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St Michael's Middle School Newsletter

September 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to start by welcoming new parents and pupils to St. Michael's, or welcoming back those who were already at the school, to the start of the new academic year. As I come to the end of my first week at the school, I cannot think of a week containing more change than the last 7 days. We were all expecting a change in Prime Minister at the start of the week but few, if any, were prepared for the events of the last 24 hours. We came together as a school today to celebrate and reflect on the contribution and legacy of Queen Elizabeth II and to pray for the new King, Charles III, and the extended royal family at this difficult time. The children were extremely respectful and thoughtful in their responses. The thoughts and condolences of the whole school community go to all mourning the death of the Queen.

In line with protocol during a period of national mourning and in respect for the Queen, all non-urgent communications from Wimborne Academy Trust Schools, including St. Michael's, will cease for the next 10 days.

New Staff

I hope that you join me in welcoming a number of new staff to the school for the start of the year. We welcome Miss Owen (Science) and Ms Minne (Modern Foreign Languages) to the teaching team. We are also delighted to welcome a number of new teaching assistants to the team. Joining the school will be Miss East, Mrs Tegerdine, Mrs Smith, Miss Ewins and Mrs Waters. We are also delighted to welcome Mrs Sewell as our new art technician. I hope they enjoy their time working at St. Michael's and wish them all the very best in their new posts.

A Few Reminders

Thank you for the very positive way that pupils have returned to school and the efforts that have been taken to ensure that they are prepared for the coming year. As a parent myself, I know how many things need to be sorted for the beginning of term and the time and effort this involves. In this first communication home, there are a few of the school's rules and procedures I want to ensure are clear to all of the school community. During the past two years, some of the traditional procedures required modification due to COVID restrictions. As we enter a year without these restrictions, we look to get back to normal routines right at the start of the year.

Car Parking and Traffic Safety

The road along the front of the school gets incredibly busy at the drop-off and pick-up times. I understand how frustrating this can be and I would ask that if you are able to avoid this at the start and end of the day, please do so. In addition:

- Parking spaces are extremely limited in the immediate area around the school and I would request that you do not block the driveway access for any local residents when trying to find a parking space. Can I also remind you that New Merrifield Road is a private road and should only be used by residents.
- Please do not use the designated bus area for parking during pick-up and drop-off times.
- The school car park is not open for parents picking-up or dropping-off unless this by prior agreement with the school.
- If possible, try to make the road at the front of school an 'unofficial' one way road during busy periods of the day. We would suggest entering the road from the war memorial end and exiting from the church end. This follows the routes that buses will take when coming to the school site. There is not the space for two cars to pass each other and this leads to traffic coming to a standstill. If we all follow this route, we will improve the flow of traffic for all involved.

Bikes and Scooters

I am delighted to see that a number of pupils come to school on either a bike or a scooter. This has the dual benefit of improving fitness levels whilst also reducing the number of cars in and around the school. To ensure the safety of all using these methods of transport:

- Please can all pupils on bikes and scooters enter by Gate 4 (war memorial end) and only use the designated bike sheds for storage of bikes and scooters during the day. Scooters or bikes outside this area will be removed.
- Please do not scoot or ride inside the school ground as other pupils use the paths.
- Please also avoid scooting or riding on the pavements at the front of school as these are also very busy before and after school.
- We **strongly recommend** that any pupil on a bike or scooter wears a helmet to protect them in the event of an accident. Whilst most pupils do this, a small minority do not. Please also remind your child that the helmets only work if they are on their heads and are useless if they are on their handlebars.
- Please make sure that bikes and scooters are locked for security.

Gates to come into and leaving school

During COVID, it became necessary to assign different year groups an entrance to enter and exit school to keep year groups separated. As the rules are now more relaxed, we wanted to clarify the correct gates to use.

- Year 5 should use gate one (the gate nearest the youth centre)
- Years 6, 7 and 8 can use gates 2,3 or 4 (whichever is the first gate they come across upon arrival at school).
- Any pupils on bikes and scooters should use Gate 4 only as this is the nearest to the bike and scooter stores.

Uniform and PE Kit

Thank you for ensuring that pupils have returned to school with the correct school uniform and PE kits. The most essential thing to help you retain all of the items you have purchased is to make sure that ALL items are named. I have already picked up 5 jumpers this week from the playground and not a single one was named. We are putting in place systems to quickly reunite lost property with its owner but this will only work if items of uniform are named. A few other uniform guidelines include:

- Pupils are allowed one pair of small stud earrings whilst at school. We ask those pupils with multiple piercings in their ears to use plastic clear retainers (available cheaply from Amazon) during the school day or take out additional earrings all together.
- Pupils with long hair are allowed to wear this down providing that it does not completely cover over their face. All pupils with long hair will be required to tie up their hair for certain lessons and activities during the school week and so **MUST** have a hair band to use for these situations.
- Skin tight cycling type shorts are not part of the agreed PE uniform and should not be worn in school.
- Please check the length of skirts. The length should be just above the knee. Wearing shorts under short skirts is not allowed.
- Pupils will be asked to put school shoes back on at the end of their PE lessons, regardless of the time of day. This is helping us reduce lost shoes in the changing rooms.
- I expect pupils to be looking smart at all times they are in uniform, including coming to and from school and especially in the immediate area outside the school.

I am aware of the rising cost of school uniform and the recent news coverage about trying to remove branded items from uniform lists to make them as affordable as possible. At this time, we ask that the uniform worn is what is on the lists sent out before the summer break or in letters at the start of term. I will be looking to review the uniform in the coming year and we will then phase in any changes for September next year.

Should the cost of the uniform be difficult for you, please speak to someone at the school and we will look to offer support if we are able. Any conversations will be in strict confidence. We will also be looking to establish a used uniform swap facility (for use as your children grow) and will also be having a second hand uniform sale before half term, both of which should help with the ongoing cost of uniform.

Mobile Phones and Valuable Items

A reminder that we operate a strict no mobile phone use policy at the school. If required, pupils can hand their mobile device into the office for safekeeping. Any device brought onto the school site is done so at the owner's risk. Any phones brought into school and not handed into the school office must be switched off and kept in bags and not on their person.

We are aware that a number of pupils own smartwatches. Our advice is to not bring these expensive items to school. Any watch with the capability to link to a phone and receive messages etc. we will ask pupils to remove and switch off.

Lastly, please ask pupils to not bring in any expensive items or those with sentimental value. Anything of this nature that is brought into school is done so at the owner's risk.

Pupils of the Week

Each week, I will be asking a small selection of pupils from each year group to be sent to see me for a positive reason. This will take place last thing on a Friday. Any pupil that is sent to me will receive a letter home, a special sticker and a rewards pencil. Should your child come home from school with a letter from me, please make a big deal of this with them as it is a special privilege to be selected.

Apologies for the length of this first letter but hopefully, the above information has clarified a few issues for both parents and pupils as we move on after the first week back. I am very excited to finally start in the post of headteacher here at St. Michael's and look forward to having the chance to meet many of you in the coming weeks.

Have a lovely and restful weekend,

Mr. Darren Ayling
Headteacher

TERMS DATES 2022-2023

Autumn Term 2022

Staff Training Days Thursday 1st & Friday 2nd September

Pupils Return Monday 5th September

Prospective Parents Open Evening - Thursday 29th September 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Year 5 Activities Week – 5th, 6th & 7th October

Year 5 Parents Evening – Wednesday 12th October 3.30pm – 6.30pm

Year 5 Parents Evening – Tuesday 18th October 3.30pm – 6.30pm

Half Term Holiday Monday 24th October- Friday 28th October

Staff Training Day Monday 31st October

Pupils return Tuesday 1st November

Propsective Parents Open Morning – Wednesday 9th November 9.15am – 10.15am

Propsective Parents Open Afternoon – Tuesday 22nd November 2pm – 3pm

Carol Service at Wimborne Minster – Thursday 8th December – 7pm

Last Day of Term Thursday 15th December

Staff Training Day Friday 16th December

Spring Term 2023

Staff Training Day - Tuesday 3rd January

First Day of Term - Wednesday 4th January

Half Term - Monday 13th - Friday 17th February

Staff Training Day – Monday 20th February

First Day of Term – Tuesday 21st February

Last Day of Term – Thursday 30th March

Staff Training Day - Friday 31st March

Summer Term 2023

First Day of Term Monday 17th April

May Day Holiday Monday 1st May

Half Term Holiday Monday 29th May – Friday 2nd June

Staff Training Day Monday 5th June (First and Middle Schools Only)

Pupils Return Tuesday 6th June (First and Middle Schools only)

Last Day of Term Friday 21st July