

17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Re: Arrangements for the new academic year from 1<sup>st</sup> September onwards**

First of all, I trust this finds all Milestone families safe and well. My letter builds on the letter sent earlier this week from LAT's CEO Simon Beamish.

This letter is split into two sections, the first devoted to establishing the context of what we have had to react to since 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the challenges we face as we go into 2020-21 and the mitigating strategies that will need to be in place to enable us to meet these challenges.

The second section is then focussed on the practical arrangements covering the first week Tuesday 1st September and then on into week 2 and the rest of Term 1.

**Section 1**

**Introduction – A reminder of our working context since Monday 23rd March 2020**

Patently at this time of the year families, pupils and staff would usually be looking forward to the end of the academic year and a well-deserved break with the start of next year centring on a single already established September opening date. We would then normally work together based on our collective experience of past years' opening to settle Milestone down over the first day or two – all built of course on transition exercises that each class would have undergone beforehand.

Our past year of 2019-20 has however been very different – almost a year of two halves. A 'pre-Covid-19' half where we operated normally up until Friday March the 20th and the 'Covid-19 present' half from Monday March 23rd onwards. Since that Monday we have understandably had to set up Milestone Academy in relation to a constantly updated set of Government guidance regarding the running of schools in the Covid-19 context.

The broad logistical impact has been that since 23<sup>rd</sup> March we have had to frequently adapt to the unique pandemic conditions that we have all faced. This has meant that over the past months between 9% and 33% of our pupils have been accessing our main site, with less than 25% of our usual number of vehicles delivering and collecting our pupils. In turn, with the need to limit numbers of staff using the site, we have had no more than 40% of staff present at any one time. In turn I chose to close all of our satellites so that all of our resources could be maximised onto our main site.

During this time, we have patently had to rapidly adapt our methods and content of delivery in terms of presenting a curriculum to pupils that initiates educational progress – be that academic or personal progress. My colleagues had virtually no lead in time to plan our reaction to this situation, yet I am so proud of the professional way they have sought to maintain a form of education for our pupils.

Equally we all know that we have been unable to bring our normal community platforms together i.e. classes, phases, satellites, primary, secondary, whole school – community platforms that enable our pupils to experience the critical aspect any school delivers, that of socialisation with peers and /or adults leading and supporting their learning in and out of the classroom.

### **So with regard to this context, what are the key challenges that now face us at Milestone Academy in 2020-21?**

1. How do we safely reform our community and then operate in 2020-21 (main site and satellites) safely whilst we conform to the Government Covid-19 guidelines?
2. The second challenge is a combined logistical/operational one. After almost five months of being apart we must set about bringing our Milestone community back together so that 100% of pupils and staff are able to attend - as well as all the vehicles that are needed to transport our pupils and families in and out.
3. Then in parallel we have the short to medium and possibly long-term challenge of delivering an effective sustainable daily education / EHCP programme (academic/personal/social) to our pupils whilst again having to conform to the updated Government guidance when we are operating in full classes again. We will also need to factor in our pupils having to get used to new class locations, some new class mates and some new adults leading their learning.
4. Whilst doing this we will need to lower the level of totally understandable Covid-19 anxieties that will exist amongst families, pupils and fellow staff.

### **The combined potential negative impact of these challenges can be mitigated by us taking actions that include:**

- Following the most up to date Government Covid safe school guidance that is in use
- Employing rigorous risk assessments in line with Government, LAT, KCC and Union guidance
- Adopting (as the guidelines allow) a phased start across the first week
- Having three separate times of entry and exit on our main site
- Having specific entry / exit times for our satellite pupils - set apart from host Academy timings
- The use of pupil bubbles i.e. specific groups be they on main site or satellites
- Increasing the time devoted to weekly on-going training for ALL staff across the main site and satellites.

As I fear it will sadly be some time before I author a 'post Covid-19' letter to families, we must be prepared to all learn to adapt so that we can in turn be the best prepared we can to adapt the learning for our pupils. What I do know though is that my colleagues, despite all that has gone on, are nothing but very keen to warmly welcome and then deliver learning to our pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> September – and what follows is the framework as to how we will set about bringing this to life

## **Section 2**

### **Practical information**

#### **Organisation of our bubbles**

From 1st September we will reconfigure Milestone Academy both on our main site and in our various satellites as per the Government guidance into a number of self-contained groups known as 'bubbles' – based on a hybrid of their class group, the phase the pupil is in and the location of the class on the site. Each bubble will be made up of classes of the same pupils and appropriate staff each and every day. The use of this approach will ensure that no pupils will interact with pupils from another bubble and, should we have a suspected case of Covid-19, enable us to react in a measured and well-informed manner.



On the main site these bubbles will be configured as follows:

<b>Bubble 1</b>	<b>Early Years Foundation Stage</b>
<b>Bubble 2</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>
<b>Bubble 3</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>
<b>Bubble 4</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>
<b>Bubble 5</b>	<b>Phase 4</b>

### Satellite configurations

Across each satellite site there will be just **one bubble** containing the Satellite Director and all of the separate classes (staff and pupils) at each satellite. Parents, families and pupils in our satellites can rest assured that I have personally led with Janet Tidmas separate detailed discussions with the host Principal of each mainstream LAT Academy. These discussions have also included the relevant Satellite Director and Assistant Principal and our Business Manager to ensure our working practices are both known to and in line with the way the host Academy will be operating from September. The common and galvanizing factor here being that we are all members of LAT and therefore working to a common set of stringent risk assessment models based on the updated Government Covid-19 guidance.

I cannot thank each host Principal enough for the thought they have patently invested in how each of their Academies will accommodate their specific Milestone satellite in this new context and way of working.

**Parents and families will be sent specific arrangements for 2020-21 by each individual Satellite Director**

### Week 1 Term 1 Academic Year 2020-21

This will be based on the best practice we have learnt since 23<sup>rd</sup> March and will therefore be based on a 'phased approach' to reconfiguring Milestone Academy. The table below explains this approach:

<b>Day and date</b>	<b>Pupils to attend Both at Main Site and Satellites</b>	<b>Opening times Main Site Only Satellites arrangements will be sent out separately</b>	<b>Pupil end of day times Main site only Satellites arrangements will be sent out separately</b>
Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept	50% of each bubble – <b>names to be sent out week beginning the 20<sup>th</sup> July</b>	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 3 staggered entry times of 8:50, 9:00 and 9:10am	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 2:50pm, 3:00 and 3.10pm
Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	Same 50% of each bubble as Tuesday	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 3 staggered entry times of 8:50, 9:00 and 9:10am	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 2:50, 3:00 and 3:10pm
Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	The reverse 50% of each bubble – <b>names to be sent out week beginning 20th July</b>	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 3 staggered entry times of 8:50, 9:00 and 9:10am	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 2:50, 3:00 and 3.10pm
Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	The same 50% as Thursday	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 3 staggered entry times of 8:50, 9:00 and 9:10 am	To be confirmed but currently planned to be 2:50, 3:00 and 3.10 pm

**Week 2 from Monday September 7th and onwards into Term 1 - including an early closure for ALL on a Wednesday afternoon**

Again, the times stated at start and end of the days are for the main site with satellite arrangements being sent out separately.

**However, the early pupil closure each Wednesday WILL APPLY TO BOTH THE MAIN SITE and SATELLITES.**

Day	Pupils to attend	Start	End Time
Monday September 7th	100% of all pupils	8:50 /9:00/9:10am	2:50/3:00/3:10pm
Tuesday September 8th	100% of all pupils	8:50 /9:00/9:10am	2:50/3:00/3:10pm
Wednesday September 9th	100% of all pupils	8:50 /9:00/9:10am	<b>1:50/2:00/2:10pm</b>
Thursday September 10th	100% of all pupils	8:50 /9:00/9:10am	2:50/3:00/3:10pm
Friday September 11 <sup>th</sup>	100% of all pupils	8:50 /9:00/9:10am	2:50/3:00/3:10pm

**Week 3 onwards to end Term 1**

Each subsequent week will then follow the Week 2 arrangements subject of course to any national, Kent-wide, local or Milestone Covid-19 related interruptions.

**Increased training of Staff – early pupil closure across ALL sites on Wednesdays from Week 2 Term 1**

The early closure for pupils at 2pm will start on **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September** and on each subsequent Wednesday throughout the term and will mean pupils will leave an hour earlier than the other four days of the week. **It is to come into effect for main site AND all of our satellites.**

My sole reason for moving to this change in the school day is that we can invest more time into staff training.

I recognise that this arrangement will be surprise news for parents and families and I wish to explain the thinking behind my decision.

Over the past years I have been faced with an increasing amount of training needing to be provided for all of our staff in order that we can deliver both an outstanding curriculum and at same time discharge safe medical and behavioural support practice for the benefit of all pupils.

Further demands on this training include the fact that we need to statutorily then re-train staff on medical and pupil behaviour support practices within a legal regulated time frame. Quite simply, if we do not carry out this retraining in the regulated time frame then the members of staff affected must stop carrying out these practices.

Whilst I have shared over the past year my concerns in this area with our Governing Body regarding the demands of training on our staff and the lack of time to deliver it, I will not hide the fact that I believe the onset of Covid-19 has and will ask even more demands on the time needed to train staff. I believe it is my duty to ensure we are fully trained in all of the usual elements of our work but are kept up to speed on how we will need to adapt our practice in light of the constantly updated Covid-19 guidance - this is what I believe parents and families would want me to bring about especially in the climate we currently face.

I can assure parents and families I will keep this decision under review across each Term we are operating in this manner, and that the normal curriculum time allocation will be assured through the creative use of our daily timetable.



## Supporting and mitigating measures we will undertake based on DFE guidelines issued 2nd July 2020

There is an accompanying Appendix to this letter listing these measures which I hope will serve not only to inform parents and families but also to lower understandable anxieties that will exist.

Here is the link to the DFE document we are working from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

### In summary

I would like to first thank **ALL** of my colleagues who have since March 23rd diligently and professionally adapted their practice, be they on site or working at home or indeed operating from a combination of both.

In turn I wish to sincerely thank all parents and families who have diligently answered any requests from myself and colleagues to complete questionnaires / information gathering forms and for the many warm words of support that have been sent our way since Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

Whilst I realise this letter has much information in it, the world we are in now means that any plans are subject at all times to undergoing rapid and sudden change - thus I will write again in later August with an update with regard to these plans.

Please stay safe one and all,

Yours sincerely

*Nigel Jones*

**Nigel Jones**

**Principal**

Appendix attached



## Appendix 1 - DFE guidance that Milestone will follow from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

- Any pupils who have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, must not attend school
- Pupils must clean hands thoroughly more often than usual and will be supported to do so
- Pupils must ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and will be supported to do so
- Any pupil who becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), will be taken to a quarantine room, must be sent home and will need to be picked up as soon as possible
- Pupils must follow 'Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection', which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Pupils should only bring items into school that they need in bags that can be wiped down, no soft toys to be bought in
- All pupils will have their temperature take before they come into school
- Pupils will be collected from transport by a member of staff from their bubble
- Pupils will be instructed and supported not to touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them
- Pupils must wash their hands immediately on arrival, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them, and then wash their hands again before heading to their classroom
- Each bubble will have allocated toilets and only these toilets can be used by the bubble
- Pupils will only mix with others in their bubble whilst receiving a broad and balanced curriculum
- There will be small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating pupils side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on
- Specialist areas can only be used by one bubble a day to ensure thorough cleaning in between bubbles and timetables will reflect this
- Movement around school will be kept to a minimum
- Pupils will have staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups) and some groups will eat in their classroom
- PE lessons will take place outdoors where possible
- For frequently used equipment pupils will have their own sets
- Staff will wear full PPE for all personal care and certain medical procedures, this will include gloves, apron, fluid resistant mask and eye protection
- Staff may wear full PPE when supporting pupils displaying challenging behaviour
- Staff will wear full PPE when supporting pupils who display behaviours such as spitting and smearing
- Any visits to site must be pre booked