



7th September

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to the new school year, even though many of you didn't finish the last one! I hope you have all managed to spend some quality time with your children during the summer break and have a rest of some kind too after being their teachers for 6 months as well as their parents! Let's hope that although with some differences in place for a while, this school year is a little less eventful unless in a positive way.

A special and very warm welcome to our new children and families who join Team Dowson this year. We hope you will be very happy here and look forward to working with you from the very start of your child's journey through the crucial Primary School years with us.

As we start the new year, I have a few things I need to tell you about or remind you of so that we can continue to run school in an efficient and effective way that is a positive experience for everyone – especially your children.

New systems for drop off and pick up.

Thank you for supporting our new systems at the beginning and end of the school day: I am sure you will agree that it has helped everyone to feel it is less busy and we are all able to keep a safe distance to others. With this in mind, can I ask that you please adhere to the times you have been given, that you move on as soon as possible around the one way routes and that you adhere to social distancing and refrain from gathering in groups anywhere on school grounds in order to keep everyone feeling safe and confident in our systems.

Roof works and Parking

You will have seen that our Upper School building has some ongoing roof works underway – these have been extended due to the poor weather conditions over the summer when they were planned to be completed. Because of these works, we are struggling for staff parking and therefore having to use some of the surrounding school grounds and the disabled bays at the end of the driveway. Blue badge holders only may still access the space just behind and just block these in whilst you drop off / pick up. Thank you for your understanding.

Whole School Theme

Each year we have a whole school theme that we focus on. In the past we have enjoyed such themes as 'We all love learning', 'We can change the world' and 'Great Britain, Great Manchester, Great Me'. We didn't quite get to do as much as we would have liked on 'Knowledge is Power' last year so we will be tying this in with this year's theme which is simply, 'We are Dowson, doing it the Dowson way'. We felt that this was an ideal time to remind children of





things such as the school values and expectations as well as working hard again on the basics of being a good learner and the dispositions and mindset needed for this.

Dates for the Diary

Although we have issued a list of dates for your diary, these are 'pencilled in' only as we do not yet know when schools will be able to hold events that include 'gatherings'. Please make a note of the dates for in the best case scenario and in the worst case scenario, we will keep in touch with you about alternative methods that we can continue to work together to support and celebrate your child's education and special times in school.

Attendance

A huge thank you to you all for entrusting your precious children to us during such unprecedented times when it must feel daunting and the whole country has eyes on what school openings will bring. We had 99% attendance across the first week back and that is AMAZING! It is so lovely to have a school full of happy smiling children again and the buzz of learning and busyness is already palpable.

This year, we know it will be difficult to meet our usual target of 97% again which always puts us above the National average. With the added complications of COVID symptoms accompanying many childhood illnesses such as the usual winter bugs, coughs and colds, we will undoubtedly need to err on the side of caution, where we would usually encourage attendance with some of these things that could be managed in school. However, I am confident that if we work together and make safe and sensible decisions about children's health and attendance in the best interests of everyone, we will still manage to achieve great levels of attendance this year too. As far as possible, children need to be in and learning now more than ever!

Uniform

It is lovely to see everyone back and looking so smart in their uniforms. Whilst we acknowledged there were some difficulties in the summer term for those who had outgrown things and were only returning for a short period and made adjustments to our policy for this, we are now back to our full uniform expectations. Please contact school if for any reason you are unable to fulfil this requirement and we can support you where necessary. Some reminders are:

- Shorts and blue checked dresses are summer term uniform only and it is now the autumn term.
- Hair accessories should be school colours and of a sensible size.
- No boots or trainers except for in p.e

In addition, we know that many children coloured their hair for periods of lock down and appreciate that this takes a while to wash out / fade or be cut out but we ask that you do not re-do this in line with our policy that children should not have their hair coloured or dyed.





Finally can I put out a plea to please, please label ALL items of your children's uniform, including footwear, coats, ties, lunchboxes etc. so that they are identifiable in the event that they become misplaced. This is more important than ever at the moment as we do not want to send items into your household that do not belong to your family for obvious reasons. We already have some items with no names that we have been unable to match up to children and we have only been back three days!

Homework

You will remember from the letter I wrote in end of year reports that I said we might have to make temporary changes to homework this year in order to help children to get back to where they need to be in their learning and I know you will support us with this. As always, the daily reading with your children continues to be the single most important thing you can do. In addition to this, challenge cards and talk homework will continue and there will be times that teachers set homework in areas that children need to do more practise in or to support their knowledge and understanding in an area they did not complete last year. Any homework will always be clear on how long pupils have to complete and return it and have explanations to help you support the work.

Jeans for Genes Day

After the success of last year's first Jeans for Genes day at Dowson, we are once again holding a dress down in your denim day for this wonderful cause. On Friday 18th September, children can bring a £1 and wear their own clothes to raise money that will provide care and support services to children across the UK with a range of genetic disorders. Children will discuss in age-appropriate ways what happens when there is a problem with our genes and how this affects children just like them, considering what life must be like to live with different conditions and hopefully learning how lucky they are!

I think that is enough information from me, for now!

Please don't hesitate to contact school if you have any questions or request more information regarding anything outlined in this letter or any other aspect of school.

Kind regards,

Mrs Kathryn Thornburn

Principal

