



Head's Weekly Newsletter

Issue 1, 4 September 2020



Mrs Ania Hildrey, Headteacher, headteacher@abbotsleaschool.co.uk

Dear Students, Families, Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to the academic year 2020-21 and to the first issue of my Head's Weekly Newsletter – a publication aimed at keeping you up-to-date with the school's life, events and announcements.

We are all well aware of the fact that, even though we have returned to school at last, things are different than before. Not all is smooth sailing yet, as it takes time for the new plans to bed in and become a norm. I refer here to everything from the travel arrangements to and from school, different routines around breaks, playtimes, lunchtimes and assemblies, as well as some restrictions in whole school interactions and certain zones of the schools. We will, however, adapt – that is human nature and a great skill, too. We just need a little time.

Whilst we do this adjusting, learning that awaits our students is simply magnificent and we will waste no time at all in having fun and providing outstanding progression opportunities across the three core areas of our Philosophy of Education: The ASD Model ©:

- **A**cademic studies and progress
- **S**pecialist therapeutic support
- **D**evelopment of essential life skills

During Term 1, our focus will be on returning, re-integrating, re-engaging, re-familiarising and getting used to school life (and all that it entails!). This, for all students new to the school and those returning is key to being able to thrive. In fact, a picture posted by us on social media this week resonates and is a guiding expectation I hold of all staff for this term (and beyond):

MY CHECK LIST FOR EVERY CLASS THIS YEAR

1. Keep them safe
2. Lower their anxiety
about the current situation
3. Make them laugh
4. Make them feel loved
5. Teach them something

All in that order



With kindest regards, I wish you all a nice weekend and a very successful year ahead.

Mrs A. Hildrey
Headteacher

2020-21 Term dates

School day: 8:30am – 2:30pm

Term 1:

1 September 2020 – INSET DAY

2 September 2020 – ADDITIONAL INSET DAY

Students start:

EY/KS1, KS2, KS3, KS4 – Thursday 3 September 2020

KS5 – Monday, 7 September 2020

Term ends: Friday, 23 October 2020

October break: Monday 26 October to Friday 30 October 2020

Term 2:

Students return: 2 November 2020

Term ends: Friday 18 December 2020 at 1:00pm

Christmas break: Monday 21 December 2020 to Friday 1 January 2021

Term 3:

4 January 2021 – INSET Day

Students return: 5 January 2021

Term ends: 12 February 2021

February break: Monday 15 February 2021 to Friday 19 February 2021

Term 4:

Students return: 22 February 2021

Term ends: Friday 26 March 2021 at 1:00pm

Easter break: Monday 29 March 2021 to Friday 9 April 2021

Term 5:

Students return: 12 April 2021

May day: Monday 3 May 2021

Term ends - 28 May 2021

May break: Monday 31 May to Friday 4 June 2021

Term 6:

Starts: 7 June 2021 – students return

25 June 2021 – Leavers' Day (for Y11, 12, 13, 14) and end of KS5 programme

9 July 2021 – Transition INSET Day

12 – 16 July 2021 - Transition Week

Ends: 16 July 2021 at 1:00pm

19-20 July 2021 – INSET Days (worked as staff' extended twilight days throughout the year)

School holidays: Monday 16 July to Tuesday, 31 August 2021

Deputy Headteacher

Mrs Emily Tobin, Deputy Headteacher

E: deputy@abbotsleaschool.co.uk



Dear families,

Welcome to our new school year at Abbot's Lea School. What a fantastic few days it has been! I thought I would give you a brief summary of the last 4 days from a Teaching and Learning perspective.

Tuesday and Wednesday

On Tuesday and Wednesday staff engaged in a full INSET programme. Amongst many statutory updates we ensured a big focus on the curriculum. We looked in particular at how we ensure high aspirations are set right from Early Years and all the way to our older learners in KS5 with regards to Employability. We looked at our termly themes and how we could ensure high quality discussions are differentiated appropriately to the age group, help them to understand the variance of sectors in which they might like to work.

We also had meaningful discussions about the acquisition of language in our school and the teaching of phonics; both to learners exposed to those phonics for the first time and for learners who may need gaps in understanding to be plugged.

Thursday and Friday

Today and yesterday I have doubled my step-count as I have thoroughly enjoyed walking around the school and seeing the first two days of our recovery curriculum. Whilst we focus on the recovery of lost knowledge from the time spent at home during lockdown, we have to fully acknowledge that there is so much more that will have been lost (and also gained!). We need to consider the definition of a relevant curriculum as the 'daily lived experience' There is too much good practice to be able to write about everything I have seen, but I shall pick an example from the Primary Department and an example from the Secondary Department of fantastic Teaching and Learning.

Primary Department

In this particular lesson, students were negotiating a sensory course and picking up pieces of jigsaw along the way. The focus of this was turn taking, as students engaged in whose turn it was next and congratulated their peers in their perseverance. This to me, is cross-curricular, personalised learning at its best. Students were practising life skills, whilst completing a maths challenge, whilst also benefiting from the sensory input they need.

Secondary Department

During this lesson, I watched a great example of circles being used really well. Students were all facing each other and listening to each other. One young learner recounted a visit to Southport and other learners used appropriate skills to ask questions about this visit and listen to the responses. After so long apart, it was great to see a whole class able to work so well together, supported of course, extremely well the Class Team.

Mrs E Tobin
Deputy Headteacher

Care and Safeguarding

Ms Alison Twomey, Head of Care and Safeguarding

E: Alison.twomey@abbotsleaschool.co.uk



Welcome back!

I am absolutely thrilled to be back in school and am embracing the opportunity to return to some sort of 'normal' educational existence. The last 6 months have been extremely tough on us all but we must now look to the future and the rebuilding our school community. I have no doubt that, within a very short space of time, our students will be settled into school life and thriving in all areas. Despite the continuing restrictions there is so much to look forward to and we must remember that focusing on the positives, rather than the challenges, will allow us to flourish and enjoy life to the fullest.

The first week back has flown by and I am pleased that all of the safety measures outlined on our school risk assessment have been implemented and are working exceptionally well. Despite the restrictions on allowing different staff groups to mix together, we have successfully delivered a whole school safeguarding refresher, focusing on the changes to the key statutory document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2020). New staff also received training in our Positive Behaviour Support policy, including the safe and appropriate use of Team Teach.

I'm certain that over the course of this academic year, we will continue to learn new and innovative approaches to education. The next few months are as exciting as they are uncertain and I am looking forward to each and every new challenge that awaits.

Miss A Twomey
Head of Care and Safeguarding

School Business Support

Mrs Michelle Griffiths, Head of HR

E: michelle.griffiths@abbotsleaschool.co.uk



Hello and welcome back to all of our students, staff and families. It has been a long time since we were all on site together and our students coped amazingly well with their first couple of days back.

Our site is looking fabulous and I would like to thank the Facilities Team for all of their hard work over lockdown and the summer to make improvements to our site and to make it as secure as possible for our return to school.

I would like to say a warm welcome to the new members of our team joining us this term:

- Connie Hamilton - TA in Cape Verde Class
- Lauren Skeggs - TA in Tasmania Class
- Rebecca Ledward - TA in Wales Class
- Lucy Davies - TA in USA Class
- Rose Quigley - TA in Canada Class
- Heather Robertson - TA in Samoa Class
- Sarah Elliott - Midday Supervisor
- Keith Jones - Midday Supervisor
- Charlotte George - Office Manager



We also congratulate Mr Roach and Miss Jennings on their promotions to Teacher within Brazil and Botswana Classes.



We are also joined on a temporary basis by 4 additional cleaners who will be supporting us in keeping all teaching areas clean throughout the time students are on site. Welcome to:

- Jonathon Pick
- Shirley Reilley
- David Evans
- Lynn Evans



Sadly we said goodbye to two team members over the summer. Mrs Ross decided to take retirement and will be leaving the EYFS/KS1 team. Best wishes from all of us and we hope you enjoy your retirement.



Mrs Armer is leaving her role as Intern Coach and moving on to a Teacher role. We wish her the best of luck.



Inevitably we have some changes within our staff team which have been brought about by the impact of Covid-19 such as quarantine and self-isolation, and although we will do our best to keep our staff team as stable as possible, sometimes this will not be possible and are team will move around the school to provide support to students where it is most needed.

The first two days of term we spent on staff training and preparing for the return of our students. Activities included a briefing on the Covid Risk Assessment so everyone was clear of their role and processes and support available. We also carried out training on Team Teach behaviour support and covered changes in processes, as well as re-familiarising ourselves with the school!

Finally this week I would like to draw your attention to some vacancies we are currently advertising. These are:

- Head of Autism Research and Development
- Job Coach
- Higher Level Teaching Assistant
- Teaching Assistant
- Further details are available on our website if you or anyone you know might be interested.

Wishing everyone a restful weekend after a busy first week back.

Mr Andrew Cocklin, Head of Finance and Operations

E: andrew.cocklin@abbotsleaschool.co.uk



Firstly, it's great to have our students back this week. It's been a long wait but we are back to being a school and seeing so many happy smiley faces coming into the school the last few days has been so uplifting.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the staff who have worked tirelessly to get our school ready for opening. It hasn't been an easy task but it has been worth it, so my thanks in particular to our facilities team for their work over the summer period and our Head of HR, Mrs Griffiths.

I would like to say a further thank you to all the Business Support staff, Kitchen staff, new Midday supervisors, new cleaners and Facilities team for hitting the ground running from day one and for making some new processes work as best as possible. Huge changes to the

school transport runs and lunch time services, but everyone has just got stuck in and made it work. We will review regularly and try to improve where we can, but thank you everyone.

Over the summer there have been lots of changes, whether it be both teaching buildings being painted, new classroom furniture, new toilets for EYFS/KS1 or new CCTV right the way across the school site. It's been hard work, and we will continue to change things where needed. It is a never ending process as we always want the best for our students and staff and we are always trying to deliver this.

COVID has meant we have to work differently, interact differently and support our students differently, but what hasn't changed is the amazing class teams that we have, who are there 100% for all our students in all aspects of their needs. We have a fantastic team across the board at Abbot's Lea, and 3 years in to my time here, I may be a little greyer, few more wrinkles, but my passion for the school has only grown stronger and I am proud to work in such an inspiring school.

Well done to Mrs Tobin for her first week as our new Deputy Head. Never easy moving to a new school but we can see already you are going to do an amazing job. And to our Headteacher, Mrs Hildrey, we hope you are well and we look forward to your speedy return.

Happy Birthday!



TO

September birthdays:

**Samuel for the 03 September
Abigail for the 04 September
Lewis for the 09 September
Flynn for the 16 September
Jacob for the 17 September
Nathaniel for the 18 September
Charlie for the 19 September
Alexander for the 22 September
Oscar for the 22 September
Alfie for the 27 September
Mohamed for the 29 September
Faye for the 29 September
Yusuf for the 30 September
Joseph for the 30 September**

We wish you a wonderful birthday and have fun!



Just a few school improvements...

