

11th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you all at the end of what has been a brilliant week at Western. It has been so good to have all of our children back (with more Early Years pupils joining us over the next few weeks) and to see them getting back into the swing of school life with big smiles on their faces. I also want to thank parents for co-operating so well with us in our efforts to make the school safe but also for the good wishes you have sent our way and the kind and positive comments we have received.

The start to the new school year has been overwhelmingly positive but, inevitably, there were going to be teething problems and I want to explain some changes we will be making from Monday 14th September.

The pinch points at Western were always going to be the potential for congestion on the narrow pavement outside school during drop-off and pick-up. This is a concern not only from a Covid point of view, but also from a road safety perspective as I have seen adults and children having to step into the busy road to get past the congestion. It is vitally important that we improve on this situation. My concern regarding Coronavirus has now been overtaken by my concern about the possibility of a road traffic accident, so **I would urge all parents and carers to take note of, and act upon, the following points.**

- From Monday 14th September, **parents and carers with siblings can bring all of their children to school at the time of their earliest allocation and collect them at the time of their latest allocation.** There is no need to contact phase leaders over this unless this is not going to work for you – we will assume that all parents will now do this unless we hear otherwise. This will eliminate the need for parents to ‘hang around’ outside school at these times.
- **Parents and carers of children in Years 1 and 2:** when collecting your child at the end of the day, rather than queuing on the pavement, we would like you to come up the steps and wait in the two areas either side of the wooden fence in front of the school building. We will put signage in place to help you with social distancing. Please note that this is **only at the end of the school day** just now as collection is more time consuming than drop-off. When queuing in the morning, **we would like you to queue up the road towards the playground gates.**
- **Parents and carers of children in Years 3 and 4:** please note that, at the end of the day, you may **enter the side playground and wait against the wall** where the blue dots indicate your social distancing points.
- **Parents and carers of children in Years 5 and 6:** When queuing in the morning or evening, please queue up the road towards the single gate. We have looked into the possibility of parents coming into

the car park but this is very problematic given how small this space is and the difficulties this causes in terms of social distancing.

- It would be very helpful if just one parent/carer were to drop off and collect their child.
- It really isn't helpful to add dogs to the mix! If you could find another time during the day to walk your dog, this would be appreciated.
- Please avoid the temptation to stand chatting in groups after drop-off and collection. This is not only against the government's advice on social distancing but also adds to the congestion and the chances of a road traffic accident.
- A significant number of children are arriving up to 10 minutes earlier than they should. I appreciate that this is a difficult one as no one wants to be late and I am sure this will improve as everyone starts to get an idea of how long it takes them to get to school.
- I am very concerned by the number of parents who are encouraging their children to cross the road opposite the car park gate. I do understand that this may be to avoid having to walk past the parents congregating further up the road but it can be a dangerous place to cross and I would urge extreme caution. We will be in contact with the Highways Department on Monday to explore the possibility of some kind of temporary crossing at this point or lower down Cold bath Road.
- No matter what measures we put in place, it is clear that social distancing at these times is very difficult. The spaces are simply too narrow and it is impossible to keep 2 metres from anyone when passing on the pavement. For this reason, along with the recent increase in infection rates and the ban on gatherings of more than 6 people due to come into force on Monday, **I am recommending that adults wear face coverings during drop-off and collection.** Obviously this is not something I can insist upon or enforce but I think it is a sensible precaution to take in the current circumstances and I look forward to your co-operation. **I will be asking any staff who are on the pavement at this time, or who need to get close to a group of parents, to also wear a face covering.**

We have been in contact today with the owner of the access road between our car park and Oliver's fish and chip shop to pass on our concerns about the poor visibility for drivers coming onto Cold Bath Road, given the increase in pupil and parent numbers in this area. He was very understanding and has said he will look into erecting some signage, warning drivers to take particular care. We have also asked the police if it would be possible to have an officer in the vicinity at these times to help with traffic calming and general safety. They have not been able to commit to this on a daily basis, due to the pressures they are under, but have said they will do their best to have someone present whenever they can.

I hope this letter hasn't come across as too negative or critical. School has been buzzing this week and I only wish you could have had a glimpse or a taste of the atmosphere inside. The building is full of purposeful chatter and smiling, excited children. Everyone is so happy to be back, working and learning together and long may it continue.

However, safety has to be our biggest priority and I am confident that by working together for the benefit of the children, we can vastly improve our and their experience, at the start and end of each day.

Have a lovely weekend,



Tim Broad
Headteacher

