



21<sup>st</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Happy New Year and welcome back to the Spring Term – let's hope the weather starts to show us some signs of this over the coming weeks! In the meantime, please ensure your children have appropriate coats, hats and gloves etc. to make sure they are warm at play and lunchtimes and remember that they can wear a plain navy tracksuit (or one with the Dowson logo from either of our suppliers) as part of their p.e. kit for outdoors. Remember to label everything with their names too – lost property continues to overflow!

Our theme for this year is 'We are Dowson, Doing it the Dowson Way!'. We have chosen this as a theme that will help staff, pupils and parents re-group, re-visit and remember some of the things that over the turbulence of the pandemic may have had to change, happen differently or not at all. Our pupils are rising to the challenges of demonstrating our values and the high expectations we have of them in their learning and conduct behaviours – they are making us incredibly proud and showing acceleration in their learning to mitigate some of the impact that the disruptions have caused. We really hope that later in the year, we can get back to inviting you in to one of our exhibitions so that your children can share some of their fantastic work.

### Term dates 2022-2023

Along with this letter, you will find the term dates for the next academic year (I can't believe I am sending them already) for those of you that like to be ultra-organised and maybe even get your holidays booked in. May I remind you though that holidays are not authorised in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that absences over 10 sessions may result in the local authority issuing a penalty notice. I would also like to point out that this is a draft version only and all of the dates, but particularly the inset dates, are subject to change. Further updates to this document will be updated on our website if and when any changes are made.

### Road Safety and Parking

Last week marked Road Safety week nationally. Unfortunately, we continue to see dangerous and disrespectful driving and parking around and within our school grounds and surrounding streets on a daily basis. I also continue to be alarmed by the stories that a number of parents share with school and those from our neighbours both in terms of people's initial actions and their reactions if challenged; sadly, this is also true for any staff who make attempts to keep our pupils safe by requesting those parked dangerously or illegally to move on.

We have had some serious near misses for pedestrians recently and horrible upsetting encounters for those trying to promote safety and I am increasingly concerned about the possibilities that lack of care and attention around this issue may result in.

Therefore, once again, I make yet another plea, for the sake of our pupils – your children's – safety:

- Drive carefully, slowly and cautiously when approaching school
- Park legally and courteously, without blocking driveways, being on the yellow zigzags or in the school grounds' disabled bays without a blue badge.



- Ensure when parked that families, including those with pushchairs or prams can still walk past your vehicle without having to enter a road.
- Switch your engine's off and not leave them idling in order that we reduce emissions and keep the little lungs walking by fume free.
- Respect and understand the requests to move on or change driving behaviours when challenged: two minutes is two too many if it endangers a child.

We will continue to liaise with local traffic enforcement and police teams on this where we can and will pass number plates of persistent offenders to the teams in order to work on making everyone's journey to school safer, less stressful and worrying.

### Parent - School Communications

We appreciate that the introduction of MCAS as a new form of communication with school has introduced some uncertainty with how parents should get in touch with us if needed. We endeavour to have several forms of communication so that school's messages to you can reach you as quick as possible which is why we often put the same communication on several different platforms.

However, for us to receive your communications to us as quickly as possible and ensure they are dealt with and actioned efficiently, we have detailed below how parents/carers should communicate with school depending on the reason for communication.

- **Absences** - regardless of the type of absence, all absences should be reported to school via telephone selecting the option for reporting absence, this can be reported as a voicemail on this service
- **Communications specific for the child's teacher** should be done via Class Dojo. Please do not send messages for your child's teacher via MCAS, teachers do not have access to the messages on MCAS.
- **Late bookings of Dowson's Den**, please call and hold to speak to the main reception.
- **Any other queries** please call school, message via MCAS or email [admin@dowson.tameside.sch.uk](mailto:admin@dowson.tameside.sch.uk)

Please be reminded that teachers are not expected to pick up Class Dojo messages outside their working hours unless they choose to do so, so please be patient when waiting for a response and use other forms of communication if you wish to speak to or get the message to them urgently.

Similarly, our Facebook inbox is not monitored constantly so please refrain from using this as a method of communication and stick to the channels outlined above.

### Updates to Guidance around Covid-19

Finally, you will all be aware of the changes that continue to occur within the guidance nationally and for schools in relation to the pandemic.

Currently, the following statements outline the guidance:

- Seek a PCR test if you have any of the three main symptoms of covid 19 which remain as a new continuous cough, a temperature higher than 37.8 or a change in or loss of taste and smell. Isolate as soon as symptoms appear and until the results of the test.
- If you are considered as a close contact of a positive case of the virus, you no longer need a PCR test but should take an LFD test each day for 7 days since the last point of contact.
- You should isolate immediately if you have a positive LFD test and do not need a confirmatory PCR. All eligible adults and children (see link below for details of this) now only need to isolate for 5 days. From the 5<sup>th</sup> day, if you take a LFD on two consecutive days, 24 hours apart, you can stop isolation immediately after the second negative test. This is a rolling 2 days from the 5<sup>th</sup> day up to and including the 10<sup>th</sup> day if you continue to test positive.
- After any full 10 day isolations, you may leave isolation unless you still have a temperature.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

At the minute, I must tell you that we have the highest case rates we have ever had in school at any time in the whole pandemic. More than half of our classes have active cases. Although the guidance on symptoms still lists the main three that have been the same throughout, we are seeing a high number of pupils with headache, sore throat, cold symptoms and tummy ache with the current variant.

Therefore, I ask that you all remain vigilant, take part in regular rapid testing for your family and certainly, where we have sent warn and inform letters, continue to test children daily for 7 days in order that we can take as many cases out of circulation as possible.

When pupils are isolating due to covid 19, we will continue to provide remote learning as before and would be grateful if you can support them to complete this if they are well enough so that they do not suffer from further disruptions to their education.

Thank you for your continued support as always. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any concerns or questions regarding any of the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs K Thornburn  
Principal

