

2nd September 2020

Dear Lower Prep Parents,

I hope you have had a fabulous summer and have been able to enjoy the hot weather. Both the Lower Prep Team and I are looking forward to welcoming you to the coming year in the Lower Prep section at Ballard.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the families who are joining us for the first time; we are delighted to welcome you to the Ballard Family.

After such a strange summer term, we are looking forward to a more normal and exciting year ahead and I would like to inform you of some useful points for the new term (but please bear in mind that some of these things may change as we finalise details for this term). We have been working hard to develop the plans and to ensure School is safe for everyone, and details have been sent out by Mr McCleave during the past week. We understand it has been a very different and difficult time for many over the last six months and returning to School will have its own issues. Children are very adaptable, but we are aware that suitable pastoral support will be vital in the coming weeks and months and we will support all in the Ballard family through these times.

I am writing to inform you of some important information for the Lower Prep, which will be effective from today onwards.

Behaviour & Values

As always, we will be focusing strongly on our school core values this year and children will be rewarded for demonstrating these. I would be grateful if you could support and reinforce these values at home - please do share in your child's log book if you notice them independently displaying one of these values. We are keen that children not only thrive at Ballard but also become good citizens.



Be honest Be Kind Be responsible
Be safe Be Curious Be respectful Be positive



Dietary Requirements

We take great pride in reinforcing manners and etiquette at lunch time. The children are encouraged to sit down and participate in discussion, as well as waiting to start their main course or dessert until everyone at their table is ready.

Lunch time provides Lower Prep Form Tutors the chance to sit down and catch up with the children at the same time as teaching them the importance of a balanced and healthy diet. Due to this, we encourage children to try food with which they may not be familiar.

If your child has particular dietary requirements, please advise their Form Tutor via email. Thank you.

Lower Prep Uniform

At the front of your child's logbook you will see a document which explains our school uniform expectations for both inside and outside the classroom.

I would like to highlight that the summer dresses and shorts will be compulsory for all children within the Lower Prep during the Summer Term. The children may wear these shorts and dresses for the first half of the Autumn Term should the weather be clement.

Homework on My School Portal (MSP)

Weekly homework will be posted on *My School Portal* for you to view. We discuss weekly homework with the children in order that they understand what has been set for them. Your child will never be set more than one piece of English and Maths homework a week. We do ask that the children read out aloud once a night at home in addition to practising their timetables on a weekly basis. Apart from this, no further work is required to be completed at home; we feel it is just as important for children have the opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family.

Should you require assistance in order to access My School Portal please do not hesitate to contact our IT Department by emailing ITHelp@ballardschool.co.uk

Assessment Weeks

Once a term, your child will undertake national assessments in Maths and English. We do not complete revision weeks for these tests, nor do we 'teach to tests' as we believe that this may put unnecessary pressure on the child or create a false overview of the child.

We often tell the children that these assessments are not 'the be all and end all'; far from it! The purpose of these assessments is just as much for us as it is for the children. It enables us to review the curriculum; decide what planning is required going forward; and set individual targets for each child to develop within the Lower Prep.

I am passionate and a strong believer that there are different types of intelligence and that everyone has the ability to be brilliant! The Lower Prep is the next step of a very long journey and I encourage my colleagues to not only make sure the foundations are laid but also to make sure that we are inspiring children to find their inner genius and inner confidence. We want the children to experience enriched learning through exciting indoor and outdoor environments whilst feeling safe, happy and included in everything they do. School is far more than just the academia; it's also about the life skills learnt and being good people.

Please take the time to look at the document 'What Are Our Aims for the child during the Lower Prep'. This document can be found at the front of your child's logbook and is something we will constantly refer to during the academic year.

Handwriting and Presentation

Starting from this term, we are looking to move children from using a pencil in Year 3 to a blue Berol Handwriting pen and then, eventually, to using a blue ink pen. The changes will be encouraged and based on staff judgement. Our aim is to get the majority of pupils using a fountain pen by the time they leave Lower Prep. This is an initiative created by Mr McCleave. Our aim is to push pupils to have more pride and employ more diligence when producing and presenting their work. Research shows that this will lead, in the long run, to an increase in the quality of their work.

The school will provide a handwriting pen for every child at the beginning of term. Here is a picture of the proposed pen:



The children will be presented with the blue ink handwriting pen in an assembly or form time when staff feel they have reached the required standard. Here is a picture of the proposed pen:



If parents wish they may, as an alternative, purchase the Stabilo or the Manuscript Pens manufactured by YPO (shown below). Please may we request that parents do not buy pens other than the ones recommended by the school. Children will not be permitted to use biros, friction pens or gel pens.



Waterproofs

We are asking for all children to bring in a suitable waterproof jacket every day as we are going to be taking the children outside for break times as much as possible.

Textbooks and Reading Books

Please can we ask that all books that have been borrowed from either the Lower Prep (such as *Target Your Maths*) or the library are returned on Thursday morning so they can go in to quarantine. Thank you to all of the families that have already done this before the summer break.

Forest School

Forest School sessions will begin on the following dates and then run alternate weeks throughout the term.

Year 3: To wear PE kit every Wednesday

4DW: Friday 11th September (resuming Friday 6th November after half-term)

4JR: Friday 18th September (resuming Friday 13th November after half-term)

5MM: Thursday 10th September (resuming Thursday 5th November after half-term)

5EL: Thursday 17th September (resuming Thursday 12th November after half-term)

To avoid having to change at school, and in order to meet COVID regulations, please ensure your child arrives in school wearing the appropriate clothing on these days, including a waterproof jacket. **They should also bring with them a pair of waterproof trousers and old trainers or welly boots.** We recommend that children wear their PE kit for Forest School until October half term.

In order to help protect skin from stings, ticks, insect bites and sunburn, long sleeves and trousers should be worn, even during warm weather. Please apply sunscreen and insect repellent at home prior to arrival at school.

I apologise for the length of this letter, however, we want to make sure that our families are aware of all the protocols put in place for the safety of everyone involved within the Ballard community.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to email me and I will do my best to answer as promptly as I can.

Yours sincerely

Mr Simon Ridley
Head of Lower Prep

ADDENDUM – Return to school update for Lower Prep

We have been working hard to take the necessary steps to prepare the School for the children to make a happy and successful transition back to School. We understand that every child returning to School will have had a different experience of learning at home and our priority will be supporting them to readjust to School routines and social interactions with their peers and teachers, whilst taking every precaution we can to support everyone's wellbeing and safety.

We aim to make School welcoming to help the children settle back securely but whilst following Government guidelines, there will inevitably be some changes to our normal routines, which are detailed below. These arrangements may be subject to change based on changing guidelines from health and Government officials.

How it will look

We will be operating in Year Group bubbles, with pupils based in classrooms used only by their Year Group:

Year 3 will be based in P1 and P2 (the first floor above the boys changing rooms) with Mrs Laurent and Mrs Hookes-Gosney. Mrs Stembridge will also be the teaching assistant for Year 3.

Year 4 will be in P3 (the first floor above the boys changing rooms) and P15 (opposite the DT Department) with Mrs Reeve and Mr Winch. Miss Travis will be a co-tutor and we will also have Mrs King and Mrs Skidmore as teaching assistants throughout the week.

Year 5 will be in P11 and P16 (both opposite the DT Department) with Mrs Marshall and Miss Liddiard. Mr Wood will be a co-tutor and we also have Mrs Jenkins as the teaching assistant for Year 5.

The children will remain in their classrooms for the majority of their lessons (apart from PE) with the teacher of each subject coming to the children's form room to teach.

Pupils will be kept independent from other 'bubbles' within the School at all times. They will have exclusive use of separate assigned areas of the School, both inside and outside, making use of our beautiful school grounds, and toilets designated for their year group use only. The Lower Prep children will have sole use of the toilets within the changing room corridor.

Normal school rules will apply (other than uniform).

Drop off Arrangements

Please arrive promptly between 8.20am and 8.30am to drop off your child.

Drop off will be in the main car park. We are recommending the parents of older children to stay in their cars as well as maintaining the 2 metre social distancing rules at all times whilst refrain from gathering in the car park after dropping off their child.

We will be allowing Lower Prep Parents to park in the far sports field (past the car park and near the treeline) and walk their children to the sign in point at the front of the main house (underneath the canopies). Here you will be met by Mr Ridley and another member of Lower Prep staff. The children will then enter the building by themselves. Sign out will also take place in this area at either 4.00pm or 5.00pm.

Parents must not enter school buildings at any time unless a prior appointment has been made. Although the Form Tutor should be your first port of call (and we really want to hear from you), this is not the best time of the day to see a Form Tutor; it would be much better to leave a message or email in the first instance. With the new arrangements for this term, this will be particularly important and I urge you to note the drop off arrangements that will be sent out including the fact that we will not be able to run the normal Early Club.

The children should report directly to their Tutor Room where their temperature will be taken on arrival at School using a remote infra-red thermometer. If your child's temperature is 37.8C or greater, their temperature will be checked again after a few minutes and if it is still high you will be asked to collect them immediately.

Pick up Arrangements

The children will come out at 4.00pm or 5.00pm to the designated area where they are dropped off in the morning. We recommend you stay in your car and please maintain the 2 metre social distancing rules at all times.

What to Wear

School uniform is to be worn every day, except for the following:

For Forest School (please refer to the dates stated above)

Years 3 and 4 Tuesday

Year 5 Monday and Wednesday

On these days the children should come wearing full PE kit (i.e. including full tracksuit). N.B. there will be no changing facilities available.

What to bring to School

Please bring all your own equipment which will be kept in your bag or designated work area. Please also bring a reading book.

You may bring, for example, a ball to use at break time.

Water bottle, clearly named – additional water points have been provided so bottles can be refilled.

Trainers for days when they are not in their PE kit but might be doing PE lesson or activity.

No other items should be brought into School.

Classroom Environment

A one-way system is in place around the School, and this will be explained with other guidelines on the first day in School.

The desks in the classrooms have been arranged as far from each other as possible and the teachers will remain 2 metres from the children.

Where possible, windows and doors will be opened to ensure good ventilation.

Break times

The Lower Prep will have morning break on the Astro. Lunchtime will be on the Basketball Court, Outdoor classroom and the grassy area around it.

Children should continue to adhere to social distancing guidelines where possible, whilst still having fun playing together. Break time snacks will be delivered in their designated areas and handed out using tongs.

Lunch

Pupils will eat lunch in the dining room supervised by a member of staff. They will be reminded of the importance of not sharing food and drinks with their friends. The children will sit down for their lunch at midday whilst using the designated tables and maintaining as much social distancing as possible.

Hygiene

Hand sanitisers have been placed at the arrival point and at all the entrances and exits. Pupils should use these when they arrive at School, before and after eating and playtimes and at regular intervals throughout the day. Hand driers are disconnected in the toilets so pupils must wash their hands for the recommended time of 20 seconds and dry them well with paper towels provided.

Good respiratory hygiene will be encouraged and children will be reminded to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow with tissues disposed of in the allocated tissue bins.

Classrooms will be thoroughly and professionally cleaned every evening, with particular attention to frequently touched surfaces.

PPE

Government guidance is changing regularly, but we have decided that children within the Lower Prep will not have to wear face coverings. Staff will be wearing face coverings (masks and/or face shields) when travelling around school.

Responding to someone becoming unwell at School

If a child shows symptoms of COVID-19 whilst at School, the School Nurse will be contacted. They will be cared for in the isolation room, either with the School Nurse or other member of staff. Parents will be contacted to come and collect them immediately. The Government advice below should then be followed <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>.

Finally

It is vitally important that all pupils adhere to these guidelines. Any behaviour that might increase the risk of spreading the virus will result in that pupil being asked to be collected – please refer to the Behaviour Policy addendum produced by Mr Marshall on MSP. If you have any questions, please email him directly on andy.marshall@ballardschool.co.uk.