



Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## **Headteacher's Newsletter – September 2020**

Welcome back! I would like to wish everyone a welcome return to Saint Ambrose Barlow for the beginning of the new school year. It is just so fantastic having all of the children back together under our roof. It is truly the highlight of my day seeing them coming in each morning smiling and happy. We have missed them all so much, and although these are not ideal circumstances, it is just so wonderful to be together again.

I have waited to allow everyone to settle in before writing this, and I realise it is a packed newsletter so please bear with me as it is all important information.

### **News & Events**

#### **Meet the Teacher**

As this is a brave new world, our traditional meet the teacher sessions cannot currently be held in the usual way. I hope that all parents have been able to access the Meet the Teacher' presentations that your child's new teacher have loaded onto Seesaw. If you have been unable to access these presentations or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact. These meetings are usually an opportunity to meet your child's teacher and for them to work through the overview of the year and class expectations. The presentations should at least, in part, give parents some insight into the year ahead for each of the year groups.

#### **Seesaw**

Each year group will have a new Seesaw group for their class and as such new codes should have been sent home to families. I am sure that you have enjoyed seeing the learning which has been shared so far already this year, and I know there will be plenty more to come. Seesaw allows not only for homework and examples of work to be shared but also afford families the opportunity to directly contact their child's teacher. During this period while our arrangements for drop offs and collections are so restricted this line of communication will be key. I would ask that families are mindful that teachers also have their own home commitments and they are not messaged late in the evenings. I know that many of the staff can't help themselves when they hear the ping of a new Seesaw message and feel compelled to address the message immediately. We have an extremely dedicated staff and I am mindful that these out of hours communications take them away from their families. I would ask that all families bear this in mind when sending messages via the platform, and that replies may not always be immediate.

There are two versions of Seesaw that families will have access to, both with their own use and separate login details. They are as follows:

***Seesaw Pupil App*** – This app is centred on pupil access and is designed for activities and challenges to be completed and uploaded directly by the pupils themselves. This is where teachers will load activities for the children to work on including home learning challenges and tasks. This app should be downloaded onto a device that the child has access to, and allows the children to upload and annotate their work.

***Seesaw Family App*** – This app allows parents to view the work that their child has completed or shared in their account. Through this app parents will be able to see only their own children's work, and will be able to comment and message their child's teacher directly. It is advised that this app is kept on a parent's device such as a phone or personal tablet.

## **Parents' Evenings**

As you might imagine, physical parent/teacher meetings will not be possible this term. We are currently working on an alternative, which will most likely be telephone call appointments. Appointments would still be booked in the usual manner via ParentMail, and be given an allocated time slot in the usual way. We feel that this option will be the most straightforward to arrange for all families and will allow teachers the opportunity to feedback to parents how their children have settled in to the new school year and are progressing in their work.

## **PTA**

Our incredible PTA have been working tirelessly behind the scenes trying to create a programme of possible events which can be arranged even under the current restrictions. The first PTA linked activity, the clothes drop off worked extremely well and raised £46.60 through the generous donations made by families. It is felt this was a useful experience for families and the discussion has been had regarding arranging several more of these clothes donation drop offs over the coming months, so look out for details from the PTA.

We will also soon be receiving a set of books purchased by the PTA linked to Mental Health and Wellbeing. This is an addition to our library which will benefit all of the children as they will be accessible not only for individual children to read but will also be used in our structured programme of support across the whole school.

## **Daily Arrangements**

A huge thank you to all parents for their efforts to make the start and end of day arrangements work so smoothly. We are however still receiving regular comments and complaints from parents that not all parents are adhering to the collection procedures. The two regular comments are that certain parents are arriving before their allocated time slot, and/or are skipping the queue. These actions are causing quite a bit of upset among groups of parents and I would ask all parents to respect the arrangements that have been put in place. It is not school's place to police queues, so we would ask that everyone be mindful of each other and if all parents adhere to the procedures that have been put in place then we can ensure the smooth release of children in a timely and orderly fashion.

The morning routine has worked extremely well from the beginning of the year and has run smoothly each day. As a result, we feel we are able to reduce the time frame of drop offs for classes at the beginning of the day. This is testament to all of our families and their organised approach to our procedures. The slight shift in the timings will allow all classes to get into school a little sooner and therefore allow sessions to begin quicker. The below staggering of times will allow the flow of traffic to be maintained whilst continuing to promote the steady arrival of children onto our site each day.

From Monday 28<sup>th</sup> we will ask classes to follow the updated routine:

**8:45am – Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6)**

**8:50am – Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4)**

**8:55am – Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2)**

**9:00am – EYFS (Reception)**

## **Uniform**

As I stated back in the summer our school uniform policy should be adhered to in full from September. This is still the case and will be enforced as we move through the year. The policy is clear and where children are sent to school in garments which do not adhere to the school's published policy they will be asked to remove the item, where appropriate, or parents will be asked to provide an alternative in line with school rules. The school's uniform policy has not changed, and all families have been made aware of the regulations on a regular basis.

This said, I fully appreciate that the last 6 months have impacted families and their personal circumstances in many ways, and as such any family who is in need of support in any way need only to contact me. Uniform items can be provided where necessary without question. This offer was made in my previous communication regarding uniform and still stands. I can also appreciate that it is not always an easy step to take. I would ask that where required a message which simply contains the items required be given to me and these can be sourced and delivered privately without any further conversation being needed. These are extremely difficult times, and we are here to support one another as best we can.

### **School Mass**

A school mass has been organised with Father Paul for 9:30am on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October. The mass will be celebrated in year group classes and will be streamed live from church via Father Paul's YouTube channel. Many of you will be aware that we celebrated our Year 6 leavers' mass in such a way and it proved very successful. All families are very welcome to join us in celebrating the mass as a school community from the comfort of their own homes. Simply go to the YouTube main page and search Father Paul Grady. This will bring up his channel symbol and the video will be accessible from his main page.

### **Twitter**

The school account will continue to be active over the course of the year and will be used to highlight some of the wonderful activities taking place within school, and also as a way of rapid communication with parents. Although many of the classes now opt to share work and news via the Seesaw platform, I will continue to endeavour to share where I can via the school's Twitter account.

Although Twitter is a fantastic tool to share and communicate with families, we ideally want Seesaw to be the primary tool for parents to link with classes. I would therefore ask that the direct messaging service only be used to contact the school Twitter account in emergency situations and that if a parent has a question or query regarding their child's class the appropriate avenue would be to contact the school office or send a direct message to the teacher via Seesaw.

We receive many requests each day from people wishing to follow the school account, and as this is a private and closed account each request must be approved. Only approved Twitter users can follow the school account, and only where the account is easily identifiable as a linked or associated person will the requests be approved. This means that if a parent or family member wishes to follow the school account, unless their account name is clear or a recognisable image is used as their profile picture the requests will not be approved. If you have requested to follow the school account and have not yet been approved, I would request that you let school know either by speaking to me directly or by emailing the office.

### **Mental Health & Wellbeing**

As you will no doubt be aware, we have worked very hard over the last year or so to develop our mental health and wellbeing programme throughout school. The children will already be well versed with the concept of mindfulness and some of the exercises we have practised over the last 12 to 18 months under this banner. Mrs Kearns has worked incredibly hard in producing tailored training and work for teachers and classes which can support the mental health of our young people. In our latest progression, all staff have been trained in the ROAR programme developed in conjunction with Liverpool CAMHS.

The ROAR response to Mental Health in Primary Schools, is a course which aims to help teachers and staff recognise and address the signs of mental health problems in children. It is a first line response aimed at equipping front line professionals with the tools to provide early intervention, and support to children experiencing mental distress. The course also recognises the importance of building resilience in children.

The ROAR response offers training for staff around building resilience in relation to specific mental health needs. It will also help you to spot the signs and symptoms of a child experiencing problems with their mental health.

One in 10 children between five and 16 years old suffer with depression, anxiety or conduct disorder, according to the Mental Health Foundation. Given the still unmeasured impact on children's mental health of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that all members of staff are equipped as fully as possible to help support our children in their recovery. The ROAR training equips teachers with the tools they need to support our children at every stage of their introduction to school. ROAR stands for:

- R - Recognise the signs and symptoms
- O - Ask Open questions
- A - Access support, services and self-care
- R - Build Resilience

Mrs Kearns is currently working on materials for parents and the possibility of running an information session via video conferencing in the near future so watch this space.

### **School Rules**

Last year we introduced a new set of school rules which proved to be very successful across school. As part of our annual review we decided to add an additional rule this year – Be Kind. Not only is this at the core of our school ethos and behaviour approach, but also ties into Wigan's core message at this current time. We feel this addition completes our rules and compliments the established rules encompassing all aspects of our school ethos and the essence of what our school is about.



We have been lucky enough to have a local artist donate their time to create some artwork for us around the school building over the summer break. The above graphic is in fact their work as well. One of the major pieces they have produced for us is based around our 5B's school rules and some of the imagery that is important to us in school. This piece of art not only links to our school rules but also to our school motto 'In God's light, we shine, we love and we learn'. I am very excited about unveiling the new additions to the building as we feel they really elevate the spaces around school for our children – so watch this space.

## **Public Health**

### **Seasonal Illness & COVID-19**

As we start back into the Autumn Term the children will experience many coughs and colds, as is usual at this time of year. Many may not have mixed outside of their family bubble for some time and the reintroduction into a class group will bring with it the spread of the usual seasonal ailments. This is to be expected and we must approach such illnesses in a measured way. Children are going to get sick, they are going to get colds, this is the usual course of events. As a school we are governed by government regulations in regards to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Where a child is exhibiting one or more of the Coronavirus symptoms school has strict protocols it must follow. The current list of symptoms school must look out for are:

- A high temperature – this is recognised as being 37.8C or above.
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours.
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

A raised temperature or cough does not necessarily mean that your child has Coronavirus, but where they match the above criteria you will be asked to collect them from school and seek further advice. Usually this will be by contacting the NHS on 111 or 119. At this point a medical professional can advise you on whether or not a COVID-19 test is required. You may be asked to simply monitor high temperatures, and if they lower and your child is no longer symptomatic, you may be able to return them to school after a given period. If advised to book a test, your child should not return to school until they have received a negative test result. In the case of an unclear result, you will be advised either to book another test, or depending on the time period which has elapsed you may be advised to simply self-isolate for the full two-week period. The key is to seek advice from the NHS and follow it to the full, and to stay in communication with school.

### **School Closures**

You will have seen much in the press about school's having to close year group or class bubbles due to the identification of a positive case of COVID within the group. Many of our families may already have been impacted by such closures in the secondary schools. Although every precaution is being taken, I fear it is inevitable that all schools will have to enact such closures at some point over this year. It is a case of not if but when. I hope that from the press coverage and personal experience of families that it is clear this is firstly not something that is done lightly, and is only actioned where totally necessary to help safeguard families. No school wants to close a class or year group. We are back and we want to stay back as fully as possible. However, the greater responsibility is that of protecting our school family and helping to protect the NHS through our measured actions.

Where a positive case is identified school immediately is in contact with the local Health Protection Teams and the dedicated services involved. Risk assessments are carried out and the in house tracking procedures are examined to fully assess the impact and potential risk. At this point clear guidance is given and actioned by the school. This may mean a class bubble must self-isolate. It may mean additional staff must do the same. In most cases those who are asked to self-isolate will not require a COVID test, unless they themselves become symptomatic. The closure of a class group is a last resort, and through our heightened procedures we hope we do not have to action such protocols. However, where closures are enacted, children will be provided with online learning via our online platforms. School will continue to support our children remotely as required.

### **Additional Information**

Further updates and government guidance can also be found on the school website. A new 'Public Health' tab has been added in the 'Information' section of the site. Simply click the 'Information' section on the homepage and the new section is the first tab of the drop down menu. We will also send updates via ParentMail and on Twitter. As you will be fully aware by this stage, the situation is a moveable feast and all regulations and procedures are subject to change. We will always endeavour to give families as much notice, and information as we possibly can in all cases.

As always, thank you all for your continued support. It is times like these, the strong, open and supportive relationship between school and home is more important than ever. Thank you for all that you do and for working with us for the best of the children.

Stay safe and God bless.

Yours sincerely

**Mr Doherty**  
**Headteacher**