

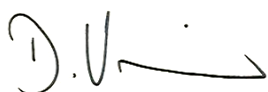


Welcome Back – The New Academic Year

Welcome to the new school year. It has been wonderful to welcome children back. After 18 months of considerable disruption to education, there is a tangible sense that school life is returning to 'normal' in many ways. Whilst we are well aware that COVID is not behind us, many restrictions have been lifted and I hope we will be able to reclaim the feeling of community which has always been so important to us.

I would like to extend a special welcome to parents and carers of children new to our school this term. I hope that your children will feel 'at home' very quickly and you will enjoy being part of this school community.

The staff and I are looking forward to the year ahead, and hope that it will be exciting and fulfilling for the children, enabling them all to flourish.



Daniel Upfield
Principal

General Information for the start of term

School office and buildings

If you need to contact the school office, email or phone remain the easiest way to communicate. However, if you do need to speak to someone in person, please access the office via the main front entrance and not via internal corridors.

Please note that parents and carers should only come into school corridors/classrooms with agreement from a member of staff or for an appointment. This will enable us to ensure the safeguarding of children in our school buildings at all times.

Medicines

Prescription medicines must be given to the school office as soon as possible. Parents must also complete a permission form for each prescription medication before these can be administered in school. In particular, please ensure that inhalers are brought to the school office as soon as possible if your child requires one to be held in school. Also note that it is parental responsibility to replace medicines which have become out of date. If you are unsure of the dates on your child's medicine at any point, please contact the school office.

Parents with a child who has regular medication (for a long-term condition) which is kept in school (such as inhalers or EpiPens) need a 'Health Care Plan'. If your child's details and medication are unchanged from last year, this does not need to be updated. However, if your child now needs a first Health Care Plan or details need to be amended, please contact the school office.

School uniform

The children have come back into school looking very smart: our aim is to enable all pupils to feel a pride in themselves and their uniforms, and that the high standards expected of the children in all aspects of their work and behaviour, are reflected in their smart appearance. The staff will be monitoring uniform carefully and I would ask that you ensure that your child comes to school each day correctly dressed. The full uniform list is available on our school website for your reference.

If a child has pierced ears, studs may be worn but these have to be removed or covered with micropore tape for PE lessons. Watches are allowed but must be removed for PE and children must take full responsibility for them.

I would like to draw your attention to the PE uniform as this is one area where it would be good to see a real improvement this year. Children should wear their PE kit to school on PE days.

Ark Swift polo shirt



Plain black shorts*



Plain black tracksuit trousers/leggings



** Optional to purchase from school. If purchasing from elsewhere, please ensure shorts are plain black*

In colder weather, children may wear the school sweatshirt/cardigan with their PE kit. Other hoodies and sweatshirts are not permitted.

Packed Lunches

Since we have a number of children in school with nut allergies, we request that packed lunches do not contain any nuts or peanut butter. As we continue to encourage our children to lead healthy lifestyles, we ask that packed lunches do not contain sweets or chocolate bars. Please note that children are able to bring dried or fresh fruit or vegetables to enjoy at morning playtimes – no cereal bars or other foods please.

Sweets

As adults we are all aware of the need to think carefully about the children's diets, and specifically their intake of foods and drinks that are high in sugars. Please help us by remembering that children should not bring in birthday sweets or birthday cakes, either for sharing in the classroom or in the playground at the end of the day. We do of course celebrate the children's birthdays with them, but ask for your support as we seek to encourage the children to make healthy choices.

Pupil Illness

At the beginning of term, I thought it would be useful to remind parents and carers of our procedures regarding (non-COVID) pupil illness.

In general, and for illnesses other than COVID-19, the school should be contacted on the first day of the child's illness via phone or e-mail to info@arkswiftprimary.org before the start of the school day. Please ensure that you give your child's full name and class. If your child is absent for several days or is suffering from a condition which may be contagious, a daily update is requested. The school would normally authorise absence for illness unless there is a pattern or an unusually high level of absence, when we would ask for further evidence such as a doctor's note.

In line with current NHS advice, we ask that children who have diarrhoea and vomiting are kept away from school for at least 48 hours after the last episode in order to prevent spreading any infection to others. Thank you in advance for your support as we try to ensure that we limit illnesses as much as possible this year.

Bikes and scooters

I would like to remind everyone that bikes and scooters must be pushed (and not ridden) on site. Please do ensure that younger siblings also push rather than ride their bikes/scooters. All bikes and scooters must be taken home every Friday evening.

Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular sporting activities are re-starting this term. Miss Burton is currently collating a timetable, which will be sent to you as soon as possible.

Times of the school day

The government's COVID guidance advises that staggered starts and ends to the school day are no longer required. Although popular with some, staggered starts have created their own challenges, particularly in ensuring children arrive at school in a timely way. Our start of the school day aims to ensure that each child arrives in a calm and orderly way and starts the day in a way which helps them to focus and begin their day's learning effectively.

The timings for all classes will be as follows:

8:40am	Gates open
8:40-8:55am	Children arrive and go directly to classrooms; they will immediately engage in a calm individual activity
9:00am	Register is taken. Any child arriving after this point will be marked as 'late'

We have also reverted to 3:25pm as the end to the school day for all children. Gates open for parents and carers at 3.25pm and there are no longer restrictions on which parents/ carers can come onto the school site. Face coverings are not required, although some may choose to continue to wear them.

Personal hygiene

We will continue to maintain handwashing / sanitising routines adopted last year, asking children to wash their hands on arrival in the classroom each morning, before eating and after playtimes. It is hoped that this level of personal hygiene may also reduce the incidences of seasonal viruses which can be easily transmitted in school.

Year Group Bubbles, assemblies, and playtimes

The requirement for children to remain strictly in 'bubbles' has been removed, meaning that whole school and key stage assemblies can resume. These are an important feature of school life and the ability to meet together as one community is something which we have missed in the last 18 months. Although assemblies in school have continued throughout the pandemic period, we can now return to a weekly pattern of whole school, key stage and class assemblies and singing.

Year groups are now permitted to mix at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Water bottles

Please can we encourage all children to bring a water bottle from home. Water bottles should be clearly named and must be taken home daily to be washed. It is important that children stay hydrated during the busy school day. Disposable cups will be provided for any children without a water bottle.

COVID cases and isolation

There are new and very different rules about isolation, which should lead to much reduced levels of absence from school for both pupils and members of staff.

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 if any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

Instead, they will be contacted by 'NHS Track and Trace' (not by the school, even if the close contact is in school) informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. Children and members of staff under the age of 18 years 6 months who have been identified as a close contact should continue to attend school as normal. However, if your child is a close contact of someone who has tested positive, it is helpful for us to know; please do contact the school office if this is the case.

Children or adults who develop positive symptoms

Pupils, staff, and other adults who develop COVID-19 symptoms or have had a positive test should follow current public health advice on when to self-isolate and what to do. They should not come into school if they have symptoms or have had a positive test due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19. Please contact the school office if your child develops symptoms.

If a pupil develops symptoms, however mild, whilst at school, we will contact parents and carers and ask you to collect as soon as possible. We know that this can be inconvenient, and children sometimes 'recover' as soon as they are home. However, operational guidance for schools is clear that a child or adult with mild symptoms (new persistent cough, temperature, a change in taste or smell) should isolate and take a PCR test. Thank you for your understanding if you receive a call from the school office.

Mobile Phones and smart watches

We would be grateful for your support in ensuring that children do not bring mobile phones to school. The exception is for children in Years 5 and 6 that walk to and from school by themselves. All phones should be handed to the school office at the start of the school day and collected at home time.

Please also note that in line with our Uniform Policy, watches should be basic analogue or digital; they should be inexpensive and must be named. Smart watches and fitness devices should not be brought into school.

Curriculum newsletters and timetables

Curriculum newsletters and timetables for each class can be found on our website:

<https://arkswift.org/curriculum/curriculum-newsletters-and-timetables>

Staffing

At the start of the new academic year, we are delighted to welcome several new members of staff. A full staff list can be found on our website:

<https://arkswift.org/welcome/staff>

Home Learning

We are currently developing a revised home learning policy. This will be shared with parents in advance of the week beginning 11th October.

This will include details on our expectations for home reading as well as explaining the new book vending machine some of you may have noticed in the main reception area.

Welcome from our new Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

My name is Miss Sentance. I am the Education Welfare Officer for Ark Swift Primary Academy. My primary role within school is improving attendance. Part of this role will involve meeting parents and families to support with any barriers that are affecting children achieving outstanding attendance. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as I am keen for parents to contact me if they need help with any issues surrounding school attendance. I am looking forward to working with lots of families and seeing attendance improve at Ark Swift Primary Academy this year.

Burlington Danes Family Cycle Library

This project run by the PTA at Ark Burlington Danes Primary Academy has children's bikes, a child seat, trailer, and balance bikes available to borrow in Autumn Term 1. This is all offered completely free and is open to Ark Bentworth/Conway/Swift families. Visit <https://bdpa-pta.org/cycle-library> to click on Borrow a Bike to register.

Secondary transfer

A reminder for Year 6 parents that information relating to secondary transfer can be found here on our website:

<https://arkswift.org/admissions/secondary-transfer-september-2022>

If you require any help with secondary applications, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of the leadership team. In addition, Miss Katie is happy to sit with parents and guide them through the online application process.

Secondary applications must be made by **31st October 2021**

The e-admissions website is located here: <https://www.eadmissions.org.uk/eAdmissions/app>

The following secondary schools have asked us to share details of their upcoming open days:

Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA)

- KAA Y6 Open Mornings – Monday 20th September, Tuesday 21st September and Wednesday 22nd September (9.15am-10.30am)
- KAA Y6 Open Evening – Thursday 23rd September (5pm-7.30pm)

Parents can register via the website at <https://kaa.org.uk/admissions/academy-open-days/> - this is especially important for Open Mornings where space is limited.

Phoenix Academy

Phoenix are hosting a VIP feeder school open morning (just for Ark Swift families) on Wednesday 29th September from 9:00-10:15am. You will get the opportunity to see students working hard in lessons, to ask questions and finish with a Q&A session with the Principal.

To attend, complete the form by following this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/XfWGC1vL6H>

Hammersmith Academy

Parents will need to book in order to participate in the events and they can do so here:

- **Year 6 Open Evening** – Thursday 7th October, 4-7PM
Click here to book: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/171046303097>
- **Year 6 Open Morning** – Tuesday 12th October, 9-11AM
Click here to book: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/171261767557>
- **Year 6 Open Morning** – Thursday 14th October, 9-11AM
Click here to book: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/171727861657>

Fairbanding Tests

Applicants must complete a banding test as part of the admission criteria. The early banding test can be sat if parents prefer to know the band in which their child will be placed, prior to their application being submitted.

Early Banding Test – Saturday 25th September 2021 – Please register for this early test by clicking this link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc3AZZXOIZlEbPCmtiEaqMgSsyrvohSmUbmvdYUyihZ7_sltQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Fair Banding – Saturday 27th November 2021 – Registration not required, applicants will be automatically invited once they have applied for their secondary school choices.

Fair Banding – Saturday 4th December 2021 – Registration not required, applicants will be automatically invited once they have applied for their secondary school choices.