



West Malling

CE Primary School & The McGinty SRP

Old Cricket Ground, Norman Road, West Malling, Kent ME19 6RL Headteacher Mr David Rye MSc PGCE NPQH

Tel 01732 842061 Email office@west-malling.kent.sch.uk www.west-malling.kent.sch.uk

4th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome back to school for the start of the new school year. I hope that everyone had an enjoyable summer, whether that was on holiday in this country or abroad, or simply enjoying time in the sunshine nearer home.

Welcoming everyone back is always a special time of year, and I extend a particular welcome to the new Chestnut children and families who are joining the West Malling family. Following several days of individual meetings with Mrs Penfold, the children started their West Malling journey yesterday and certainly seemed to enjoy spending the morning getting to explore the classroom and begin to take the first steps in establishing new friendships. Starting school is such a big step for children (and parents!) and I know from personal experience what an emotional time it can be.

Similarly, moving classes is an equally big step. The fact that it is within the same school does not matter, and change can be very unsettling for some children. Please remember that we are all here to offer support – after all, the children are the most important thing for all of us; parents and staff alike. If you have a question or a query, do try and catch the class teacher at the end of the day. I am also out on the gate most mornings and in the playground after school, so come and have a chat if I can help with anything.

Mobile phones and smart technology

There has been significant discussion recently around children using mobile phones in schools, and the Department for Education has strengthened its guidance. Children should not be using mobile phones when on the school site during the school day. The guidance also relates to other devices with similar functionality, such as smartwatches.

If children in upper KS2 bring a phone to school as parents feel they require one for their journey to and from school, this must be switched off before entering the school site and handed in to the class teacher immediately on arrival in the classroom, where it will be stored securely. The phone will remain off for the whole day and cannot be accessed at any point for any reason. It can only be switched back on once the pupil has left the school site.

Smartwatches of any form are **not** permitted to be worn in school.

If a parent or carer needs to contact their child for any reason, such as to change pick-up arrangements, communication must be made through the school office rather than directly to their child's mobile phone.

Attendance

Similarly, school attendance has also been in the media and we would like to aim for everyone's attendance to be as close to 100% as possible. I would like to remind parents that there is a requirement for schools to inform the local authority when a pupil is absent from school due to illness for 15 days or more (either consecutively or cumulatively throughout an academic year) or is due to be absent for 15 days due to illness. In addition, the guidance from Kent County Council is that schools should not authorise any absence of a planned nature in term time. This includes all holidays and weddings and parents will be liable to fines if they choose to ignore this advice. The fines are issued by Kent County Council and the money is collected and retained by the authority and does not come back into school.

The normal format of newsletter will return next week, and I hope you all enjoy a good weekend.

Mr Rye

