



Hillstone News

Dear Parents,

Having had an initial joyous return to school on the 2nd September, last week proved to be a very challenging week. Not from the children, who continue to be behaving well and are calm, happy and engaged with school, but from parents who's anxieties and worries seem to be spilling over into anger and we are sometimes on the receiving end of some of this. Firstly, thank you to the overwhelming majority who send us positive messages—this goes such a long way and helps to keep us sane. Thank you also to those who have emailed using the enquiry@hillstone address. Where possible I will try and phone and speak to people following a communication, but at the very least you will receive an email reply from the school.

Unsurprisingly, at this time of heightened frustration and uncertainty, we know that there is misinformation, rumours and speculation circulating on social media. Many schools are experiencing the same. Sometimes this takes the form of template letters which are circulating and suggested that they are sent to schools. Sometimes it is just pure inaccurate rumour and speculation that causes anxieties and sometimes statements and comments that are simply malicious and/or false. Please, if you do see such posts on social media, do question the motive of some items that are posted by others. We thank the parents that have addressed some of these comments by pointing out that they are untrue or unfair.

Here are some of the issues that we will seek to address. Do not hesitate to contact us through the office or school email if you would like reassurance or to discuss something you are not happy with or would like clarification on.

- ◆ Staggered starts: It was recommended that we had staggered starts to the beginning and end of the school day. However, we could see that our initial timings were actually meaning that more parents had to wait around before they could take children in, so after listening to feedback, these times were adjusted. The vast majority of parents are now happy with these times. Unfortunately, it is still proving difficult for some parents who drive their children to secondary school. We have always stated that our plans will be reviewed every half term so we want to remain with these times for now but we are always open to suggestions that will benefit the majority of our community.
- ◆ Social distancing: We have received numerous complaints from parents who are not happy because some parents are not adhering to social distancing. We have also been met with people objecting when we do point out to them that they should be social distancing. It is incumbent upon us all to be considerate to others and help keep everyone safe. Some of our community are in a vulnerable situation, either due to their own health or because they are living with someone who is vulnerable. Some schools ask for only one parent to enter the school grounds or for children to line up at the gates and not come on site. We deliberately chose to suggest parents do come on site because we have such large grounds and could easily accommodate everyone keeping a 2 metre distance. Do spread out on to the playground—you will easily be able to see when the doors open for your child's entrance.
- ◆ Thermometers: An anonymous complaint was received by the West Midlands commissioner that we were not undertaking thermometer checks. We have also had three complaints about the use of infra-red thermometers. When a child is displaying Covid symptoms in schools; a high temperature or a new continuous cough, we isolate the child and I take their temperature using an infra-red thermometer. These are the most accurate thermometers and are perfectly safe. Here is a link to a fact checking site which I think you will find useful.
<https://fullfact.org/health/>
- ◆ In order to prevent having to handle cash we have switched to all payments being made on line. This has led to some teething problems regarding snack. All infant children are given the government funded free fruit daily. Like junior children they also have the option to pay for snack if they wish, **but this is an additional snack to the free snack**. No child would be left to go hungry—if they want something and there is an issue over payment, we will liaise with parents at the end of the day. **All** parents will continue to be offered the Amazon delivered Magic Breakfast bags (catering tin of baked bin, bagels and porridge) and this will continue whilst we are not able to offer our free breakfast club to everyone. We have been advised that this service will end on the 4th January 2021. Look out for more information regarding this soon.



Contact Details

We have found the best method for communication is to send out text messages. We are trying not to inundate you with texts but we know how frustrating it can be if you feel you have not been given up to date information. We are also able to see if messages have been delivered to phones. Do make sure that we have up to date contact details for you, including secondary contacts and both parents, where they are separated.

This is essential not only for our text messages but also for if we need to call you if your child is taken ill.

Coach

Coach has done too good a job here at Hillstone and he's been enticed away to work for Sport Birmingham. I know how reluctant he is to leave us as Hillstone is where his heart is, but this is a terrific opportunity for him. He will be leaving at the end of September and we wish him all the best. I will be advertising soon for a replacement, but I know we have big shoes (trainers!) to fill.

Virtual School

Our virtual school will be back up and running this week. Teachers will post links to the National Oak Academy school every week. This means if your child has to be at home for a day or two, they can access lessons. Some children might like to use it every day, even if they are still at school as it will help with additional learning. If a whole bubble has to self isolate then their teachers will post a much more detailed version of virtual school, as we did during lockdown.

<https://www.hillstone.org.uk/children/learningathome>



Parents you may also find the well-being pages useful to access.

Car Free Streets

This initiative will start in the next couple of weeks. The purpose is to make the area around schools safer and free from pollution. The area around school gates has often been found to be highly polluted and is aggravating children's asthma. I know that this may be a frustration for you initially, but in schools where this has already been trialled it has proved safer and more beneficial for children which is something we all want.

In preparation, you might want to think about whether you can manage without a car on some or all mornings and if you need to drive, where would be the best place to park. We have been advised that there is plenty of parking space up at the park but this will add an extra 5 minutes to your journey. This could be a nice time (if you are not in a mad rush!) to chat to your child about the day ahead and about the benefits of keeping healthy.

