



Explore, Learn and Grow Together

Brewery Road
Wooler
Northumberland
NE71 6QF

Friday 8th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to the start of the 2023-2024 academic year. It has been a busy few days welcoming all of the children into school and establishing our school routines again. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all children and families starting with us this autumn across the Nursery, First School and Middle School. Parents and carers can expect the usual communications from teachers and form tutors at the start of term regarding children's learning and timetables/kit days for this term. We also have a couple of staffing changes this year with Miss Malthouse teaching in Year 1 while Mrs Moscrop is on maternity leave and we welcome Mr Newton who is teaching in Year 2 following Mr Tait's departure in July. I am picking up SENDCo duties while Mrs Moscrop is away.

We are keeping sensible arrangements in place around hygiene here in school but the vast majority of our COVID measures have now been stepped down (but remain ready to reinstate if necessary). Our final step down is a welcome return to 'family' seating arrangements in the lunch hall. This means no more strict rows and year group separation with WFS children seated in groups of mixed year groups with Year 4 table leaders and GMS children being able to make their own seating choices. This worked brilliantly, and felt great this week but we will continue to monitor this over the coming weeks and months. We have been told to expect further bouts of respiratory illness over the winter and the most important action for all parents and carers is to be vigilant for any illness and act appropriately. We expect to have the annual winter colds and flu along with the common childhood illnesses to manage but COVID has not gone away and we all must remain vigilant to protect ourselves, families and work colleagues and to keep our schools open and operating well.

COVID - Four key control measures:

- **Hygiene** (*Handwashing/sanitising – cleaning – respiratory hygiene – PPE*)
- **Ventilation** (*Natural ventilation – windows/doors open – management of temperature and energy use will be a challenge*)
- **Vaccination** (*Take up vaccination offers as they arise this autumn*)
- **Follow Public Health advice**

+ Planning for an outbreak in school

Attendance

School attendance continues to be a focus area for schools across the country post-pandemic. This is the case for our schools here in Wooler as well. We had an up-and-down year with attendance last year with some periods where pupil attendance was back to pre-pandemic levels (over 96%) and others where we fell short of that level. Over all our attendance figures for the 2022-2023 academic year were around 93%...this year we aim to do better! The government has identified this as a national priority and have published documentation for schools and parents/carers. This is called 'Working together to improve school attendance'. The updated Keeping Children Safe In Education legislation also makes much greater emphasis on the important of maintain good levels of school attendance. The message is clear – attendance needs to improve and we all need to work together to achieve that for our children. If you child's attendance was low last year you can expect some contact from us here at school to improve that this year.

Food in school

This is an important one as we have two children here in school with serious nut allergies. We can not have any peanuts in school at all. This includes peanut derived products - the children have been great this week as we have discussed this and they have been checking items in their lunch boxes and morning snacks with me and my colleagues. All staff have been trained to respond to a severe allergic reaction/anaphylactic shock and we now have several auto-injector pens in school that we can use in an emergency with any child if directed to do so from health colleagues on a 999 call. Hopefully this will not be needed!

The message is a simple one – no peanuts in school and products with nuts in are to be avoided. Thank you in advance for your help and understanding with this serious issue.

Wooler & Glendale specific routines and procedures

Wooler First School:

- Wooler First School starts at **9.00am** each day – the site will be open for children to start arriving from 8.45am – children will not be allowed onto the school site before this time. Children will head straight into school via their classroom doors where they are greeted by their teachers. This worked well last year and created a calm and purposeful start to the day. **All children are to be in their classrooms ready for morning registration by 9.00am each morning so getting here on site for just before 8:55am is ideal. I will continue to undertake morning duty welcoming children to school each day and supporting our younger children from school transport.**
- Wooler First School finishes between **3.15pm and 3.25pm** each day – children will exit from school by their classroom exits and staff will identify parents and carers for safe handover at home time. Children on school transport will remain with their teachers and engage in 1:1 and small group activities before being guided to their transport by duty staff at 3.30pm ready to be joined by the older pupils from Glendale.
Oak Class will finish at 3.15pm - Cherry & Cedar Classes at 3.20pm - Willow & Maple Classes at 3.25pm
- Little Acorns Nursery will be following the same daily operation procedures as outlined for Wooler First School above. We will be maintaining the arrangements for drop-off and collection that are currently in place to minimise congestion at these times. Parents will not be allowed into the nursery and will continue to drop-off and collect children from the designated point next to the entrance ramp for the swimming pool. Session times will be confirmed as normal directly from Gillian in the nursery.

Classes for September with teacher contacts:

Oak Class – Miss Symons (3.15pm finish)

Cherry Class – Miss Malthouse (3.20pm finish)

Cedar Class – Mr Newton (3.20pm finish)

Willow Class – Miss Matthews (3.25pm finish)

Maple Class – Mrs Alexander (3.25pm finish)

Glendale Middle School:

- Glendale Middle School starts at **8.55am** each day and all children will again congregate on the rear yard before school. The site will be open for children to start arriving from 8.45am – children will not be allowed onto the school site before this time. Children will assemble at their designated points before heading into school for morning registration in their form groups. **All children are to be on the rear yard by 8.55am each morning so getting here on site for 8:50am is ideal.**
- Glendale Middle School finishes at **3.35pm** each day for all pupils – children will exit from school onto the rear yard and make their way out of school by the pedestrian access point or head to their school transport assembly point outside the hall. Duty staff will check bus and taxi lists and guide children to their transport providers.

Form tutors for September:

Year 5M – Miss Millburn

Year 6E – Mrs Easton

Year 7L – Miss Leishman

Year 8HD – Miss Hall & Miss Dunn

These systems worked very well this week and all of the children now know exactly where they need to be as they arrive at school and as they depart at the end of the day. If you have any question regarding your child here at school the teachers and form tutors noted above should be your first port of call.

Routines and procedures across both of our schools:

- Parental vehicles will not be permitted to come into the school car park to drop off or collect children. Use of the school car park is permitted for parents and carers dropping off children at 8am to our before-school club and again in the evenings when collecting children from after-school club. Parents and carers undertaking Nursery drop-off & collection within the school day are also permitted to use the front car park. Children and parents are expected to walk or cycle to school where possible. If cars must be used parents must park well away from the school and walk in. All parents are expected to be sensible in where they park showing respect for our neighbours. It would be ideal if families could agree where older children will be met outside of school at home time – for example in the car park next to the bowling club or the car park by the garden centre. Older children also need to be reminded that if they are not met as expected away from school at home time they must come back into school so that we can keep them safe until parents/carers arrive to collect them. These rules make it much safer for everyone arriving and departing from our schools – your support is appreciated.
- All children must wash their hands before leaving home to come to school each morning. Enhanced personal hygiene routines will continue for all children with effective hand washing, use of sanitiser and good respiratory hygiene expected at all times.
- Children should wear their school uniform. The children have all presented for school looking very smart this week and staff have given a few gentle reminders regarding piercings etc. **If you have allowed your child to have any piercings at the start of the summer holiday they are to be taken out for school. Any hair colouring must be of natural colour (no pink/blue etc. and no shapes or extreme cuts). Children should not wear any jewellery to school other than a wrist watch.**
- Children must not bring toys from home. At Wooler First School water bottles will be kept in school and washed daily. At Glendale Middle children will continue to be expected to take responsibility for their water bottles bringing them into school and taking them home again each day. Clear bottles are needed here in school. Water will be available to children throughout the day.
- Children are expected to be in school every day but children who are ill must not attend school. All absences must be reported to school via telephone before 8.45am each day.

School Transport – the County Council transport providers are up and running and we have confirmed our start of term bus lists with them. I meet children arriving on school transport each morning and duty staff ensure that they are safely on the correct transport home again in the afternoon. Face coverings are not required on school transport this term for pupils. **Any changes to normal transport arrangements must be communicated clearly to the ladies in the school office – thank you.**

We have individual school photographs here in school on Monday 25th September and the immunisation team will be in school for annual flu vaccinations for all pupils on Tuesday 26th September. We also have a residential visit for our new Year 5s at Ford Castle just before the half term break. Our first significant school events will be our Harvest Festivals – further information on these to follow and we look forward so seeing lots of parents and carers here in school sharing in our celebrations. We are all looking forward to a full and successful year ahead across our schools and clarity regarding the decision to change the organisation of our schools and the wider Berwick Partnership of schools by the County Council from the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

On the back of this letter is a reminder of the safeguarding leads across our schools and I will be following this communication with further safeguarding information as we move into the start of the academic year.

Accompanying this letter is also information about Operation Encompass and how it operates here in our schools. My final note on this welcome letter is to remind everyone that we are also planning to have another work day to clear more of our Forest School later this term. The volunteers from the local log bank will be in and extra hands would be most welcome for a couple of hours - I will put out a paper note soon requesting help.

M.Deane-Hall

Executive Headteacher



Safeguarding

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We are committed to safeguarding and have a culture of 'it could happen here' in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. **Any of our staff can listen and act appropriately on your concerns.** We have specially trained safeguarding leads in our schools - these are our safeguarding team.

Our safeguarding team



Mike Deane-Hall
Headteacher and
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead (DSL)



Victoria Symons
Deputy
Headteacher and
Deputy DSL



Geoff Tong
Deputy
Headteacher and
Deputy DSL



Jennie Dunn
SENDCo and
Deputy DSL



Rachel Mascrop
SENDCo and
Deputy DSL



Sarah Milner
Designated
Teacher for LAC
and Deputy DSL

If you are worried about a child you can:

- Contact our safeguarding team via the usual school contact channels including our main phone number 01668 281 470
- Talk to the local safeguarding team 01670 622 720 or One Call, the Local Authority's single point of access on 01670 536400
- If you believe a child is in immediate danger you should call 999 and report your concern immediately to the police.

More information and our policy on safeguarding and child protection can be found on our website.

The following organisations websites can also provide information and their helplines can listen if you have concerns:

- NSPCC 0808 800 500
- CEOP
- Childline 0800 1111