

30 August 2016

Dear Parents,

As I write this letter it is a blisteringly hot day and the 1st September seems to be a very long way off. The 1st September is a significant day for all the stakeholders in Harpenden Academy as it is the day the school officially becomes part of the Sir John Lawes Academies Trust.

Everyone at the trust is very excited and delighted to welcome Harpenden Academy into the Trust. We are confident that together we can make the learning experiences for all the children at the school a positive one, where all the children not only achieve academically and socially but are cared for, happy and enjoy their primary education.

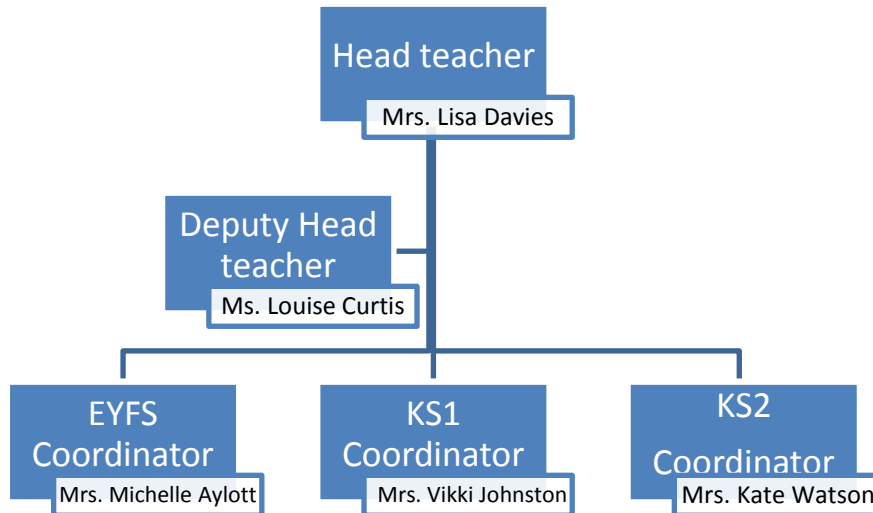
During September it is my intention to meet with parents on a class by class basis to discuss what belonging to Sir Johns Lawes Academies Trust will actually look like and to discuss how we can work together for the benefit of our children and the school. Please see the first newsletter in September for these meetings.

I am very aware that as a parent body there has been multiple changes over a very short period of time and that this has led to a very unsettling time for children and parents alike. I do not want to add unnecessarily to this list of changes. As I'm sure you can appreciate, more than I, Harpenden Academy has been through a tumultuous year which has affected many aspects of school and family life. It is my intention, with the support of the staff, children, parents, Governors and the Trust to provide a period of stability, educational leadership expertise and positive growth for all stakeholders but especially the pupils of Harpenden Academy.

That said, there are changes to be made and some of them need to be in place before the start of school in September and these are outlined in this letter.

New Leadership structure and roles moving forward

The structure of the leadership team for September 2016 is as follows:



I am delighted to welcome Ms Curtis to the Academy; who alongside Mrs Aylott, Mrs Johnston and Mrs Watson are the new senior leadership team. Miss Emma Louise Burdett will continue to be SENCo and will continue working for the benefit of our children. It is important that parents are familiar with the new structure and use it to address any issues you may have. The first port of call for parents is always the classroom teacher. Only if the avenue of class teacher has been used and it is unsuccessful in resolving any issues should it be escalated to EYFS/ KS1 or 2 co-ordinator and then Deputy Head. If resolution cannot be found after following this pathway then the Deputy Head will refer it to me.

This structure and approach has been created in direct response to the most recent HMI report which stated the need to improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management. This also responds to parents' desire to have clarity after a disrupted year.

End of the school day for Year 1 children

At the end of this academic year the decision was taken to have mixed age classes in specific year groups. Currently Year 1 children finish school at 3.00 pm (Mon-Thurs) and 2.00 pm (Fri) with Year 2 children finishing at 3.20pm and 2.20pm respectively.

From September, due to the mixed age classes in Year 1 and Year 2 we are proposing that all year groups, except Reception, move to finishing at 3.20pm including Year 1. I appreciate that this is short

notice for parents and for that I apologise. Therefore, if you are a **Year 1 parent only** and it is imperative that you collect your child from school at 3pm (Mon- Thurs) and 2pm on Fridays then you will be able to do this up to the end of the Autumn Term 2016 This cannot be on an “ad hoc” arrangement which changes over the course of the week but a decision, which if taken, must remain in place each week. This is because your child’s class teacher needs to ensure children are ready for an early pick up. Your child’s class teacher will be happy to discuss these arrangements with you if you have any queries.

In January 2017, the start of the Spring Term, all Year 1 children will be expected to stay in school until 3.20 p.m. (Mon-Thurs) and 2.20 p.m. on Fridays and the optional 3.00 p.m./ 2.00 p.m. pickup time will not continue. The sibling club will continue for children in Reception as normal.

Mid-Morning Snacks for EYFS/ KS1 and KS2

I am delighted to advise parents that as from September 2016 all EYFS and KS1 children will be entitled to a fruit snack under the government’s “School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme” This is a free of charge service for these children and is delivered daily to the school.

KS 2 children (Year 3, 4, 5 and 6) will be able to bring in a piece of fruit or a vegetable based snack from home. We will no longer be asking for contributions to buy fruit for the children as this approach has proved to be unwieldy to administer and time consuming for the Teaching Assistants taking them away from the classroom during the school morning.

Please note that Harpenden Academy is a nut free school. We have children with severe nut allergies and therefore we ask you not to bring any nut products into school.

The Mound

In May 2016 the visiting HMI stated in the report that:

“You (the school) have rapidly identified that the mound in the playground, which is a large structure of building rubble covered with artificial turf, is unsafe for a number of reasons, in particular because of the way it was constructed. You (the school) have taken appropriate action to prevent pupils from using it and are exploring how this issue can be dealt with in the longer term.”

In the longer term the mound will start to be deconstructed during the next academic year, starting approximately in July 2017. This is a long term project which will take 10-12 weeks to complete and will include working through the summer holidays. The mound will not completely disappear but it will be significantly reduced from its current height of 6.75 m to no more than 1.5 m at its highest point. The reduction of the mound will remain a key issue over the forthcoming months and I will keep parents posted.

In the short term the mound cannot be used as fully as it has been. This is because the rubber crumb which should surround the base of the mound has not been laid (this is a soft pore surface to support children's safety when using the mound – often found in public playground areas) I am hopeful that this can take place in October half term holidays as companies need 2 consecutive days to lay the crumb. The children cannot be without a playground for 2 days so October is the first available opportunity to complete the job since EFA funding for this was only granted two weeks ago. Until this protective surface is laid the mound will not be operational at its full height. A line will be painted on the mound showing how much can be used by the children whilst we wait for the crumb to be laid. Once this is completed then the situation can be reviewed. We were also granted EFA funding to extend the playground by removing the gates by the far fence. I am hopeful this will also be done in October.

As you know, FoHA have devoted many hours raising funds to make our playground more enticing. We will be consulting the children via family groups as to which playground equipment they would like us to purchase for them to use during playtimes. Over the holidays we have taken delivery of various items of gym equipment including table tennis tables, netball posts and football goals all of which we will be using to compensate for the lack of use of the mound.

Changes in use of first names to address members of staff

As from September 2016 members of staff will be known by their preferred title of Ms, Mrs, Miss or Mr and their surname. I know that this is quite a significant change for children and parents of Harpenden Academy. This is not a decision taken lightly either but it has been discussed with members of staff, Governors including the Chair and the Trust throughout the holidays.

It is important that an appropriate relationship between children and staff and staff and parents exists. The staff, both teaching and non-teaching, has a professional boundary to uphold and when this professional boundary gets blurred problems can occur. Sadly, the use of staff members first names has led to an over familiarisation which has affected the behaviour of both children and on occasions parents. This has led to the need to “reset” the relationships between all stakeholders. This does not mean that members of staff will be any less friendly towards children and adults alike or respect anyone any less.

I do ask parents to be respectful of this decision and the wishes of the staff and use the teachers' surnames when talking to them in front of the children. I have included a list of members of staff and their names so that parents and children can become familiar with them and prepare their children for September.

Our exciting future

I return to my opening paragraph as the 1st September is a significant day for us all. Throughout the month of September I will be meeting the parents of each class to discuss the future developments of the Academy and a way to work together to make this a place where children's development, both academically and socially and their learning is at the heart of what we do.

It is a time for a new beginning and new growth at Harpenden Academy. I cannot address the issues from the past but I can influence the future for all our children at the Academy. The time has come to draw a line under the past year and move forward together as I believe that our goals are the same: to have a school where our children are happy, where they learn to the best of their abilities, where they have friends, feel safe and secure and enjoy the possibilities that a great Primary education can bring them. In order to make this happen I need the support of all of you. I very much look forward to meeting you all at the September meetings, until then please enjoy the remainder of the summer holidays and the autumn term will be busy, busy, busy!

Many thanks



Mrs Lisa Davies

Headteacher

Year Group	Reg Group	Teachers	Teaching Assistant
Reception	Ladybirds	Michelle Aylott Helen Newton	Lisa Welch Sarah Barker Claire Allen
Year 1	Elmer	Katie Dorney Lee Bird	Anne Ross Jackie Baines
Year 1/2	Aslan	Vikki Johnston	Lisa Toms
Year 2	BFG	Kathryn Worts	Jackie Baines Sarah Barker
Year 3	Kipling class	Gemma Moss	Christine Parker Sarah Duncan
Year 3	Potter class	Katharine Haines Michelle Wong	Louise Skillman Sarah Duncan
Year 4	Austen	Catherine D'Sylva	Marie Jo
Year 4/5	Dahl	Laura Gilham Billie Foster	Lee Bird Zuzana Holmes
Year 6	Shakespeare	Kate Watson Louise Curtis	Rebecca Goulbourne