



The Palmer Academy
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Executive Headteacher: Mr Aaron Wanford
Head of School: Miss Libby Thomassen

Monday 13th June 2022

Welcome and Introduction

Dear Parents and Carers,

I want to write to you this week to personally introduce myself, following the communication you were sent last week about the change of leadership at Palmer this term. From my time on the playground at the beginning and end of the day, some of you have had the opportunity see me or say hello (even if you weren't quite sure who I was at the time), and for those parents/carers who have not been on the school site, I hope that this letter serves as a virtual introduction.



For those parents and carers who are new to Palmer this year, you may not remember me, but I was the interim Executive Headteacher at Palmer last academic year between September 2020 and May 2021, whilst Mr. Prendergast was unwell. As such, I know the school well, the children and staff and am quickly able to get stuck back into life at Palmer! The children and staff are so wonderfully friendly, and they have all made me feel welcome in such a short space of time. Please just bear with me as I continue to try to learn as many of the new children's names and faces as I can and get to know yourselves as well. Please do come up and say hello on the playground if you see me when I am at Palmer.

I would like to reassure you that whilst at Palmer between now and Christmas, until a new permanent Headteacher is appointed, I will ensure that Palmer continues its trajectory of improvement. Obviously last time I was here we were amidst the pandemic which meant there was much disruption to all aspects of school life; thankfully, this time we are in much more certain times, and it means we can get on with the job – making sure that our children's learning is the very best it can be, and that our children are happy, safe and well supported in all that they do.

Some parents/carers have already approached me in the playground and given me some useful feedback about how they think Palmer can be even better – particularly around standards of uniform, behaviour and consistency of communication. Whilst there are lots of things for us to be focussing on, these are key things which are important to get right so that pupils, staff and parents/carers know what is going on and what the expectations are. I hope that this letter begins to clarify or reiterate some of these expectations, which may have lapsed over the last year or so, with all the changes.

Communication

Communication is key at Palmer, with such a large school and many families to reach out to. To streamline communication, I am implementing from this week that letters and communications to parents/carers will ONLY go out on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday unless there is an urgent need for another day. This should help you to know when to expect communications, and also helps us better prepare and manage the flow of information that you receive each week. You will continue to receive the Palmer weekly newsletter on a Friday as a round-up and summary of all that is and has been going on.

Uniform

We currently have a high number of pupils who are not wearing the correct uniform on a regular basis. Our expectations for having a uniform at Palmer are based on the notion that a school uniform:

- Promotes a sense of pride in the academy;
- Fosters a feeling of community and belonging;
- Is practical and smart;
- Makes children feel equal to their peers in terms of appearance;
- Sets a high standard of appearance for all, whilst clothing pupils in practical, cost-effective school wear.

As a reminder, our uniform expectations are as follows:

Winter (November-April)	Summer (April-October)
School jumper or school cardigan	School jumper or school cardigan
White shirt or white polo shirt	White shirt or white polo shirt
Grey or black trousers	Grey or black shorts
Grey/white/black socks	Grey/white/black socks
Plain black shoes	Blue gingham summer dress
Grey or black skirts	Plain black shoes

The following items of clothing are not permitted:

- Heeled boots/shoes
- Open-toed shoes
- Trainers
- Hooped/dangling earrings

Please be aware that if your child is in the incorrect uniform, you may receive a letter from myself asking you to ensure that this is corrected within one week. If parents/carers are experiencing any difficulties in sourcing or funding the appropriate uniform, then they should speak to the school office in the first instance. We are currently looking into how we widen our provision for second-hand uniform so that good quality uniform can be re-used when children have outgrown their garments.

Attendance

Our current whole-school attendance is sitting at 92.7% since September 2021. Inevitably, COVID has had an impact on this, particularly during the autumn and spring term, but we are still significantly below national average and have much work to do to ensure that our children benefit from their education by being in school regularly. Nearly 25% of all pupils are deemed to be 'persistently absent' – this means that a quarter of the school has less than 90% attendance, which needs to be addressed. We cannot expect our children to learn and make progress if they are not in school regularly. I will be addressing this over the coming term in more detail, but for now I would like to ask all parents/carers to get their children to school on time.

Our gates open at 8.40am and the bell for lining up goes at 8.50am. The class register is taken before 9:00am. If arriving after 9.00am but before 9.30am children will be recorded as late (L). If they arrive after 9.30am they will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U) unless the reason provided for the lateness is authorised.

Please also be aware that we are receiving an exceptionally high number of requests for leave of absence. In line with our [attendance policy](#), please note that these are only agreed in exceptional cases, and holidays and extended visits to relatives are not exceptional.

Please be aware that the Local Authority will issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for those parents/carers who permit their child to have irregular school attendance. As a school, we must

support this given the significant amount of absence and the urgent need to make sure our children are in school each day, without fail. Our children's education is so important – and we really need your support to ensure that they are here to benefit from the learning we provide.

Sun/weather

The weather over this week is set to be hot, with temperatures rising to the high twenties by the end of the week. Obviously, our children still have break, lunch and PE times when they are outside, and we are mindful of not having the children outside when it is too hot. However, the sun can catch us all out, particularly for the children and so we ask that parents/carers ensure that they apply sun cream before their child comes to school when the weather is sunny.

We would advise that parents/carers send their child into school with a bottle of sun lotion, which is named and has their class names on. Your child must be able to apply their own sun lotion (as far as practically possible, given their age/stage). Staff will keep any sun cream brought into school in a designated tray/area, so that pupils can put on before lunch each day, if required.

Lunch orders

We have an increasing number of pupils turning up each day without ordering a lunch, if they have a school provided one. Parents/carers can order lunches up until the night before, but if you or your child do forget, they can let Mrs. Bryant know at the main entrance in the morning and we can manually add this for you. Please note that if you do not see Mrs. Bryant, your lunch will not be ordered, and you may be asked to come to school to provide a packed lunch for your child.

Thank you for your understanding with these important matters, and if you have any other feedback or suggestions at this time, please don't hesitate to come and speak to me. I want to work in partnership with you, and together I hope we can support each other in the best interests of our children at Palmer.

Yours faithfully,



Mr. Aaron Wanford
Executive Headteacher