SMA Year group bubble?

- Pupils in each year group will be able to mix with each other but must not come into contact with pupils from another year group – therefore year groups will start and finish at different times of the day and lunchtimes will be staggered
- Reception, KS1, KS2 & KS3 pupils will spend most of their time in one classroom with minimal movement throughout the day
- Primary pupils will have the same teacher and TA each day
- KS3 pupils will have the full range of subject teachers but will be taught in the same ability groups for all lessons
- KS4 pupils will move between classrooms in mostly in one zone of the building
- Class sizes will be as normal (ranging between 15 to 28 depending on the year groups and subject)
- Children will work in well ventilated rooms – they will be spread out in the room making full use of all available space
- Pupils should arrive with all equipment and books they need for the day
- Bags, coats etc. should be kept to a minimum as there will be no storage
- Pupils must wear full uniform – this does not need to be cleaned any more often than usual and should be cleaned using normal cleaning methods
- Lunch spaces, PE changing rooms and other specialist rooms will be thoroughly cleaned between use by different year groups
- There will be a limited lunch service (for KS2 – 4 the focus will be on *grab and go* items such as hot paninis, sandwiches, hot pasta and rice pots, salad boxes etc.)

Will my child be socially distanced?

- Children will not be socially-distanced in school but they *must* remain socially distanced from adults
- For children old enough they should maintain distance and not touch staff and peers where possible
- Pupils will be sat side by side facing forwards to support distancing
- Pupils will only come into contact with pupils from their own year group.

Face coverings

- Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in school but this evidence will be kept under review
- Face coverings are not required in schools as pupils and staff are mixing in consistent groups, and because misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission
- Face coverings are required at all times on public transport (for children over the age of 11)
- Face coverings must be removed when pupils arrive at school – they can dispose temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them

When will my child come to school

- Your child will attend school every day in the new term once they have completed their induction day
- Please read separate letter regarding induction date and start time/finish for your child

- Attendance is compulsory for all pupils – please contact your child’s class teacher or Director of Learning if you envisage difficulties with this
- There will be a staggered start for pupils to enable them to travel safely to the Academy -please ensure your child travels to school alone and does not meet up with friends on the way to school.

Arrival and dismissal from school

- All pupils will sanitize their hands on entering the gate and frequently throughout the day
- Primary pupils will use the pavement to the left as you walk down St Joseph’s Vale and will enter the school through the pedestrian entrance into the car park (car park will not be in use during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal)
- Secondary pupils will use the pavement to the right as you walk down St Joseph’s Vale, will cross at the zebra crossing and will enter the school through the normal pupil entrance
- We understand that staggered starts and finishes will be more difficult for families with siblings – we will make arrangements to supervise any pupils that may need to arrive earlier or stay later to wait for a sibling.

As a parent how can I help?

- If your child has coronavirus symptoms or someone else in their household does, they should not attend school
- Symptoms are: a new continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell
- Ensure your child has washed their hands before leaving in the morning and on arriving home
- Ensure your child is on time for the staggered start to the day
- If you are bringing your child to school please drop and go, and do not stop and chat outside the gates
- At pick up time please be prompt but socially distance from others while waiting
- Send any messages for teachers via the school office phone number/email rather than when picking up your child – the reception will not be open to parents

What will the Academy do if there is a suspected COVID-19 case?

- We have a separate ventilated isolation room (not the medical room) which will only be used for suspected cases
- The child will be supervised by an adult who will wear PPE equipment if a distance of 2m cannot be maintained
- The parent will be called to come and collect the child
- The child should be tested - a test should be booked immediately online [here](#)
- The school should be notified immediately of the test result.

What happens if there is a confirmed case?

- The child/staff member who has COVID 19 would self isolate for 7 days, with rest of household isolating for 14 days
- The Lewisham Public Health team will advise on action to be taken by the Academy including who must be sent home to self-isolate
- All families must engage with the NHS Test and Trace process ([here](#))

Do you or your child need someone to talk to?

- If during the holiday period pupils feel they need some support or help, then this can be accessed via
- <https://www.kooth.com/> - this great website offers free, safe and anonymous support
- If parents want to access to online support <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/> can offer this.
- If has a family you requires support you can contact Lewisham directly by telephone 020 8314 3940 or email FIS@lewisham.gov

Safeguarding

- If during the holiday period you have a non-urgent safeguarding issue, please email ayo@stmatthewacademy.co.uk
- If something is urgent, you can contact MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) on 020 8314 6660 or the police on 999.

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