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Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

### Start of Term Letter – September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to the new academic year! I trust that the summer break has been good to you, and that those of you who were planning to be away did not get 'stuck' anywhere with the travel restrictions that we found ourselves surrounded by and the quarantine measures in place. We have had some support staff affected by the quarantine rules, and I am sure this may also have applied to some of our families as well. If you are having to quarantine over the coming days or weeks, please do let us know before term begins tomorrow (details later on in the letter).

The holiday period has been a busy one for the school and staff – much deep-cleaning, maintenance and moving of furniture has happened to prepare for the re-opening tomorrow. Government advice and guidance has continued to be published throughout the summer which we have kept up to date with. It seems that our colleagues in secondary schools have had a particularly difficult summer with their changes about the use of face masks as well as the GCSE and A-Level grading fiasco. To be clear, government advice regarding masks only applies to secondary schools at this stage. Just before the weekend the government also released further guidance about how schools should operate should there be further lockdowns; it seems sensible that schools are only closed moving forwards if there is no other alternative, and that primary settings would be one of the last to close if it came to it. We hope that this does not have to happen, but we are putting plans in place so that should we ever need to close the school again for a period of time, we can move to a fully electronic way of learning with remote lessons.

That being said, I hope that as we begin the new term we can start to get back to 'normal' as much as possible. The weather has certainly began to feel like we're ready for the autumn term, but whatever you did, or however you spent the break, I hope that you managed to enjoy some of the sunshine and that everyone is feeling a little more re-charged and ready for another exciting year at Green Ridge. We are very excited to welcome our fourth cohort of pupils into the academy, and see our school grow in size and capacity, as we nearly reach being full.

On behalf of all the staff and Local Governing Body, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our new families and children who join us this week both in the Nursery and Reception classes, as well as those children who join us from other settings this term. We are delighted that you have chosen Green Ridge for your child and know that the existing parents and carers will make you feel very welcome to part of the Green Ridge community. Our motto at Green Ridge is *Limitless Learning; Infinite Possibilities* and we very much hope you will see this for yourselves over the coming terms in all that we do.

As is tradition, I thought it might be helpful just to give you a short update ahead of the start of term, which sets out some useful information and immediate dates that you may need to be aware of. Our weekly round-up newsletter will be published on Friday as usual, but until then I hope that this information tides us over.

### Pupil Absence Procedures

You will be aware that school attendance is now once again compulsory for all pupils from today, and so pupils should be in each day unless there is an exceptional reason for their absence. Our Education and Welfare Lead, Mrs. Cavanagh oversees the day-to-day attendance of all pupils in Reception onwards, and acts as a single point of contact for absences so that she can provide support for pupils and families as needed.

As a reminder, so that we can be more efficient in dealing with pupil absences, we ask that if your child is going to be absent from school or nursery, that you call the school on 01296 326320, and press option 1 to report an absence, this will give you the opportunity to leave a voice message for Mrs. Cavanagh. If you are unable to call the school, then please e-mail the school, noting the e-mail addresses below:

|                                      |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Nursery<br>(Little Berries/Acorns)   | Mrs. Bowden<br>Nursery Administrator        | <a href="mailto:nursery@greenridgeacademy.co.uk">nursery@greenridgeacademy.co.uk</a> |
| Main School<br>(Reception-Year Five) | Mrs. Cavanagh<br>Education and Welfare Lead | <a href="mailto:absence@greenridgeacademy.co.uk">absence@greenridgeacademy.co.uk</a> |

### Diary Dates

We have been busy collating all the dates for the academic year which parents/carers need to be aware of, from Christmas productions to Pupils Learning Reviews. This year, things are slightly more tentative than normal, with the current guidance being that we cannot have large amounts of parents/carers on the school site or in the building. This would mean, that similarly to just before we locked down, we would not be able to invite you to all our typical events that are open to parents/carers. We are planning currently on our usual schedule of events for the year where parents/carers can attend, but they will come with the caveat that they may not be available to parents/carers to attend, depending on government guidance. More information about this will come next week when you should receive a list of all the dates for the year with an explanation, and these will then be published on our website calendar as well. In our weekly round-up, we always publish things which are coming up in the next week as a reminder.

### Communication Procedures

We try to remain as eco-friendly as we can and only send out paper copies of communications which require written responses. A separate letter and communication will be coming out to you early next week about expectations for communication between the academy and parents/carers. This will detail who parents/carers need to direct their communications to if they have a question etc. as well as the appropriate way in which to do this. This is particularly important as we grow, as some members of staff have changed job role over the years, and as such someone you may have gone to previously may now not necessarily be the best person to help you.

We endeavour, wherever we can, to limit our communications to you to a Tuesday and Thursday, in order that parents/carers are not overwhelmed by daily communications, such as letters about trips, or reminders. Our weekly round-up gets sent on a Friday to all parents/carers.

Please do bear with us at the start of the new academic year and term as this is often a busy time for communication, and naturally when most queries occur. We will of course get back to you as soon as we can.

### Meet the Teacher Information Sessions

Typically, each class teacher would hold a short information session for parents/carers in the comings weeks. The purpose of these meetings is for you to understand about the curriculum

expectations for your child's year-group, specific arrangements and timetabling matters and also give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Because of the current restrictions, these meetings cannot take place within the school and so I have asked each year-group to create a video which will be published on our [YouTube channel](#) for your information and access from 14<sup>th</sup> September. The meetings will also give you strategies and ideas of how you can further support your child at home with the curriculum. If you have any questions that arise following the virtual meeting, then we ask you to e-mail your child's class teacher via [admin@greenridgeacademy.co.uk](mailto:admin@greenridgeacademy.co.uk) so that we can address any child-specific points. A hand-out pack of presentation slides and any other relevant information will be published on our website under your child's year group page. We recognise that this method of communication isn't ideal for such events but hope that in the interim it provides you with a chance to hear from your child's teacher and about the year ahead.

### Request for Leave of Absence

If you wish to request your child is absent from school or nursery as an exceptional circumstance, then parents/carers must complete a request of absence form from the main school office or the nursery office. The form ensures that parents/carers are aware of the implications of removing your child from school, and the potential fines which can be given for doing so. Please note that authorising absences are only done in exceptional circumstances, and family holidays and time off because there is nobody to care for your child are not deemed 'exceptional'. We would strongly advise all parents/carers to talk to either Mrs. Cavanagh or Mrs. Bowden before asking for a request of leave, so that we can make you aware of the impact on your child.

### Safeguarding

At Green Ridge we place a high emphasis on safeguarding our children at all times – both inside and outside of the school. As the named Designated Senior Person for Child Protection and Safeguarding, any matters about child safety or concerns you may have about a child or family should come to the immediate attention of myself. Mr English, Mrs. Mackie, Mrs. Cavanagh, Mrs. Erdos and Mr. Kaye are our Deputy Designated Senior Persons. We work jointly in all matters of safeguarding and if you need to speak to either of us, please make an appointment through the school office. Further information about safeguarding at Green Ridge will also be coming out to you in the next week.

As a school we review our safeguarding procedures and systems regularly, and a copy of our Child Protection Policy can be found on our website [here](#).

### Staffing Update

Over the summer holidays, Miss. Hodge gained a position as Hearing Impairment Teaching Assistant at a specialist setting, as part of her long-term career progression. We are sad to lose Miss. Hodge and I know our pupils will miss her, but we wish her every success in her next venture and thank her for her contribution to Green Ridge. In the interim, Miss. Zahra Ali will be taking Miss. Hodge's place within Year One Elm.

### Start of Day Arrangements

The beginning and end of the school day are the busiest times for children and adults congregating together in one place, particularly this year with nearly 360 pupils on site and with the challenges of social distancing imposed. As detailed in July, please remember the following procedures we have put in place for the start of this academic year:

- Start and end of day times are staggered for each group; this ensures that we limit the number of people congregating at entrances at any one point; we ask that parents/carers adhere to the times specified to avoid over-crowding;
- Children enter through external classroom/building doors independently where possible;
- Multiple drop-off and pick up areas are being designated around the site, so that not all children are entering through the same gates at the same time;

- A one-way system will operate for key walk-way areas, ensuring that parents/carers and children follow a set path/direction to avoid becoming too near to somebody passing on the return;
- Except for Nursery groups and Reception pupils, parents/carers will only be allowed to drop-off and collect at the specified gate/entrance and will not be allowed to come directly to the classroom doors;
- To reduce congestion and the numbers of adults, we are only permitting one parent/carer to accompany one child when picking-up and dropping-off their child when coming into the main gate and leading up to the drop-off area.
- Part of the car park will continue to be restricted to allow us to use the rear entrance gate for a larger number of pupils and give us a safe area for parents/carers to wait/congregate at pick-up times;
- Children will be escorted to/from pick-up and drop-off areas by staff to limit parents/carers coming into the school and support social distancing
- Parents/carers and children will not be allowed access around the site perimeter and certain locations and walkways will be blocked off to support social distancing;
- Children will wash or sanitise their hands, on arrival at the setting.

For a helpful visual representation, **Appendices B and C** give clear points of reference of where you will be required to drop and collect children, along with the direction of travel with walkways.

I need to continue to make it clear to parents/carers that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors or enter the building (unless they have a pre-arranged appointment, which will be conducted safely if needed). We will be encouraging social distancing as far as practically possible in and around the school, and in particular at pick-up and drop-off times, and I ask for your help to follow the government guidelines for everybody's safety when in and around the school site.

### Travelling to and from school/parking

I am also asking for your support on travelling safely to and from school, and walking or travelling sustainably wherever possible by walking, riding or scooting, and we have lots of bike sheds and scooter pods for this very reason, to free-up the car park as we will have an increased number of pedestrians using it for entrance and exit at the rear of the school. There will be a reduced number of car parking spaces, and more parents/carers attempting to use this.

For those parents/carers using the car park, please be aware of the narrow entrance to the car park, which only allows one car to pass through the gates at any one time, and so this can lead to a build-up of cars waiting to get in and out. Please be patient, especially in the first few weeks of term as we cope with greater numbers of vehicles than we have done previously. However, I urge you not to use your car if you can help it.

If children bring their bicycles or scooters, they can be left in the bike/scooter stands which are towards the rear of the building. However, owing to the one-way system in operation, there will be a separate stand for bikes/scooters for Reception and Year One, Year Two and Year Three, and for Year Four and Five. These will be clearly signposted.

For children in Reception and Year One, parents/carers will need to take bikes/scooters and put these in the stands for the children, as the stand will only be accessed on the way out of the site, once children have been dropped at their drop-off location. Similarly, for pick up, bikes/scooters can be accessed on the way out.

For children in Year Two, Three, Four and Five, children will need to take their bike or scooter to the stand independently when they come in the rear playground gate. At the end of the day, they will collect this before being dismissed to their parent/carer.

For children within Nursery who bring bikes or scooters, these will need to be left outside each of the classroom areas where your child is attending as you will be unable to access the main

scooter/bike stands. The school will also not accept any responsibility for cleaning these before they are re-used and cannot guarantee that another pupil will not come into contact with them.

### Timings for the start/end of the day

We strongly urge parents/carers to ensure their children arrive at the allocated time below for everybody's safety. You may be asked to wait if you miss your entrance slot, to avoid overcrowding at any point around the building. Entrance slots will remain open for up to ten minutes for each group, but we ask you to be as prompt as possible with the times specified below.

Timings for each group are:

| Year-Group(s)                                 | Start of day                                 | End of day                                   |
|---|--|--|
| Nursery<br>(Little Berries and Little Acorns) | 8.35am or 12.15pm<br>(depending on sessions) | 11.45am or 3.15pm<br>(depending on sessions) |
| Reception (Willow and Birch)                  | 8.50am                                       | 3.00pm*                                      |
| Year One (Elm and Beech)                      | 8.40am                                       | 3.15pm                                       |
| Year Two (Oak and Plane)                      | 8.40am                                       | 3.15pm                                       |
| Year Three (Cedar and Alder)                  | 8.45am                                       | 3.20pm                                       |
| Year Four/Five (Rowan/Maple)                  | 8.40am                                       | 3.15pm                                       |

\*We recognise that 3.00pm is an earlier time than most for finishing, particularly if parents/carers have children in other year groups that they also need to wait to collect. However, based on 60 children being collected where parents/carers will need to queue, particularly in the first few weeks of term whilst we get used to routines and knowing which adults are which, we think it may take at least 10-15 minutes to safely dismiss all of Reception out, before, we can allow Year One parents/carers to enter. We will keep this under review, and should we find that this does not take as long to dismiss, we will dismiss Reception later than 3.00pm. We will also ask teachers to dismiss those children with siblings in other classes first, to limit the length of time having to wait at the school.

For pupils who arrive late after the gates have closed, parents/carers and children will have to come to the front of the school by the main reception and ring the buzzer as normal. However, we need to avoid staff and pupils using the front door and staff and pupils being exposed to others who are outside of their group.

Children will be dismissed promptly from the following locations in their groups and at the times specified. As with drop-off, we ask for your timely support to ensure that children are collected promptly and that you do not arrive unnecessarily earlier and congregate in and around the school site.

Please see **Appendices A and B** which show the location of each classroom for the new academic year, and where the drop-off and pick-up points are.

### PE Kits

We have been made aware that there has been some confusion with regards to PE kits specifically with our new starters, so we wanted to take the opportunity to clarify and apologise for any confusion caused.

The children are required to wear their house-coloured PE t-shirt, black shorts and a pair of trainers during their PE lessons. Trainers are not required for indoor lessons as the children are bare foot. Plimsols are also not needed as for their own safety, children are barefoot for indoor PE lessons and will wear their trainers if necessary, to and from the hall to their classrooms. Weather dependent, tracksuits are optional for outdoor lessons in which a hooded jumper and tracksuit bottoms can be worn. Children can wear their own jumper/tracksuit bottoms of their choice.



## Lunches

We informed parents/carers before the end of term, but we would like to remind you that Herts Catering Limited (HCL) have chosen to extend their Winter/Spring 19-20 menu until October half-term. Unfortunately we no longer have any hard copies to provide, but you can still find the menu on our website [here](#). The menu will commence from Week One when the children return tomorrow.

Please remember to inform the school office and HCL if your child has any specific medical dietary requirements. You are required to complete an application on their allergy website when informing HCL which can be found [here](#).

For parents/carers with children in Year Three onwards, please remember that payments for school lunches should be made in advance. Please put a credit balance on your Arbor account that meals can be deducted from when taken. The price is £2.55 per meal, per day.

If you provide your child with a packed lunch, we encourage you to provide a healthy, balanced lunch in a sealed lunchbox/container which is clearly named. Please also remember that there is strictly to be no fizzy drinks, glass bottles, confectionary/sweets or nut-based products.

Please also remember to send your child in to school with a named water bottle in which they can refill if necessary. We ask for you to provide a water bottle for reasons of hygiene as well as convenience, practicality and because we do not have sufficient cups or washing facilities to provide each child with an individual cup each day.

## Final thought...

I am really looking forward to seeing everybody tomorrow on your return to school – for some of you, it has been almost five months! I am sure the children will be as excited as we are, although the first get up may be hard to take (for both adults and children!).

Enjoy the first week back.

Yours faithfully,



**Mr. Aaron Wanford**  
Headteacher

