



# The Hills Academy

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Headteacher: Mrs Moya Whitehead

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13<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your patience whilst we prepare arrangements for September. This is a long and slightly complicated letter – I'm sorry. The arrangements below are linked to guidance from the Department for Education alongside the main teaching unions. It is quite possible that this guidance will change over the summer and some of our plans may have to change too. Everything planned is therefore subject to review on the week beginning 24<sup>th</sup> August and again prior to October half term. Hopefully, things will have settled down by January 2021 and we will be able to reconsider things completely.

## **Bubbles**

These will now be whole class bubbles with the teacher and an allocated learning assistant and lunchtime supervisor. Each year group will have an allocated section of the playing field and stagger their time on this section. Mixing between bubbles will be minimized (although necessary for those who attend the limited Prime Time places).

## **Communication**

The great advantage of classroom drop off (the way we do it normally) is that there is an opportunity to quickly speak to a member of staff or arrange to speak to them later. This is not going to be quite so easy next term, so we will keep the class email addresses open for classroom queries – teachers will make sure you have the new email address for your class in September.

Please do continue to send administrative queries, payment queries etc to the school office (teachers are not able to deal with finances, Prime Time, lunch queries etc):

[office@thehillsacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@thehillsacademy.co.uk)

Complaints, concerns (including Safeguarding concerns, bullying, racist and homophobic incidents) or whole school management feedback should come to me:

[headteacher@thehillsacademy.co.uk](mailto:headteacher@thehillsacademy.co.uk)

## **The School Day**

This has to be staggered and we understand this may inconvenience some families. Our aim will be to improve on this as soon as is safe/allowed. Lunchtime is also staggered and has been reduced by 15 minutes.

During the autumn term only, Years 1 to 6 will have an extended day on a Wednesday and class will finish one hour later than on other days (children may be withdrawn from this additional hour but please let us know). A timetable for the staggered day is attached with this letter. It is important that you do not arrive too early at school – this avoids there being a crush of parents and children which is what the staggering is intended to avoid. As the rate of infection is dropping now, it is no longer required for parents/carers to wear a face covering whilst outside on the school grounds. Please note that we cannot safely accommodate parents/carers and their children waiting on the playground between drop off slots – you will need to leave the school premises and return with a sibling who starts/finishes at a different time (I am sorry about this and hopefully it will just be in the short term).

## **Early Years**

Nursery and Reception children should arrive at the time on the timetable. Nursery children can be brought by their parent/carer to the Nursery garden for handover and also picked up from that location. Reception children will need to line up on the painted dots on the playground, but it is perfectly ok for an adult to stand with them for the first

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couple of weeks (we've found that the young children in school now have coped with this well). Pick-up will be the same, but children will be sent to their adult who will be standing behind the barriers on the playground.

#### **Years 1 to 4**

Will arrive and line up on the spots on the playground at the time allotted for their class. Parents/carers should remain behind the barriers on the playground. They will depart in the same way.

#### **Years 5 and 6**

We would very much like year 5 and 6 pupils to walk to school where possible and where this is not possible we would like them to be dropped a few metres away from the immediate school entrance (preferably the gate that goes onto Leasway). Please can Year 5 and 6 pupils enter the school grounds by themselves (preferably through Leasway if possible), keeping social distancing in mind and making their way directly to their own classroom – outside doors will be open to greet them at the allotted time. It is really important that children do not arrive early and/or play on the school grounds prior to the start of the day. Please can you arrange with your child if he/she is walking home or where you are going to meet them when they walk out of school.

#### **Lunches**

At least for the first six weeks we have agreed with our lunch provider (HCL) that each class will have their lunch in their own classroom. This does mean that the offer will be limited to what can be portable - this is not ideal in the long term. We will let you know the details of this once it has been confirmed.

#### **Before and after school care (Prime Time)**

In the morning there will be Prime Time from 07:45. This will happen in the hall split into two bubbles of 15 (i.e. with a maximum of 30 pupils).

In the afternoon Prime Time will only operate until 17:00 for the autumn term. This will be split into three Bubbles; two in the hall and one in the computer suite. These bubbles will each be a maximum of 15 pupils (so a total of 45 pupils after school). It is therefore very important that you book your requirements in advance and cancel in good time if not required. We will inform you when the system is ready for registrations and bookings.

#### **Nursery children attending more than one provision**

The current advice is that your child should only attend one provision (Nursery class, Playgroup or childminder). Whilst this advice might be amended in future, you need to make a decision about which provision that is going to be. Please inform us as soon as possible if you decide your child will not be attending our Nursery class. Please feel free to contact the school office regarding the hours your child is attending our Nursery.

#### **The Curriculum**

Teachers are planning to continue to offer the broadest possible curriculum. Emotional health and wellbeing will be a core part of every week and an essential focus to aid pupil recovery from missed school and the effects of the extended lockdown. The additional time we have squeezed out of the school week will be used for focus on key skills.

We have completely overhauled the curriculum to provide a more joined up journey through the school (an area identified in our Ofsted) in subjects like History, Geography, Art and Design Technology.

Physical Education is initially going to be limited to outdoor PE, personal fitness and non-contact sport. Swimming will not take place in the autumn term.

Music (Y1-6) and Computing (R-6) are taught by specialist teachers. To avoid bursting bubbles in the autumn term, Mrs Frost will spend a week with each year group which will mean that each class will get a 6 hour music focus per half term. Mrs Williams will work in a similar way with Computing with slightly longer hours.

Music lessons provided by external music teachers will almost certainly continue remotely to begin with, but this will be confirmed early next term.

### **Clubs, trips and assemblies**

In the autumn term there will be no clubs, trips or whole school assemblies. The school will continue to follow the agreed set of values as our basis for Collective Worship and this will take place in classrooms. I will do an assembly for a different year group each week, so over the course of the Autumn Term they will get two face to face assemblies from me. Harvest assembly will not take place, but classes will learn harvest themed songs and film them for parents to enjoy. The arrangements for Christmas productions will be kept under review, but currently these may also have to be filmed and shared.

We will plan for trips that are after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

We hope to reintroduce clubs commencing January 2021 too (teachers will then drop the additional hour on a Wednesday)

### **Parent meetings/consultation events**

These will be conducted via Zoom (or similar) during the autumn term.

### **Settling children back into school**

We know from experience to date, that every child has responded differently to lockdown. Some have flourished on their own projects and worked effectively at home, others have struggled with their emotional health or found it difficult to engage with home learning. That is ok, it is our job to identify all of this and develop ways of supporting them. Teachers have already begun to highlight the children they think might need additional or different support and we will be writing and acting upon personalized 'recovery' plans for those children, and others we continue to identify, in the first six weeks of next term. Every class will have an identified learning support assistant to secure this recovery and the highly trained wellbeing staff will target the children who most need their input.

Year 6 children will have a third teacher supporting their learning to ensure that they are as ready as they can be for Secondary transition in September 2021. As parents you will need to be thinking carefully about the Year 7 options for your child, the deadline for applications is around the middle of October (please do ask if you need any support with this).

### **Planning for increased family poverty**

It is right for me to acknowledge that increasing unemployment and short term hardships have already given rise to families experiencing greater poverty. The school will be offering bookable breakfast bags to any pupil that wants it (details to be released in the first week of term for a week 2 roll out), this will be offered at a small charge and free to Pupil Premium and Free School Meal children.

If your circumstances have changed then you should check your eligibility to claim free school meals for your child: <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=1Pw4LTUFeKo&localofferchannel=6>

If you are in short term hardship I am able to write you a referral for Bedford Food Bank. Please send me an email and we will get this sorted as soon as possible.

Family support from Marcia Harcombe will continue, but she will be offering a one to one service (again either by phone or Zoom) – more details (including contacts) will be sent out at the beginning of term. Hopefully this will be back to our weekly get-togethers in January too.

### **What about if I don't want to send my child back to school yet?**

I know from some of the correspondence I have had that some parents are not comfortable with their children returning to school right now (and may not be in September). The government has said that there will be fines for families who do not attend unless there is a strong medical reason. Firstly, unless the law is changed, it is Headteacher discretion regarding fining for non-attendance. The school approach has been not to fine for the first holiday taken in term time (in an academic year if a fortnight or less) but we have always reserved the option of legal action in the case of extreme non-attendance where the educational wellbeing of a child is being detrimentally impacted. I will certainly not be rushing to pursue prosecution and fines with families at the beginning of the autumn term and where they still hold extreme fears regarding Covid-19 infection. As the R drops closer to 0, I will however, be expecting all pupils back in school, but will hold informal conversations with families before taking formal action.

**What if there is a second wave as winter approaches?**

I am not an expert, but there is a fear from some scientists that the cold and wet will bring a second wave of infection. If this is the case the government will direct us on either national or local lockdown. In either case we will do our utmost to provide classes for Key Worker children and the most vulnerable.

**Thank you – you are all amazing!**

That just leaves me to say that there will be something (probably more than one!) that we haven't thought of and we will be as flexible and responsive as we can be. The support from parents and pupils over the last four months has been wonderful and really kept our spirits up on the dark days - we cannot wait to welcome everyone back to school in September.

Have a wonderful summer

Very best wishes

Moya