

Dear Parents and Carers,

CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL DAY NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR (SEPTEMBER 2024)

As of September 2024, schools are 'expected' to deliver a 32.5-hour week, from registration to collection. We already have a 'soft start' from 8:40 a.m. During which time children come in and access planned activities in class with registration at 9:00 a.m. To meet this expectation fully, however, we need to add 15 mins to each day. Therefore, from September 2024, we will be taking registers at 8:50 a.m. and having just a 10 minute 'soft start'. Children will still be welcome into school at 8:40, but we will be closing doors and registering the class 10 minutes earlier. At the end of the day, we will add the remaining 5 minutes (10mins for Class 1) and classes will come out at 3:20 p.m. We plan to keep the arrangements that KS1 are collected on the playground and will wait with KS2 siblings until parents make their way around to the front of the school.

ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS

This may seem very early to let you know about this change for September, but it ties in with the next part of our drive towards improving attendance, which, as I explained at the start of the Spring Term, continues to be an issue nationally, with Birch following a similar trend. Our yearly attendance, pre-COVID, was generally around 96%, which is very good. It is now lurking around 94%, which, although fine within the National picture, does not reflect well, given other statistics around our school. Last term's 'ATTENDANCE STRATEGY' document, focused on decreasing the 'Unauthorised absences' which, as I explained previously affects ALL the children in the class. In that document, I shared this quote from OFSTED'S new chief inspector, which bears repeating:

"Teaching is a tremendously difficult job, and it's even more difficult if you have a class of 30 and five are absent one day and five another day, that becomes really disruptive not just for that child's learning but for all the children in that class."

Similarly, lateness affects the smooth start of the day and is disruptive. In addition, children can become quite anxious about coming in late to school, as they do not come in via their usual entrance, but need to come in via the office. Despite a friendly welcome from our office staff, they can find coming in at a different time to everyone else quite difficult. Sometimes we know that this is unavoidable – roadworks and inexplicable traffic lights happen to staff as well as families – but, with a change in school hours approaching in September, some may want to use the Summer Term to 'practice' the new hours. It's a great time to develop new morning routines as we are just beginning our summertime hours and the mornings are lighter and warmer...from our side of things, we will do our best to get them out on time. Sometimes it can be very difficult to have all the children ready at the same time to come out, but, like you, we will 'practice'.

GUIDANCE ON ILLNESS

Finally, Mrs Bayles regularly puts NHS guidance on our updates about when children can and cannot come into school. The 48 hours after sickness or stomach upset is standard, but there is some flexibility with other symptoms – staff can administer medicines, with written permission, if needed, which can just help a child stay in school or come back to school a bit earlier. They may not feel 100%, but will have some benefit from just being here and following the sequence of learning. Of course, they should be at home if they are feeling really unwell, but please refer to the guidance below if you have not yet seen it.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

It was lovely to welcome all the children back yesterday after, what I hope was, a refreshing break for everyone. The summer term is notoriously busy with many sports fixtures and Sports Day, The Fete, KS2 show, Y6 leavers and various trips. Please keep looking at the updates, we will endeavour to share any dates with our as soon as we have them, even if the exact times and details have not been fully planned. With such a lot going on in addition to normal lessons, tuition and clubs, it is very easy to 'drop a ball'. Please come and talk to us early if you have any concerns or can see any conflicts that we have not yet noticed!

Best wishes

Rebekah May

