



22 August 2024

Dear Plymstock School families

As we prepare to welcome children back on Wednesday 4th September (Years 7 & 12 Induction) and Thursday 5th September (all Years), I want to acknowledge the events earlier in the summer and to reinforce the importance of education around this. I also want to outline the importance, stance and response of education to the recent unrest in the UK, some of which has taken place in our local area. We recognise these events may create uncertainty and angst among students and families, and our thoughts are with anyone who may be affected.

I am sure you will share that our hearts, thoughts and prayers also go out to the families of the three little girls, Bebe King, Alice da Silva Aguiar, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, whose lives were cut short so tragically in the attack in Southport on 29th July. The loss of these three lives and the impact of the attacks on all the families, schools and community is tragic beyond words.

The bottom line is that violence has no place in our society, so it is devastating to see Muslims, refugees, and people of colour, including children, targeted by violence. But it is also heartening to see so many responding with courage and optimism and it is on this courage and optimism that we will focus when we welcome children upon their return to school. We will focus our personal development on respect - showing due consideration for the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of others. By fostering an environment where differences are celebrated, we can help our children grow into respectful and compassionate individuals.

I attended a national briefing for school leaders this week which shared information from the Department for Education, the Home office and Police as well as officials advising on support for young people and communities. In light of my reflections on this briefing, I wish to reiterate the following:

- School is a safe place. When children are in school, they are safe. Education plays an essential role in long-term wellbeing.
- When our children return to school, we will continue to have meaningful conversations with them. We have to let our young people talk about their feelings and emotions; how what they have seen and experienced has affected them and the way they see themselves and their place in our society and the future of our country.
- Although social media can be used in a positive manner, we have seen once again various platforms can also facilitate the spreading of misinformation and hate, the flow of which is difficult for us as parents to control and monitor. It is through education that we can remind our young people of the importance of filtered, careful and considered use of social media as well as to provide a voice that speaks louder to children than messages of hate or that are unkind towards difference or are intended to manipulate and mislead.
- Conversations around feelings and emotions can be uncomfortable – particularly for our pupils of colour or those of other minorities – but we will continue to make our school a safe space where our children can be honest about their feelings and concerns so that we can provide the guidance and reassurance they need.

Every single child should know that they can speak to an adult at the school if they have concerns – either about something that has happened or in general. We seek to be a ‘telling school’ where children can share concerns and be heard and know that these will always be taken seriously. Teachers and Support Staff are all in a position to listen and ensure that concerns are reported to the most appropriate member of the pastoral and safeguarding teams.

Should your family be in need of support prior to children’s return to school, then please get in touch <https://plymstockschool.org.uk/contact/> and we will remain on hand to help.

Ensuring that everyone feels included and supported is a priority for us. We will remain in close communication with local authorities, including the police, to ensure we are up-to-date with any relevant information and that we can respond appropriately to any concerns that may arise.

I hope you all have a safe, enjoyable rest of the summer break and we look forward to welcoming children back for the start of the new academic year.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Koehler-Lewis
Headteacher