

# BACK TO SCHOOL NEWSLETTER 2021



We are looking forward to welcoming the children back to school from **Monday 6th September**. Staff have been busy preparing their classrooms and are ready for the new school year.

We hope you have had a lovely Summer break. We'd like to thank Mrs Hutchings and her team for running another successful Summer Club for our children. This year we had record numbers of children come along to enjoy fun activities together over the Summer. And in between running Summer Club Mrs Hutchings somehow managed to find the time to get married and is now Mrs Higgins - Congratulations Mrs and Mr Higgins.

We've been working hard to make sure the school environment is ready for all the children to return to. We very much hope that the children can enjoy a more settled year this year. We have followed national and local guidance in making our plans. Some recently introduced structures and routines will be kept because they work well or are still needed for safety but in other areas of school life we'll return to the old systems as the DfE are encouraging schools to reduce restrictions that impact on children's education and wellbeing. The most significant of these changes is that children no longer need to stay in bubbles and can mix and play with children across the school meaning they can move around the school freely. We are very excited to be able to allow the children to be together again and hope to re-establish the family culture of children caring for each other across the school.

## **Classroom staff**

Mulberry Class: Debbie Wellings, Lara Griffiths, Julie Gooch, Jess Rolin & Nita Smith

Aspen Class: Lucy Jones, Louise Kentell (Debbie Wellings & Lara Griffiths)

Pine Class: Trefor Jones, Sophie Bird

Alder Class: Catherine Orr, Faye Poynter, Sarah Higgins (formally Sarah Hutchings)

Cherry Class: Rebecca O'Rourke, Abbey Orr, Michele Isaac, Warren Thornton

Maple Class: Carole Henderson, Jayne Lewis, Tanya Thomas and Warren Thornton

Willow Class: Tim Spelman, Sam Johnson, Pip Owen

Oak Class: Isobel Fowler, Faye Poynter, Paul Newell & Louise Reading

French teaching: Pip Owen

Music teaching: Christina Barrow

PE : Rosie Smith

# **Attendance**

Children starting in YR sometimes need a phased start to school to help them adapt to school life. This should be discussed with the class teacher with the aim to support the child to attend school full time as soon as possible.

After such a disrupted few years and possible further disruption ahead (with the need for families to isolate if they contract coronavirus), good attendance and punctuality is even more important.

Children should attend school everyday unless they are unwell or there is another exceptional reason for absence from school that has been agreed by the school in advance.

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on time everyday. Schools are only allowed by law, to authorise non-medical absences if requested in advance by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides. A school can only authorise such a request if they are satisfied that there are “exceptional circumstances” which apply. However, even if there are exceptional circumstances, schools can still consider any other relevant factors such as previous attendance rates; the ability of the pupil to catch-up on missed work; the wider impact of missing the specified period of time.

Devon County Council’s advice is that schools must be extremely cautious about approving such requests if the pupil’s education is likely to be significantly impacted upon.

Parents should ensure that they know whether the absence will be authorised or not as an **unauthorised absence will likely result in a penalty notice or court summons being issued to each parent for each pupil affected**. It is therefore recommended that parents complete the S2 absence request form (available on the school website or from the school office) **at least three school weeks** before the requested absence.

## **Reporting absence due to ill health**

If your child is not able to attend school, please telephone the school before 9.30am to let us know. If you are leaving a message, please tell us:

- Child’s name
- Reason for the absence
- Expected length of the absence

*If your child is absent from school and we haven’t heard why, we have to consider them as missing. In this event we do what we can to find out where your child is by contacting all of the child’s parents and emergency contacts. If we are not able to confirm that your child is safe we will refer our concerns to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. This procedure is to ensure the safety of all children.*

## **Coronavirus related absence from school**

***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, and 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 Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a [PCR test](#). We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.*

**We strongly encourage parents to book a PCR test for their child if they have had close contact with a positive case of coronavirus and understand that children may need to be absent from school to get to a testing site. Please let us know if your child is having a PCR test so that we can record the absence correctly in the register.**

If a child tests positive for coronavirus they must stay away from school as advised by the NHS test and trace service. If the child is well enough, they will be supported to continue to access lessons from home.

## **Children or staff showing symptoms of coronavirus**

Staff or children showing symptoms of coronavirus must not come to school but should book a PCR test and self isolate until the result is received. Parents with coronavirus symptoms should also self isolate until they have the result of a PCR test and should not mix with others outside of their household during the school run.

If staff or children become unwell with coronavirus symptoms during the school day we will move them away from others until they are able to be taken home. In this circumstance we ask that parents arrange for children to be collected promptly so that they are not left isolated for an extended period.

Children (thankfully) often have mild symptoms when they contract coronavirus but they can carry and pass on the virus. If your child has any of the symptoms - however mild or short lived - please do not send them to school but book a PCR test. We appreciate that this may be inconvenient or worrying but it is extremely important.

### **Main symptoms of coronavirus:**

- a raised temperature (Before taking any paracetamol or ibuprofen) – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature with a thermometer).
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

PCR tests can be taken at home (tests are posted out) or at a testing centre and can be booked here: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

## **Coronavirus Protective Measures still in place**

**Hand Hygiene** - Children will be encouraged to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser properly and regularly. We know that some children experienced sore skin caused by additional hand washing and so will continue to provide E45 cream for children to use in school if needed. Children should be encouraged to rinse and dry their hands thoroughly after washing them to help protect their skin.

**Enhanced cleaning** - We will continue to clean school regularly with increased cleaning of 'touch points'

**Ventilation** - Spaces will be as ventilated as possible while keeping a comfortable temperature. Classrooms will be cooler than children might be used to at home and so an extra layer of clothing might be needed. Cooler well ventilated classrooms also help children to stay alert and focused on learning.

**Staff and parents are encouraged to use Lateral Flow test (LFt) twice a week (to be reviewed by DfE at the end of September)** - If a member of the household test positive on a LFt they should isolate and get a PCR test. Other members of the household and close contacts should get a PCR test (children and fully vaccinated adults no longer need to isolate unless they become unwell with covid symptoms or test positive on a LFt or PCR test).

**Visitors to school kept to a minimum.** This will help to keep congestion down in indoor spaces. Parents can make an appointment to come into school if needed or come in if invited by a member of staff but we'd encourage you to use the phone or email when possible.

**Willow class at West Down will continue to use the hall as their classroom to give them more space.**

**No whole school indoor events on school site.** Neither school has an indoor space that is large enough for the school to gather safely. We previously squashed the school community into one room for assemblies or celebrations but the environment was very congested and quickly became stuffy. We will continue to hold outdoor, class or virtual assemblies and celebrations. We will book the village hall when needed for the school to gather if it is available. We will make decisions about Christmas community events as soon as possible (hopefully by half term) but will of course need to keep an eye on changing national and local guidance. We do not expect to hold any community events in the first half term to allow the children to adjust to being part of a larger school group before introducing an adult audience.

## 'Covid keepers'

Some changes made as a result of covid have worked well for the children and so we plan to keep them.

Covid keeper	Why are we keeping this and how sustainable is this change?
Children will continue to have their cooked meals delivered to their classrooms by members of staff.	Lunchtimes are calmer and the children take better responsibility for keeping their eating space tidy. We are relying on more staff helping at lunchtime as this model creates more work. Any increased staffing pressure might mean we need to return to the old system
Parents drop off at the gate	We were worried that younger children would find this hard but actually it made things better for all children. We have had less separation tears over the last year and a calmer start to the day for all and so will keep this change. Children have also become more independent and better able to look after their belongings. It relies on staff being available to meet the children at the gate and so increased staffing pressure might mean we need to return to the old system - if this needs to happen we'll let parents know by email.
Staggered start and end to the day (see new timings)	This makes for a much calmer start to the day and the staggered arrival and departure has significantly reduced traffic congestion in the village making the environment safer for everyone.
Children will be taken out to the gate at the end of the day at Berrynarbor. Parents should not enter the school building without an invitation or appointment.	This seems to be safer for all children. This relies on having enough staff so any increased staffing pressure might mean we need to return to the old system - if this

	needs to happen we'll let parents know by email.
Children at West Down will be taken to the playground to meet parents at the end of the day. Parents should not enter the school building without an invitation or appointment.	This will reduce congestion in the road outside the gate.

## **Step up Measures**

If we have a local outbreak of coronavirus we may be advised to 'step up' our Covid protection measures as part of our contingency plan. This means that we may reintroduce some measures and restrictions for a short period of time to help control an outbreak. We will communicate the implementation of any step up measures to parents via parentmail. Step up measures may include returning to class bubbles and restricting the use of indoor spaces to one bubble, reducing the movement of staff between bubbles and moving some activities outside (eg. singing and exercise).

## **Arriving at school and collecting children at the end of the day**

We will still be limiting the number of visitors onto the school site. This means that unless there are exceptional circumstances, **children should be dropped off at the school gate and come into school without their parent** - this has worked very well over the last year with even our youngest children being more settled and becoming more responsible for their belongings.

Drop off and collection times will remain staggered. We know that families have other commitments and any change to school times can cause difficulties. We are happy for families to swap drop off and collection times but please let us know who you've swapped with to avoid any embarrassment at the school gate. Please notify us of any drop off time swaps by emailing [parents@westberryfederation.org.uk](mailto:parents@westberryfederation.org.uk). Our aim is to limit the total number of families and cars (rather than individuals) arriving at school at one time so swaps can be made between families of different sizes or ages of children.

<b><u>Drop off</u> -</b> 8.40am - Sterridge 8.45am - Colam 8.50am - Umber	<b><u>Pick up</u> -</b> 3pm - Sterridge 3.05pm - Colam 3.10 pm - Umber	These timings will be the arrangement for the entire year. We are more than happy for you to swap with another family, please email <a href="mailto:parents@westberryfederation.org.uk">parents@westberryfederation.org.uk</a> with your swap information.  If you are struggling to make these arrangements please let us know and we will help find a solution that works well for your family.
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At the end of the day the class teachers will help the children to collect their belongings. Berrynarbor children will meet their parents at the school gate at their allocated time. West Down children will meet their parents on the playground at the allocated time. Cherry class parents should wait by the Cherry gate at the end of the Cherry playground (just inside the main school gate) Maple class parents should wait near the staffroom.

## **PE Kit**

We hope to introduce a new PE tee shirt later this year in time for inter school events and competitions. The new tee shirts will be brightly coloured so that our children are easy to spot amongst other schools. Until this is introduced children should continue to wear white or grey tee shirts and black shorts, leggings or jogging bottoms if a PE kit is needed (see below - not all children need a PE kit)

## **Stationery, uniform and school supplies**

	<b>Cherry</b>	<b>Maple</b>	<b>Willow</b>	<b>Oak</b>	<b>Mulberry</b>	<b>Aspen</b>	<b>Pine</b>	<b>Alder</b>
<b>Full school uniform</b>	YR only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Active school shoes that are suitable for running in.</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Waterproof coat or jacket</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Waterproof trousers or all in one</b>	Yes	Yes	On occasion *	On occasion *	Yes	Yes	On occasion *	On occasion *
<b>PE kit</b>	No	For use later in year	Yes	Yes	No	For use later in year	Yes	Yes
<b>Change of clothes including underclothes</b>	Yes	Yes or PE kit	No but spare socks and pants in with PE kit	No but spare socks and pants in with PE kit	Yes	Yes	No but spare socks and pants in with PE kit	No but spare socks and pants in with PE kit
<b>Trainers</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Pencil case with stationery</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Wellington Boots</b>	Yes	Yes	On occasion *	On occasion *	Yes	Yes	On occasion *	On occasion *
<b>Headphones for use with chromebooks</b>	No	No	If possible	If possible	No	If possible	If possible	If possible

\*Children may need these items for particular activities on specific days - the teachers will inform the children when they need them.

**Children will continue to be discouraged from sharing stationery and clothes. We will not allow children to borrow supplies from their friends or items of lost property if they don't have what they need. Please ensure that all of your child's belongings are labelled with their name. This means labelling each individual item of clothing (including shoes) and stationery.**

## **Contacting school staff**

There will not be the opportunity for parents to pop in and see their child's teacher as children must be dropped off at the school gate in the morning. If you have any information to pass to your child's teacher please email [parents@westberryfederation.org.uk](mailto:parents@westberryfederation.org.uk). If you have an issue that you need to discuss with a member of staff, please call the school office and we'll arrange a time for a member of staff to call you back or invite you into school for a meeting.

## **Maintaining contact with or meeting other parents**

Parents at both schools have established a parent Facebook page as a way for parents to safely connect and communicate with each other. These pages are being run by parents of children at our schools independently of school. In the past, parents have posted spelling lists, uniform swaps, school letters and useful tips and we hope this will continue to be a useful source of information and sharing. We have new families joining both of our schools. Please do what you can to welcome these new families and ensure that none of our families become isolated. Both villages have wonderful play areas that many families use after school - please encourage new families to join you.

Thank you to those parents who have set up and are maintaining these Facebook groups and to all those parents who have contributed to them.

West Down parents should search facebook for: West Down School Buddies  
Berryarbor parents should search facebook for: Berry parents

## **Consent Forms on Parentmail**

Please log into Parentmail to complete the consent forms needed for your child to take part in some school activities. There are different forms for different aged children and forms will need to be completed for all individual children please.

If you need help logging into your Parentmail account please contact the school office or email [parents@westberryfederation.org.uk](mailto:parents@westberryfederation.org.uk)

## **Data collection forms**

Your child will bring home a data collection form on their first day back. These forms will show the information that we hold about your child on our school management system. Please check these forms, make any



amendments needed and sign the bottom and send them back to the school office. Please put the form back in the envelope that it came home in and tick the box on the outside to show if you've made any changes. This will help our admin team to prioritise their work. **All data collection forms must be signed and returned even if you don't need to make any changes.**

## **Afterschool Club and Breakfast Club Bookings**

Breakfast club and afterschool club will be open at Berrynarbor and Breakfast club will be open at West Down. Booking will be taken via parentmail in the 'Accounts' section. Prebooked sessions are cheaper as prebooking allows us to organise staffing more efficiently. Prebooked sessions for the Autumn Term charged at the cheaper hourly rate can be made until Friday 10th September.

## **Private Music Lessons**

Private music lessons will be available in school. If your child would like to start music lessons please contact Mrs Barrow for more information. [barrowc@westberryfederation.org.uk](mailto:barrowc@westberryfederation.org.uk). Mrs Barrow coordinates all visiting music teachers for us.

## **GDPR**

Our Data Protection Officer is Jo Williams. Our school website has our up to date policies and privacy notices.

## **Safeguarding**

Our new safeguarding policies are available on our school website. Please check them as they contain useful information about how to keep your child safe as well as outlining what we do in school to safeguard your child.

## **If your child is starting school with us for the first time...**

Starting school is a big and exciting step for you and your child. It is common for children and parents to feel a little anxious before quickly settling into school life. We want your child's time with us to be fun and productive, and for you and your child to feel safe. If you have any questions or concerns, however big or small, or however last minute – please get in touch. We will do what we can to make your child's time in our school positive. Emails to the [parents@westberryfederation.org.uk](mailto:parents@westberryfederation.org.uk) address will be read by Mrs Carey or Mrs Poynter and sent on to the appropriate member of staff.

**We look forward to seeing you soon!**