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Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back to you all and a special welcome to new parents to Ben Jonson whose children are starting school with us for the first time this term. I hope you all had a good summer and that the children are ready and excited for a new year at Ben Jonson.

### Summer Works

It has been a busy time this summer. We have been carrying out works to make the building a better place for your children.

We now have two new sheds in the playground to store equipment. We may be getting a third one during half term to store the bikes and trikes we have in the school.

During the holiday the work was started on the pitch to resurface it with AstroTurf. Once the old surface was taken up it was clear that there were further old playground surfaces underneath. More works are needed to prepare the surface for the AstroTurf so the pitch is closed at present. We expect the pitch to be open again by the end of next week. But the good news is that the hill is back in use with a new circular bench on the top. We are planting a bush in the middle of this bench to create a canopy for shade.

If you go into the Reception and Year 1 playground you will find a new fence which now creates an outside learning space that does not get disturbed by energetic Year 1 children playing during playtimes.

During the holidays we have had some classrooms painted as part of the cycle of works. We have replaced all the interactive whiteboards with 'state of the art' Smart Screens in all the classrooms.

### School Priorities for the year

We are in the process of finalising the School Improvement Plan priorities for this coming academic year and we have much planned to improve the school further this year. The School Improvement Plan contains the details of all the things we are working on to further improve the school. Here are the some of the main areas of work for the school this year:

1. **Encouraging children to come to school more often – at least one more day than they did last year!**
2. **Embedding our approach to inclusion in everyday practice;**
3. **Developing handwriting and improving the quality of presentation in the children's books;**
4. **Continuing with our work on reading, particularly how we teach guided reading in Key Stage 2 and for the whole school to develop a love of reading and good reading habits at school and at home;**
5. **Children to learn their times tables and to be generally more confident in their mental maths skills generally;**
6. **Refining the way we teach phonics to ensure that more children are confident in using their phonetic knowledge to read and write earlier;**

7. **Develop the use of Numicon ( a practical maths resource) to support the children with their number work in maths;**
8. **Continuing our work on developing positive learning behaviours, encouraging the children to be more independent and creative in the way they work. We also want children to become more responsible for managing their own behaviour;**
9. **Develop the ‘wooded area’ and get parents involved in gardening in school.**

We will be holding parent workshops to reflect the school priorities; we know that we will only make a difference if we are working in partnership with you all. Once the main priorities are decided upon we will publish them on the website. But of course we continue to work on everything!

### **New Staff and new pupils**

We had a great assembly welcoming the new children who are joining us at Ben Jonson. We also welcomed some new members of staff that are new to school since the end of last term.

Our new Reception children are joining the school six at a time in each class. This is to give the staff a better chance to get to know the children quickly and to help them settle in. It is always so exciting to get to spend time with our youngest children; I have not heard any tears over the past two so it seems they have settled well!

Mahjural is a new member of staff who is covering Jenny’s position as DT teacher. Jenny is now on maternity leave and awaiting the birth of her baby.

We have three new mid-day meal supervisors – Bonnie, Billie and Sayma. We have two new TAs. Sussan is working in Key Stage 2 and Zara is working in Reception.

I know you will all join me in welcoming these new children and staff members to the school.

Hena Begum, our Inclusion Advocate, has secured a new position in a local secondary school and will not return to Ben Jonson. She has given many years of loyal service to the children and families of Ben Jonson. We will really miss her but wish her all the best in her new job.

### **Phoenix**

Phoenix is a special school on Mile End Road for children with Autism. They are running out of space for the number of children who need to go to Phoenix and they are working on getting other buildings to increase the size of the school. It will take a while before the new buildings will be ready. So the headteacher, Stewart Harris, has asked if any schools had space to host a class from Phoenix until the school is big enough for them all. The governors and I felt it was our community duty to offer them the Annex as a class.

Over the summer works have been carried out to transform some of the rooms in the Annex as a classroom space for Phoenix school.

In Ben Jonson, 20 children from Phoenix school have started Year 3 in the Annex. The children have their own teachers and 9 support staff from Phoenix. The two teachers, Anna and Katie, are in charge of the class whilst on site. They have their own playground and equipment; they will have lunch in their classroom. I talked to our children in assembly yesterday and said that we may not see very much of the children at all. But it will be great for staff and our autistic children to have such a rich source of expertise and support literally on site. Ash and George will also be working with children from Phoenix. I have been visiting the class each day to get to know the staff and children and to check that everything is going well. I thought it would be good idea if some parents were willing to help Ruth, Dee and Shara hold a ‘welcome breakfast’ or ‘coffee morning for the new Phoenix parents. Please contact Dee if you would like to help.

## Uniform

It was good to see so many children looking great in their school uniform at the start of the new academic year. As part of our work on presentation we are going to focus on children wearing the correct uniform. On the parents section of the website there is a detailed list of what our expectation of uniform is.

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of aspects of uniform. The children have an active day at school so it is important that their footwear is suitable for the children to run in. Black trainers are ideal for running in as are black shoes with laces, velcro or straps to hold them onto the foot. I have noticed children wearing trainers of different colours or with flashes of a different colour. I have also seen children with slip on shoes they cannot run in. Both these sort of shoes are not the correct uniform.

For those girls wearing the hijab, they need to fit well around the face and need to be plain blue, black or white. Many girls look great in their hijabs and are in keeping with the school uniform. Please no hijabs with patterned fabric, or with sequins, beads or other embellishments.

## Commodore Street and Essian Street

Both Commodore Street and Essian Street have become extremely congested with cars over the past year. Children walking to school have been increasingly put at risk by cars dropping off children. Things got worse at the end of last term when there was an incident including an act of violence which was witnessed by parents and children. We have contacted both Rushanara Ali MP and Highways to support the school in dealing with this matter. I am determined to find a way of ensuring all our children are safe. I would like this to be resolved by fewer parents using these streets to drop off children by car. I strongly suggest that no family drives down Commodore street as the buses are dropping off children going to Phoenix. We suggest that if you need to drive to school then you park away from these streets and walk the last part to school

## Medicines

We are currently checking the medical boxes for those children who have a medical need. We have noticed some of this medication is out of date. We will be asking parents to replenish this medication and we would be grateful that this could be done as soon as possible so your child's health is not at risk.

All medication needs to be given to the office, not the class staff, as we have strict rules that we have to follow. As per our protocol, all medicines must be in the box with the child's name and dosage instructions visible.

If your child has been recently prescribed any medicine and you wish for the school to administer the medicine, please come to the office to discuss if this is possible. We are advised that, where possible, medication should be given by parents and carers. In some cases we may be able to support the short term medication of your child. We are uploading the 'Ben Jonson Medicines in School' policy on the website this week if you want further information.

It was so good to see you all yesterday and today. The relationships between members of staff, children and parents are fundamental to the success of the school. Working together we can ensure that children flourish during their time at Ben Jonson School. I would like to thank you for everything you do for your children and for the school.

Best wishes



Monica Forty, Headteacher