



# Headteacher's Newsletter to Parents 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019



**Welcome** to the new school year at Watergate! Apologies that it has taken me three weeks to write to you, but I am sure you will understand how much there is to do and to find out as a newcomer to Lewisham. I am so excited to be here as Watergate's interim headteacher and am very much looking forward getting to know your children and to meeting with you. To briefly introduce myself: I am an experienced special school leader. My last school was a 52 week residential school for children with severe, complex and challenging needs, many of whom had an autism diagnosis. Almost all of my 30 year teaching career has been in special education and I am also a qualified play therapist. My passion is for truly child-centered learning: by which I mean education that that is completely focused on the needs of each individual child. I also have a grown-up son who has autism, so I experience the challenges of getting the right support from the perspective of a parent.

## Invitation to cake and coffee

I would love to have the opportunity to meet you all and would like to invite you for **cake and coffee** (or tea) on **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October from 9.30 – 10.30am**. I hope that we will have the opportunity to talk about what you feel the school does well and what you would like us to develop in the coming year. I also want to know what family workshops you would like us to run and any other ideas for ways in which we can support you. It will also be an opportunity for you to meet and chat with other parents. At least one of our parent governors will be there to talk with you. Those of you whose children are new to the school, either on the main site or in the new class at Ladywell are most warmly invited to come along.

If you are not able to come along but would like to come in to see me please contact the school office to arrange an appointment.



## Medications in school

Currently I am reviewing the policy and procedures for the administration of medication in school and will be in touch shortly with any new procedures you will need to be aware of. In the meantime, please continue as previously, sending in the Parental Agreement for Medication in School form to authorise the nursing team. If your child travels to school by taxi or school transport please hand the medication to the escort, do not put it into their bag. The escorts will hand the medication over to a member of staff on arrival at school. In this way we can be sure that nothing is missed and no child is at risk.

**Absence from School** – a reminder that you should notify the school in writing if your child is going to be absent from school for medical appointments or treatment, giving details of when and how long the s/he is likely to be absent. If your child is unwell the school must be notified by telephone on the morning of the absence and again on each consecutive day.

The amended 2006 School Attendance Regulations made it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence, other than for medical reasons, during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Clearly there are many situations which may be considered exceptional circumstances, but we interpret this as being of such unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child that it outweighs the loss of teaching time. We are only able to authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances for a maximum of 5 school days.

We ask parents/carers to respect the regulations under which we work, and that if you do really need to take your child out of school during term time you write to me making it very clear in your request how the circumstances are exceptional.

Attendance is discussed regularly with the borough's attendance officer and unauthorised absences are investigated by them.

**Mobile Phones in School** – can I respectfully remind those of you who bring your children into school or collect them at the end of the day, that mobile phones may not be used in any area of the school, except in the reception area if there is an emergency. This is to ensure that our children are protected at all times.

## School News

Our new **Olive Class**, based at Ladywell Children's Centre has opened and has 8 pupils who are settling in so well. I have been so impressed with the way in which they are learning the routines of the school day, beginning to make relationships with each other and trying new things.



**School residential visit:** last week four children went to Woodlarks Activity Centre in Surrey, where they had a most exciting time taking in part in fun and challenging activities in the beautiful countryside.

Look out for more photos on the school website.



**Move Award** – as you will know the school is a Centre of Excellence for the Move programme. I am delighted to tell you that we have won a Move Award which brings with it a £500 voucher to purchase Jiraffe equipment with. The award was given for the wonderful Move Week that was held last term. More details can be found here: <https://www.enhamtrust.org.uk/move-day-2019-winner-revealed>



Dang (left) is pictured on the Move website, his goal was to sit on a standard chair in a restaurant with his family and he raised over £100 by sitting on a chair independently for over 30 minutes at the Mad Hatter's tea party that was held during the Move week.

I look forward to meeting you soon.

Kind regards

Fiona Veitch

