

Harleston C.E. Primary Academy

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Headteacher: Miss Hannah Holgate

8th March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you in reference to the pick-up and drop off arrangements we have put in place from today.

As you are aware, I took the decision to change the approach to one where parents drop at a designated school gate and the children are met there by familiar staff. To reiterate, I took that decision to ensure we keep children and staff as safe as possible. By minimising the number of people on site, it reduces the risk of Covid transmission. This keeps children and staff as safe as possible and gives us the best chance of keeping all classes and children in school.

I have had parents express support for this change and others who have been critical. This reflects the challenges of managing risk across a wide community and it is not a responsibility I take lightly. I requested for the St Benet's Trust Head of Operations who oversees Safeguarding and Health and Safety to be on site this morning to review our approach and she reported

'Having attended on site this morning to welcome children back into school, it was clear that coming back to be with their friends and to see their teacher again, was very important to Harleston pupils.

Teachers and staff members were on hand at each gate to greet and collect pupils in a safe and supportive manner and to assist with parents' and carers queries around which gate/timings to use. The timings allowed the class bubbles to go to their respective classrooms before the second intake began which worked well so bubbles did not mix.'

She continued to explain that it was important for adults to socially distance;

'Understandably on the first day parents wanted to wave goodbye to their child, or to speak with other parents and this did lead to congestion outside the gates where groups of parents were not socially distanced from each other. Seeing the child through the gate and then moving either across the road or away from the main entrance will of course keep everyone safe. A number of children were so excited to be back they shot through the gate before the parents could hand over their bags/sports kits, but staff were able to collect these and those children who were a little anxious or teary, could be seen minutes later chatting to their friends.'

My Leadership team and I will continue to review the approach and I ask that all of the school community work together to make this work as well as possible.

Why can't we drop off like we did previously?

It is the school's view that the safest way to minimise mixing between children in different bubbles (ie children not in their class) and therefore decreasing the risk of transmission is for children to say goodbye to their parents or carers at the gate. This protects children and staff by removing any congregating or mixing on site. We had many parents raise concerns about the previous approach and the amount of mixing between children and adults it created.

How you can help us:

- Please use the full window of the staggered drop off times as this reduces any crowds.
- Please don't arrive early. If it is busy near your gate and you have time please wait for any groups to clear;
- Please move along the path once you have said goodbye to your child as a steady flow helps social distancing;
- Please maintain social distancing. This may make lines for drop off look longer but it allows space in line with Covid guidance.
- Please wear a mask whilst waiting to drop your child off

How we can help you:

- If your child is particularly anxious and drop off is difficult as a result, Mr Mullen will be positioned on Gate B. He can offer extra support and an alternative route into school if your child has found change overwhelming and needs more support.
- Please talk to us by calling or emailing us. We will be looking to set up a parent forum in the summer term, so that we can work together to build a strong foundation for the children in our community.

Thank you to all who offered positive comments this morning and it was wonderful to see so many happy smiling children return to the school today.

Kindest Regards,

Hannah Holgate
Headteacher