

To enable all children to achieve, participate and contribute to their community for life'

Kindness

Inclusivity

Resilience

Respect

Openness

Understanding

Empathy



Newsletter

Monday 12th July 2021.

Dear Parents and Carers,

What a weekend - Wimbledon and football finals! If there has been a constant thread that has run through the events of this year, it has to be community. The national community has been bonded and inspired by the England football team, and in particular by a manager who demonstrates a range of qualities that are an inspiration to others.

Our community has also been brought together by the approaching lifting of Covid restrictions. If we are honest, we know there is risk in returning to normality so completely during a time of rising infection numbers but it is clear that the Government have decided the disruption to communities of all kinds and at all levels by Covid should not continue.

Bubbles and continued Covid safety

I could not fail to notice the innate strength of our community as everyone struggles with the rising number of cases. There has been no complaint, no grumbling, no questioning of the regulations we are still required to follow. The community has pulled together, accepted significant inconvenience and got on with making the best of a difficult situation. My thanks therefore must go to parents for their patience. I know short term adjustments to work routines are not easy and impact on family life when bubbles are closed. This has also impacted staff in recent weeks as some of our children's schools have needed to close bubbles.

The decision for schools to no longer require the use of bubbles and the ability to have children collaborate fully is welcomed by some. Please be reassured that the Trust and the Academy will review risk assessments for updated safety measures to ensure that the good record we have managed regarding covid safety will continue. This will be published on the academy website in readiness for September. We will continue to the end of this academic year with all existing measures remaining firmly in place.

Structure for September

Thank you to parents who got in touch regarding classes for next year. Further to this, I would like to outline how classes will be structured for September. Our primary phase will decrease to 4 classes in September as we do not have a large cohort of primary phase pupils joining us this year. Every year the new cohort of pupils is different, and the academy has to adapt to reflect this along with the needs of pupils.

The intent for September is for every class to have a large classroom base where children can move freely through the zoned learning spaces within the arrangement of an enabling classroom environment. This includes a reading corner/space to relax, independent workstations, explicit teaching table, etc. In addition to the main classroom each class will have at least one second room known as a 'break out' space.

Therefore, although some classes may appear larger in their pupil listing (averaging 8 – 11 pupils), children will work in small groups across their learning environments and rooms, not necessarily as a whole class in one room. This means through teachers' planning, delivery and the assess, plan, do, review graduated approach, we enhance our provision through structured small group, pair or individual interventions and maximise use of break-out spaces. Our provision is a distraction limited environment and many children's sensory needs mean they require quiet spaces and small groups to help focus their attention and concentration to a task.

This year many break-out spaces have been designated as classrooms. However, this did not allow for parity as some children with smaller rooms did not have free flow access to the classroom outdoor space for movement breaks when needed throughout the day and movement around smaller rooms was restricted. Our academy was purpose built with the intent of a large classroom, its own outdoor area and a smaller class break-out space opposite the classroom. We know that often children do not cope with larger class sizes.

Classes and teachers will use their break-out rooms flexibly for group work, individual work, therapies, quiet sensory spaces, etc - however it is needed for the individual requirements of children in the class. Most classes will have 2 support assistants, and this means the class team can work across spaces to support a broad and balanced curriculum in delivering our evidence-based autism approaches, EHCP provision and ensure explicit connections are made between learning from everyday classroom teaching and structured interventions.

The TEACCH approach is fundamental to our pedagogy to help pupils develop independent learning skills, manage their own learning and behaviours through carefully planned daily routines, visual and physical structure. There is balance between teacher-led activities and group interaction.

'The enabling environment: Intent for classroom and break-out spaces' document can be found on our website. Provision of an enabling environment is part of the standards and values of the Autism Education Trust.

The systems and design of a classroom along with the placement and use of furniture can enable a better flow of traffic, decrease unsafe behaviour and allow adults to better supervise pupils. For autistic pupils, research has shown that the arrangement of the classroom can impact their learning outcomes. (Kabot & Reeve, 2010).

In September, Key stage 4 will have its own separate base within the academy as year 10 and 11 groups follow a subject based teaching model in preparation for adulthood and transition to post-16 education. Pupils will start and end their day in tutor groups which allow for mentoring, pastoral care and support.

We have a large number of new starters in secondary phase in September and Mr Humphreys has been busy with transition meetings. There will be a secondary phase transition base area and a smaller primary phase transition base area. This will allow staff and pupils to form secure relationships and meet individual needs as we welcome new starters to our community here at Medeshamstede.

Finally, a huge whole school thank you to the Friends of Medeshamstede Academy who funded another 'treat' for children on Friday. The ice-cream van visit provided much enjoyment and excitement to both pupils and staff. Children were able to confidently practice their Skills Builder essential skill of 'speaking' to request their treat and this prompted much planning by the children as to their choice of flavoured topping or ice lollies - much enjoyed by all.

Warm regards,



Mrs Laura Ives
(Principal)