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# Start of year newsletter

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to the start of another school year! It's been wonderful to see the children back in school today and particularly to welcome the new starters who have joined our reception and nursery year groups.

## Updates

This year sees some notable changes to the school and perhaps the most significant is the extension to our age range. This was formally approved by the secretary of state for education in late August so we are now able to offer places to children from the term after their third birthday. We have 12 places available and children can join at various points throughout the year.

The other major change that has taken place over the Summer is building work to modernise and update large areas of the school. At the heart of this is a new hall area, which will form the centre of the school where we can gather as a community to worship, eat and celebrate our achievements. Alongside this, we have also been able to update class 3, relocate and enlarge class 2, create a new library, a new nurture room and refurbish the infant toilets.



There are still some further improvements in the pipeline, including canopied areas in both playgrounds and resurfacing for the early years outdoor area.

## School lunches

You may well be aware that there have been some changes to the arrangements for school lunches. During the last academic year, our academy, Derby Diocesan Academy Trust, invited organisations to bid for the contract to provide school dinners across a number of schools. The

trust then reviewed these bids and appointed Caterlink to be our provider. As we do not have a kitchen on site at Darley Churchtown, Caterlink staff will prepare meals at another local school and these will then be brought to school. This is very similar to the previous arrangement and children will continue to be able to order a range of healthy lunches every day.

### **Policy updates**

The start of the school year always brings a raft of updates to policies and procedures. Updated documents are published on the school website but there are three changes to be particularly aware of.

The first is our updated policy on managing allergies in school. This sets out how we will comply with the new national allergy safety standard for schools, often referred to as Benedict's Law, which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September. The key point to note here is that we will no longer be able to allow children to hand out gifts of food to other children. Sometimes children like to bring in sweets or cakes to hand out on their birthdays and we have, in the past, allowed them to do this on the condition that items are taken home not eaten in school. Unfortunately this does not always guarantee that children will not eat items before checking with an adult so we would ask that any gifts are given outside school.

The second policy change relates to photos taken at school events. Our current practice is always to ask that parents do not take photos during school events. Where possible, we will arrange for parents to have the opportunity to take photos of their children after the event. We are able to continue with this system under the new policy but must also ask that any photos taken in these circumstances are not shared on publicly accessible websites or on social media. These changes have been brought in to safeguard children against the increasing use of AI to catalogue and, in some instances, generate altered images.

The final policy update to note relates to the use of mobile phones and other digital devices. This does not require any change to our current procedure, which is that any mobile phones, tablets, smart watches or other similar devices that are brought to school must be turned off and handed in to the school office on arrival at school. The devices will be given back at the end of the day but must not be turned back on until the child has left the school site. It is best if children do not bring mobile phones to school unless there is a clear reason for them to do so, for example older children who walk to or from school on their own.

Apologies if that all seems a bit dry but I believe it is best to be clear on such points at the start of the year. I'll be endeavouring to get these newsletters out to you at least once a half term, celebrating the achievements of the children as we move through the year and keeping you informed of any changes and upcoming events. Next week, we'll be inviting parents into school to meet teachers and you'll also get a chance to have a bit of a look around and see how the building has changed. In the meantime, if you have any questions then please get in touch through the school office as usual.

Kind regards,

Tom Lloyd

Head of School