



Hillstone News

Welcome Back

Dear Parents,

I think I had the happiest day at Hillstone in the 19 years that I have been head teacher here on Wednesday. It was such a joy to have all of our children back. I was stunned by the attendance which was 95% that day. Uniform looked incredibly smart and behaviour was exemplary. I know many in the media was deeply concerned by children's mental health after so many months of lock down; I think a return to rules, boundaries and consistency will address many of your worries.

It was good to see parents too and thank you for all of your lovely positive comments and your patience whilst we try to get the logistics right. Our aim is to keep our community safe and to get children back into education so that they can catch up with their missed learning. We followed government guidance in having a staggered start which prevents too many people going through doors and entrances at the same time. However, we know that the times we have given for the staggered starts have left some parents either trying to be in two places at once or having long waits in between, leaving too many adults hanging around school. Mr King has devised a new plan. This will be sent out separately to the newsletter; do ensure you have read and are aware of the new timings. The plan gives you a ten minute period in which to arrive and should alleviate the problems mentioned above, whilst still limiting numbers going through entrances and exits at the same time.

We are fortunate in having such spacious grounds so do remember that you can wait on the playground if you need more space to ensure social distancing. We are trying our best; if you are unhappy about any aspect or have brilliant ideas that you have picked up from other schools then e-mail us on enquiry@hillstone.org.uk or phone and speak to me in person.

We have found the most effective method to communicate with parents and carers is through text messages. Our system informs us if something has not been delivered. At present, there is only a handful of messages that are not being delivered and these are all for secondary contact numbers. Do make sure we have up-to date contact numbers that can be reached at all times.

Bereavement Counselling

Some in our school community have had to deal with loss. I have been recommended this bereavement counselling service and thought I would pass it on to you: <https://www.nationalbereavementpartnership.org/>

Recovery Curriculum

Our aim is to get your children back to age-related standards by the end of this academic year. We will be making use of additional funding and tutoring opportunities. However, anyone who has been involved with Hillstone school will know that we are not only about academic standards but want a breadth of opportunities for our children. We have a number of new initiatives that we will be taking part in, to ensure our children can still participate in outdoor learning, sports and arts. Look out for Nature Friendly Schools, which will begin in the spring term.

Uniform/water bottles

Children returned to school looking very smart; however, I just want to emphasise footwear. Children are asked to wear plain black shoes or trainers. You do not have to buy them expensive ones with flashes and other colours—it does create a problem with children's attitude toward each other. I would also ask that little girls do not wear boots in the winter but stick to school shoes. They can change when they get to school.

Up until now, children could choose whether they purchased a reusable yellow Hillstone water bottle at £2.50 or bought a single use plastic bottle for 30p. We would now prefer it if all children purchased the £2.50 reusable water bottle. This is not only a safer option, but is also better for the planet. The bottles can be taken home and washed on a Friday evening.



Parents courses

Lillian is in the process of organising some back to work courses in IT, English, Maths and working with children. They will be run by Eagles Consultancy and are funded if you are unemployed or in receipt of government support. They will run in the spring term I think, but places will be limited so do look out for further information next week.



Fit Families

Another initiative that we have managed to get funding for is 'Fit Families'. This is a family physical activity initiative funded by Sport England which will be delivered in 3 wards of Birmingham; Ladywood, Hodgehill and Kings Norton. It has been created to be fun and engaging with an innovative touch allowing for families to become aware of their levels of activities and start to



build a better habit for life. The programme has been designed to remove any elements of hassle, effort and stress around taking part, linking to the school day and active travel. Delivery will consist of a specific session for parents, which will then progress on to taking part with their child at the familiar place of your school and a local community setting. This programme has been designed after community consultation. It intends levels of activity to be factored into the routine of the day easily through the walk to school and whilst the parent is on the school site making it convenient and reducing some barriers to participation. The programme is a 2- part programme and will consist of the School Package and the Community Sessions and will be delivered to 24 schools starting from January 2020. It will be a multi-faceted programme, running across 2 school terms, which will lead on to the community sessions that will run for a further year .

This is due to start in the next couple of weeks. I loved seeing so many parents around school last year taking part in sew 'n' grow and couch to 5K as part of the Healthy School award, but also the number of parents participating in adult classes. This sets such a good example for the children, to show them the benefit of life long learning.

Dining @ Hillstone

Chef was really ahead of the game wasn't he, in ensuring that we have healthy but tasty food in school? In light of the pandemic a much stronger emphasis is now being put on healthier lifestyles, including the food we eat. We know children can be fussy eaters, but we have a wide choice of food in school and can encourage them to try a wider variety of foods. A varied diet can be much better for them than bringing in the same packed lunch every day. We have a new electronic recording system which records allergies of each child but we can also tell you what meal your child has chosen. Please note that we do need an official diagnosis from a doctor to record allergies. Chef will always be happy to talk to anyone about food related issues.

At present we have had to limit places at breakfast club. I can't wait to have it open fully again but meanwhile, please do not take up a place if you do not need it i.e. if you have someone else who can bring your child in or If you are working from home.

Virtual School

Our Virtual School remains live for additional learning if families would like it. There will be a range of resources available to support your child's learning for this half term. If your child is required to isolate or is unable to attend school for an extended period of time, please call the office on 0121 675 3573 and arrange a telephone meeting with your child's teacher to discuss your child's needs.

Car Free Streets

Like many schools, we have an issue with cars at the school gate in the morning and around home-time. Birmingham is trying to make these areas safer for children and are piloting 'car free streets'. Car free Streets will start on the 28th September and run from 8.15—8.45 in the morning and 2.45—3.30 in the afternoon. Cars will not be permitted down Hillstone road from the junction of Hillstone and Freasley to the junction with Nearmoor and Hillstone. Staff and residents will need a permit. The road will have barriers put across it. Alan our wonderful site manager will marshal it but we are hoping to get volunteers from amongst our parents/community who will also help marshal on certain days and times. I know the issue is one that bothers many of you concerned for the safety of your children so it would be great if we could act together rather than it just be seen as a school problem. If you would be interested in helping with the scheme, please speak to Alan or Kerry, who can tell you more about it.

Obviously the idea is to try and discourage cars wherever possible. We do not want to push the problem of poor parking onto our neighbouring streets and verges. If you can avoid bringing the car, that would be great - if you need to drive, please consider parking further away. There are spaces for 40 cars, I believe, at the playing fields. It will mean allowing a little extra time, but if it keeps your children safer then I'm sure you will agree that it is well worth it.

In schools where this has been run, there has been a dramatic drop in the levels of pollution around the school, which has got to be good for our children, particularly for those with asthma. We know this will be much safer for our children and encourage fitness if it encourages more people to walk to school

