

Garden Fields J.M.I School

Townsend Drive
St. Albans
Herts
AL3 5RL
Telephone 01727 890440



Headteacher : Mr A. Farrugia

- ◆ E-mail : admin@gardenfields.herts.sch.uk
- ◆ Website : www.gardenfields.herts.sch.uk

2nd Week Update:

Including an update to arrangements for coming into / leaving school

11th September 2020

Dear Parents,

I dislike including the words IMPORTANT and URGENT in the title of any letter. I regard all of our school communications as important! However, I am aware from some conversations that I have with parents, that sometimes important information goes unread.

I appreciate the difficulty we have in the modern age with social media, endless email communications and SPAM and the ever changing swirl of government advice regarding COVID-19 that it can be hard to keep track with everything – I share your pain!

However, I cannot stress how important it is to keep up with my 'bulletins' each week as we go through this pandemic. I am reviewing the impact of our risk assessment all the time and making key tweaks and adaptations and so it is essential that you keep up to speed with any changes that I make.

Each Friday – and sometimes earlier if necessary – I will be updating you with any modifications to the risk assessment. Nothing will be absolutely perfect – all we can do is to put in the best measures that we can to reduce the risks from the virus – we cannot eradicate them. My plans also need modifying in terms of any update from the government based upon their latest guidance, scientific advice and also in response to any rise in cases.

In terms of the ever-changing situation with this pandemic – what a week we have just had! Over the summer, I was planning to bring back as much 'normality' to school life as possible. Coronavirus statistics were low, restrictions were lifting and things felt slightly more optimistic, but certainly over the last fortnight there is a changing mood across the country with a growth in cases again and some more restrictions being put in place to try to prevent a second big wave in infections.

Those of you who have been following the news will have seen the rise in Coronavirus figures recently – fortunately they are nothing like those back in the spring but we all need to play a part in trying to ensure that we don't have a return to that awful time. Confirmed national daily cases back in July had dropped below a thousand; we are now nearly up to 3000. In St Albans, with a population of around 150,000 we have gone from about 10 confirmed cases at the end of the holidays to 29 in the last week – relatively low at the moment but certainly rising.

With that, and the new restrictions around gatherings of 6 people, I would now urge and encourage all adults to wear masks on drop off and pick up – I know that a very small number will be exempt but in all other cases please wear them from this coming Monday.

Although we have put in many measures to spread everyone out as much as we can, I can still see from watching things that it can be difficult to guarantee any kind of 2 metre distance. The fact that we are outside obviously helps but there are still some 'crunch points' despite our best endeavours to prevent them. We have altered the arrangements to **Y3** drop off and collection to alleviate this – thank you to staff and parents for your ideas/thoughts on this; we think that we have come up with a better, if still imperfect system for this. Details were emailed to Year 3 parents earlier today. A copy can be found on the school website.

Even with masks, where possible please try to keep a 2 metre distance from others where you can, avoid blocking paths and leaving the premises quickly – we sometimes have a large contingent of families playing on the Reception playground on and near the apparatus. No one should be using the apparatus before and after school, but also, at the current time we are trying to allow everyone to leave the site safely and quickly.

In terms of the Drop off Zone, I have trialled some parents exiting this way when they live/park on that side. Following this trial I am happy for those parked in the drop off zone **ONLY** to go down the steps as I am stationing myself there and this isn't leading to congestion. However, I cannot have any pedestrians using the driveway or the drop off zone as an exit out of the school. This doesn't work because the children ultimately have to cross the driveway at the end of the drop off zone and even with parents I saw yesterday that children were 'lingering' in the driveway. It is just not worth the risk of a serious or even fatal accident – just for the sake of an extra ten minutes or so of walking. So I apologise in advance for this inconvenience for the moment, but the purpose of the one-way system is to avoid parents walking back on one another and therefore ultimately to protect you, particularly as adults are the most at risk of both contracting and having greater effects from the coronavirus.

On the subject of walking - the more that those who live locally can do to walk and cycle to school at the moment the better. I am currently out running and attempting the Couch to 5K programme. I vow that I will keep up running beyond this for as long as we make you all walk the long way outside of the school and you can hold me to that!

A plea also to those who park in the service road that runs alongside Batchwood Road. There are some parking slots along here but it is also a road for emergencies and for the residents along there who need it to leave and enter their homes. So please park carefully and also watch out for your children as cars leave and enter from there.

For parents of children in **EYFS** we will continue with the soft start arrangements which are currently in place. Children can be dropped off any time between 8:50 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

Finally, each year group will be sending out a curriculum presentation for the year on Monday. I will say more in an accompanying letter – which will cover things like reading books and homework going forward.

But in the meantime, I wish you all a restful weekend after our first full week back and thank you for your continued cooperation and support with all we are doing at Garden Fields during this unusual time.

Best wishes,

Mr Farrugia