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Friday, 3rd September 2021

Start of Term Letter – September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to the new academic year! I hope everybody has had a good summer break, and that this hasn't been interrupted by too many 'pings' or isolations, or even cases of COVID. Despite the somewhat unpredictable nature of the weather during the break, I do hope it has given everyone the chance to catch-up, refresh and be ready for the start of another year – which I hope may bear some resemblance to 'normality' that we have not seen for almost 18 months during the pandemic.

Firstly, I would like to give a warm welcome to all our new that have joined us at Green Ridge this September. We have lots of new children in Nursery, as well as 60 new children in Reception and lots of other children who have joined us across the school as places have become available. We are delighted that your child has joined us at Green Ridge, and hope that you and your child will be very happy here. Our once little school has grown again, and as of today we have 402 children on roll, which is so wonderful. Having had the children back in assemblies over the last couple of days has been something we've been eager to do, to re-group the children and re-establish some of the Green Ridge ways and expectations that haven't been able to exist over recent months. The children have all settled brilliantly back into school and got straight back on with their learning and normal routines. Our pupils in Key Stage 2 have also done a great job of helping support those younger pupils with settling in and helping out where they are able.

We know that COVID hasn't simply gone away over the summer; although all legal restrictions have ceased, the COVID threat is still very real as is shown by some of our pupils and families who have currently tested positive before returning to school. Although we are not in year-group bubbles any more, we are trying to maintain consistent staffing arrangements wherever we can, and to not unnecessarily mix pupils if there is not a need. I am encouraging staff to take lateral flow tests twice weekly still, to pick up on any early cases, and I urge you to be vigilant for any signs/symptoms within your household and get a lateral flow or PCR test at the earliest opportunity. With the new government guidance, it seems unlikely that we should have to close year groups again for remote learning if there are outbreaks, but we need to do all we can to minimise many children being absent from school if they test positive.

As is tradition, I thought it might be helpful just to give you a short update as the term starts, 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 next Friday as usual, but until then I hope that this information tides us over.

Nursery/School Office

We are pleased to say that both the nursery and school offices are open to parents/carers again now that COVID restrictions have eased. Mrs. Bowden is available in the nursery office from 8.30am to 3.30pm and Mrs. Curtis-Cross is in the school office from 8.15am up until 4.00pm daily. Please note that both offices do **not** open until 8.35am on a Friday.

Please bear in mind that the offices have not been open to parents/carers since the first lockdown occurred last March so if there is anything that we need to be informed of or you have any questions or queries, please do continue to call or email where possible. Please also note that first thing in the morning is a particularly busy time for our office staff, so it would be greatly appreciated if you could please refrain from calling and email where possible instead.

Communication Procedures and Who to Contact

We try to remain as eco-friendly as we can and will only send out paper copies of letters which require written responses. All correspondence is sent electronically so please do keep a close eye on your email inbox. We endeavour, wherever we can, to limit our communications to you to a Tuesday and Thursday, to ensure that parents/carers are not overwhelmed by daily communications, such as letters about trips, or reminders etc. Please also take the time to keep up to date with our weekly newsletters which are sent to parents/carers every Friday afternoon.

Should you have any queries, questions, or concerns, please refer to the enclosed Who to Contact document to establish who you need to contact and how. It is important that you refer to the document as some members of staff may have changed their job role, and as such someone you may have gone to previously may now not necessarily be the best person to help you.

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.

Start and Finish Times

A reminder of our start and finish times can be found below. Please do familiarise yourself with the timings and locations and refer to the internal and external site plan layouts enclosed.

Year group	Location drop off	Drop-off window/time	School starts	Location pick up	School finishes
Berries	Nursery front door	8.40-8.45am	8.45am	Nursery front door	3.15pm
Acorns	Nursery front door	8.40-8.45am	8.45am	Nursery front door	3.15pm
Please note: Children attending morning sessions only should be collected at 11.45am, those attending the lunch session should be collected at 12.15pm and pupils attending afternoon sessions only start at 12.15pm (all via the main nursery entrance).					
YR	EYFS front gate	8.40-8.50am	8.50am	EYFS front gate	3.15pm
Y1	KS1 fire exit corridor	8.40-8.50am	8.50am	KS1 fire exit corridor	3.15pm
Y2	Classroom door	8.40-8.50am	8.50am	Classroom door	3.15pm
Y3	Classroom door	8.45-8.55am	8.55am	Classroom door	3.20pm
Y4	Classroom door	8.45-8.55am	8.55am	Classroom door	3.20pm
Y5	UKS2 side gate	8.45-8.55am	8.55am	UKS2 side gate	3.20pm
Y6	UKS2 side gate	8.45-8.55am	8.55am	UKS2 side gate	3.20pm

Pupil Absence Procedures

Our Education, Welfare & Pastoral 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 nursery or school, that you call the school on 01296 326320, and press option 1 to report an absence before 8.40am every day that your child is absent. This will

give you the opportunity to leave a voicemail for Mrs. Bowden or Mrs. Cavanagh. If you are unable to call the school, then please e-mail the school using the email addresses below.

Nursery (Little Berries/Acorns)	Mrs. Bowden Early Years Administrator	nursery@greenridgeacademy.co.uk
School (Reception-Year Six)	Mrs. Cavanagh Education, Welfare & Pastoral Lead	absence@greenridgeacademy.co.uk

Request for Leave of Absence

If you wish to request your child is absent from nursery or school due to a holiday, religious celebration or any other exceptional circumstance, you must complete a request of absence form in advance. Please contact the nursery or school office and they will arrange for a form to be sent home with your child. Once completed, please return to Mrs. Bowden or Mrs. Cavanagh using the secure mailbox located outside of the main school entrance.

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 are not deemed 'exceptional'. We really want all children in school, every day, unless there are exceptional reasons, or they are too unwell.

Lateness (drop-off)

We kindly ask that you try to let us know in advance if your child will be late to nursery/school. A brief voicemail or email will suffice, but it is beneficial if we know that your child is going to be late before the start of the school day. Please note that if your child arrives after 8.50am then they will be classed as 'late', but if they arrive after 9.00am then they will be classed as missing the whole morning session and this will be an unauthorised absence for which you can be fined by the local authority if this persistently occurs.

We also require you to inform us of your child's lunch choice (even if your child has a packed lunch) if they are going to be late as we are required to inform the kitchen as early as possible. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to provide your child with a lunch if they arrive after 9.00am. Please also note that we are **not** able to hold bikes/scooters if your child is late to school.

Lateness (pick-up)

If you find that you are going to be late collecting your child from nursery/school, please inform us as soon as possible. Further information regarding nursery late fees can be found within our Little Ridges Nursery Admissions Policy [here](#) and information regarding our procedures that we have in place should you be late can be found within our Uncollected Child Policy [here](#).

Medical Appointments

If your child has a medical appointment, please let Mrs. Cavanagh know via email as soon as possible to absence@greenridgeacademy.co.uk and provide us with an appointment card or letter. If your child has a medical appointment early in the morning and will not be in for morning registration, please contact the school office before 9.00am to inform us of your child's lunch choice.

Medication

All medication was sent home with your child at the end of term and will need to be returned via the nursery/school office as a matter of urgency if not already done so. Medication is **not** to be sent in with children as it is to be stored securely and relevant forms are to be completed prior.

Arbor Parent Portal/App

Parents/carers automatically have a parent/carer account on Arbor which can be used to pay for trips, clubs and activities as well as school lunches. Once you have activated your account [here](#)

(on computer rather than a phone or tablet please!) you can download and sign in to the Arbor App which can be accessed from your app store. The app is much more user friendly (especially when accessing Arbor from your phone) and we aim to move to sending notifications via the app rather than sending expensive texts in the near future so please make sure you 'enable' notifications - further guidance can be found [here](#).

Lunch Menu, Dietary Requirements and Balances

Our current menu can be found on our website [here](#) which is valid until October half-term. We will send out the new menu for after half-term as soon as we have received it from Hertfordshire Catering Limited (HCL).

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](#).

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 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 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.

Children in Year Three and above who are not entitled to Free School Meals* can opt to have a lunch in school rather than bringing a packed lunch. However, these meals are payable at £2.65 per meal and the school is not able to give credit to parents/carers. Therefore, if you would like your child to order lunches in school, please ensure that there is money on your child's account for the cost of the meal to be deducted from. Please be aware that outstanding balances are monitored, and you may be refused access to ordering lunches if your balance is not cleared. **Please contact the school office if you think you may meet the criteria for Free School Meals eligibility shown [here](#), or if you are having trouble clearing your outstanding balance.* NB. All children in Reception, Year One and Two are eligible for UIFSM (Universal Infant Free School Meals).

Warmer Weather

During September we can often expect some warmer weather. If so, please ensure that sun cream is applied before your child comes into school and that your child is provided with a water bottle to keep hydrated. Where possible, please also provide your child with a sun hat (Green Ridge legionnaire hats are available from [Bucks Schoolwear Plus](#)). During the summer term we include a UV forecast in our newsletter each week to help prepare for the following week. It is not just about how sunny it is as there can be a high UV on a cloudy day and if the UV forecast is 3 or above, children should have sun cream applied and be provided with a sun hat to further protect themselves. You can follow this [link](#) to check the forecast each day.

Face Masks and Social Distancing

Although we appreciate that things are heading in the direction of returning back to normal with regards to COVID, we would like to take the opportunity to remind and encourage you to continue to wear face masks whilst dropping-off and picking-up your child. They are optional, but with so many families and parents, we recognise some staff and parents/carers may wish to continue wearing masks and we would support them in doing so.

Key Dates for the Academic Year

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. Please refer to the enclosed document. These dates can also be found on our website and we have a section within our weekly newsletter where we remind parents/carers of things that are happening the following week.

Travelling Safely and Sustainably and Parking

As always, we continue to ask for your support on travelling safely and sustainably to and from school. Where possible, please walk, cycle or scoot. We have lots of bike sheds and scooter pods for this very reason! This encourages a healthy lifestyle as well as freeing up the car park for those who live a little further away. As our staff numbers continues to grow, there will be a reduced number of car parking spaces available yet potentially more parents/carers attempting to use them.

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.

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 Safeguarding Leader 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 Mr. English. I, Mrs. Mackie, Mr. Kaye, Mr. Foster, Mrs. Cavanagh & Mrs. Erdos are our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leaders. We work jointly in all matters of safeguarding and if you need to speak to any of us, please contact the nursery or school office and it will be arranged for someone to get in contact with you.

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](#). More information about our safeguarding systems and procedures will be sent out next week.

Meet the Teacher Meetings

Mr. English will be sending out a letter next week to notify you about times and arrangements for the Meet the Teacher Meetings which will be taking place within the next few weeks. Please do look out for this.

Final thought...

I am really excited to start another academic year at Green Ridge and look forward to getting back on with some of our events and plans that have been halted by COVID over the last few years. As ever, I'm always around each day on the playground and gates if you ever want to chat or ask a question. Here's to an amazing fifth year at Green Ridge!

Yours faithfully,



Mr. Aaron Wanford
Headteacher