

Willow Brook Contact

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Dear Willow Brook families,

In a summer where you often have to search for good news, I would like to start my newsletter this week with something very positive! I am pleased to tell you that on Monday Mr Jones was formally offered the permanent position as Willow Brook's deputy head teacher. Over the past year he has worked with me in a temporary role in what must have felt to him like the longest interview of his life! I know that this growing expertise and excellence in the classroom will continue to develop and I am looking forward to starting in September with his enthusiasm and absolute passion for all things 'Willow Brook' by my side. He is also looking forward to learning the art of Year 6 teaching!

Most children have now been introduced to their new teachers. With maternity leaves coming to an end, I am really looking forward to welcoming Miss Johnston and Miss Weston back with us. Mrs Best is coming to take the helm in Year 4 having recently relocated from Surrey. As an experienced teacher who is wonderfully warm and full of enthusiasm, I am sure she will find her feet quickly. Mrs Smith is coming to lead our Year 5 work. She has relocated to Nottinghamshire from London, where her career in the world of economics underpins her love of maths! Over the past year she has completed her teacher training at a West Bridgford School and is looking forward to getting involved in the Willow Brook community. Whilst Miss Johnston will be making visits to get to know her new class in September. During those initial weeks, Year 2 will be in the very capable hands of Miss Scott. Miss Scott worked for many years with the Nottingham Academy before taking a teaching break to work and train in children's emotional wellbeing. Her skills will be very welcome alongside her experience, as we readjust to life in school. Mrs Sampson continues to teach in Reception and Miss Brearey in Year 3. Our team is complete!

Having chosen the wettest weeks possible to hold sports days, we managed a few afternoons of fun and games with our visiting year groups. We very much enjoyed sharing the excitement of having you back in school, albeit in smaller groups and for a short time.



Other transition visits are well underway, and I can imagine that, along with that sense of excitement, children have a slight 'pinch' of trepidation as they spend a short but precious time with their new teachers. I know that this year has been an anxious one in so many ways and that in this regard, the lockdown period has affected us all in different degrees. I also know that September and stepping back into routine, however familiar, will be daunting. This will be the same for our oldest children as for the brand-new members of the Reception class. Adults, too,

worry over change... if you talk to any teacher, they will tell you about the inevitable 'back to school' dream which never ends well... even for the most experienced pair of hands!

As I explained to a parent last week, the wonderful thing about Willow Brook is that every adult knows every child. In termly staff meetings we discuss the academic levels and progress of EACH AND EVERY ONE. Miss Brearey in Year 3, for example, will have been hearing about the children about to come to her since they settled in Reception. Our whole school learning topics that happen 3 times a year enable teachers to share their classrooms and watch how different children work. Subject leaders will know the results of children who excel in their areas of the curriculum and those who need additional support throughout the school. Once a child is established, we all watch them grow. In shared playtimes we watch them interact and communicate. This is what makes a good primary school environment work.

We cannot take away every anxiety and nor do I dismiss how much work will need to be in place to re-establish a reassuring rhythm to school life, but I would encourage you to know how quickly the children who returned in June settled into strange rooms with unfamiliar adults, and the experience for many has been a positive one. Inspiring and accentuating that optimism with your children will be so important.

From **Monday afternoon** next week (20th July) we invite you to collect your child's report from school. As I have explained in the document itself, this is a summary of the school year together with personal comments on key subjects. Whilst assessment data has not been gathered, teachers have been asked to include individual remarks that indicate where your child stood at our last testing point just before lockdown. It is clearly not possible to be as comprehensive as our annual reports usually are, but I hope that it provides a record of the academic year. Any envelopes not collected by Thursday morning will be posted to you.

September

Now that Government guidance has been received and approved by unions, our plans for the autumn term are coming together at a pace. All year groups will be expected to attend, and the class group will function as a distinct 'bubble'. The finer Willow Brook details of how this will work in a busy school day will follow next week. Suffice it to say for today that strict rules and routines around hygiene, ventilation and dedicated spaces will be the backbone of all that we do.

I would urge you to read the following document as you start to gain confidence in our return to school process – it will explain so much:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

Our pupils will operate in year group bubbles, thus ensuring that each unit will consist of no more than 30 children. Whilst staff are permitted to work between classrooms, this will be kept to a minimum. Seating, the use of equipment and movement around the school will follow our comprehensive risk assessments which will be in line with guidance.

Children will arrive at and leave school in slightly staggered time slots. Whilst we love being sociable, this system will need your full cooperation for it to work safely. Social distancing will apply on our premises for adults as in any other public place and to maintain this, we will need to be efficient. Years 5 and 6 will be encouraged to enter the school site independently via the school drive and our younger pupils will use the playground to line up and be handed over to our staff. Adults will not be able to enter the building and we will ask you to communicate with the teachers or the office staff via email or telephone. Exact details for arrival and departure will follow next week.

For the first full week of school, whilst we will be establishing the timetable, school meals will be provided as a packed lunch box. In the second full week, (14th September) we aim to provide hot meals. This will give us the required time to book meals and order supplies for the kitchen.

Staggered lunchtimes in the hall and the use of certain classrooms to eat will enable us to seat two distinct bubbles in sections of the room. Sadly our 'family service' system will have to be put on hold for a while. Midday staff will be assigned to groups.

Similarly, we aim to offer an essential wraparound service once the term begins. It is clear that WB's will not be able to accommodate their usual numbers and will need to operate according to Government guidance. Children will need to be 'bubbled' in small groups beyond their year groups and play in controlled zoned areas in the hall. Equipment will be limited, and it is likely that snacks will not be served in the evening session. You will need to register your September interest and outline your wraparound needs with WB's by contacting them directly as soon as you can.

As I have said, the usual expectations of full attendance will resume in September. We will also expect children to wear full uniform. We will continue to request that children do not bring personal items from home in to school. All essential stationary will be provided, and children will keep their own equipment in individual trays. Please make sure that your child's school bag is not too big. Like Ryan Air, our storage space is small! Other than a simple PE kit and a reading wallet (provided by the school) there is little else that they need to transport.

There is, of course, a comprehensive plan in place should a confirmed covid case be identified within our community. This morning I have attended a Public Health England Health and Safety briefing for school, and whilst our understanding of covid 19 is still rapidly developing, it is clear that the role of children in transmitting the virus is limited or being the source in a family cluster is unlikely. Still, we must ALL be knowledgeable and prepared in the test and trace system and how school will deal with a confirmed case. It is important that you read the procedure in the document above. It is fair to say that we cannot eliminate the risk of a case being identified in our community however fastidious we are in our procedures. What is important is how we maintain our guard and how swiftly and effectively we act in response.

Next week we will publish further details through a FAQ booklet. Our communication will continue over the summer break so that we all return on September 3rd with confidence. For now, I will leave you to read the 'official guidance for parents' and take in all that it includes.

We look forward to welcoming our final three visiting 'bubbles' next week. I also look forward to seeing you if you visit to collect your child's report.

Until then, I send our best wishes to you all,

Louise Ballard