



Wednesday 2nd September 2026

Welcome Back to Deanshanger Primary School

Important Information for the New Academic Year 2026–2027

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you have all had a wonderful summer and that your children are looking forward to returning to school.

As we begin a new academic year, I wanted to write to you with some important reminders and to share several changes and developments that will shape life at Deanshanger this year.

A great deal of work has taken place over the summer, both physically around the school and behind the scenes. We have been improving our learning environments, creating better workspaces for our staff, strengthening our leadership structure and refining a number of our systems and expectations. This year represents an important next step for Deanshanger. We want our school to feel calm, purposeful, ambitious and consistent, with clear routines and expectations for children, staff and families.

There is a lot of information to share, so this is a longer letter than usual. I would encourage all parents and carers to read it carefully and keep it somewhere accessible, as it contains important information that you may wish to refer back to during the year.

Improvements Around Our School

Those returning to Deanshanger will notice that quite a lot has happened over the summer. We have worked hard to improve different areas of the school, with a particular focus on creating learning environments that children can be proud of and effective working spaces for our staff. Some of these changes also reflect a much bigger development that we are introducing this year: our new school phases.

Introducing Our New School Phases

From September, children will belong to one of three phases as they progress through Deanshanger:

Explorers – Reception and Year 1

Adventurers – Years 2 and 3

Voyagers – Years 4, 5 and 6

We want every child's time at Deanshanger to feel like a journey. Each phase will have its own identity, experiences and opportunities, appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. As children progress through the school, we want them to recognise how they are growing not only academically but also in their independence, confidence and responsibility.

Explorers – Reception and Year 1

Phase Leader: Mrs Watson

Our youngest children will begin their Deanshanger journey as **Explorers**. Children in Reception and Year 1 will receive their very own **Explorer backpack**. This will be their personal backpack and will remain part of their journey throughout their time in the Explorers Phase. Mrs Watson will lead this phase and, later this term, will invite parents and carers into school to explain more about the experiences, opportunities and



milestones that will form part of the children's Explorer journey. Please look out for your child's brand-new backpack and for details of the Explorers parent meeting.

Adventurers – Years 2 and 3

Phase Leader: Mrs Baker

As children move into Years 2 and 3, they will become our **Adventurers**. Children in this phase will record their journey through a special **Adventurers map**, which will be given to them during the latter part of this Autumn Term.

The map will help children recognise and celebrate the experiences, achievements and growing independence that come with being an Adventurer. Mrs Baker will lead the Adventurers Phase and will also invite parents and carers into school later this term. This will be an opportunity to hear more about the journey children will take through Years 2 and 3 and the experiences we have planned for them.

Voyagers – Years 4, 5 and 6

Phase Leader: Mr Bunting

Our eldest children will become our **Voyagers**. As children reach the upper years of Deanshanger, we want them to understand that being one of the oldest children in school brings both opportunities and responsibilities. A particular focus of the Voyagers Phase will be **leadership**. Children will have opportunities to develop and practise leadership skills, take greater responsibility and contribute positively to the wider life of the school. Children will track their journey through the Voyagers Phase using their own **passport**, which they will receive later this term.

Mr Bunting will lead this phase and will invite parents and carers into school to find out more about the opportunities children will experience as they progress through the upper years of Deanshanger.

We are incredibly excited about the potential of our new phases. We want children to feel a real sense of identity and belonging within their phase while also understanding that they are part of one Deanshanger community.

Strengthening Leadership Across the School

The introduction of Phase Leaders is about much more than giving our three phases names. It provides another important layer of leadership within the school and means that there is greater support available for children, staff and families.

We are also delighted to share that Miss Peers is now our Assistant Headteacher. Many of our families will already know Miss Peers well and will recognise that she has always played an important role in the leadership of Deanshanger. Her appointment as Assistant Headteacher formally recognises the contribution she already makes to the school and gives us additional leadership capacity as we move forward. As Assistant Headteacher, Miss Peers will work closely with Mr Bolton, our Head of School, and our three Phase Leaders. A particularly important part of her role will be supporting the Phase Leaders with their work across their phases and providing additional senior leadership support when this is needed.

This might include joining a meeting with parents where a Phase Leader or member of staff would benefit from additional support, helping to work through a more complex concern or providing advice and guidance behind the scenes. Miss Peers does not form an additional stage in our parent communication process. Instead, she strengthens the support available to staff at each stage and can become involved when



appropriate. Together, this gives us a much stronger leadership structure across Deanshanger, with clearer accountability and more support available to staff, children and families.

Welcoming New and Returning Staff

We are delighted to welcome several new and returning members of staff to the Deanshanger team.

Miss Owen – Year 1

Miss Owen joins our Year 1 team. We were fortunate that she was able to spend several weeks with us at the end of the summer term. This allowed her to become familiar with Deanshanger and begin getting to know the children before officially starting with us in September. We are delighted to welcome her properly to the team.

Mrs Ward – Year 2 and Inclusion Lead

Mrs Ward will work within Year 1 on Mondays. On Tuesdays, she will work outside the classroom in her additional role as **Inclusion Lead**. Her role will support our continued work to ensure that all children can access high-quality learning and that teachers are supported to make appropriate adaptations to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms.

Mrs Shadforth

We are pleased that Mrs Shadforth will continue to be a familiar face around school.

She will work with children across different year groups, providing class cover and leading targeted interventions.

Mrs King

Mrs King will be a new face to many families at Deanshanger, although she is already a valued member of the Old Stratford team.

Following her return from maternity leave, she will now also work at Deanshanger. Mrs King will support class cover and lead interventions with groups of children.

We are really pleased to have her joining the Deanshanger team.

Mr McKinnell

We also welcome **Mr McKinnell**, who will work predominantly with our older children. Mr McKinnell will teach groups of children, enabling us to keep some groups smaller and learning highly focused. He will also lead interventions and provide class cover when required.

We are extremely fortunate to begin the year with a full team of strong teachers. Having experienced teachers available to work with smaller groups, provide targeted interventions and support classes gives us greater flexibility to respond to children's needs.

Mr Pedley

Mr Pedley has joined our site team. He will be working across Deanshanger and Old Stratford helping to maintain the buildings and fulfil any site compliance requirements. You may meet Mr Pedley whilst he supervises the back gate in the mornings. We welcome him to the Deanshanger team.



The Start of the School Day

The school gates open at **8.40am**. Children should make their way directly to their classroom door, where their class teacher will greet them. Learning begins as soon as children enter the classroom, so they must arrive on time and be ready to begin their day. For our youngest children, punctuality is particularly important because phonics lessons begin at the start of the school day. Phonics is a crucial part of learning to read, and children need to access these sessions consistently if they are to make the best possible progress. Even being a few minutes late regularly can result in a child missing important teaching and starting their day trying to catch up with everyone else. Thank you for helping us to give every child the best possible start to their school day.

School Uniform

We expect children to wear the **correct Deanshanger school uniform at all times**.

We recognise that school uniform can be expensive, and we do not believe parents should have to purchase more costly items simply because they carry a school badge. We therefore do not insist upon logoed uniform. Plain, non-logoed items in the correct school colours are perfectly acceptable. However, this does not mean that branded fashion or sports clothing should be worn instead. Branded clothing and visible sports or fashion logos are not part of our school uniform or PE uniform. Please refer carefully to the attached uniform information for full details of the correct uniform.

Jewellery

Please pay particular attention to our expectations regarding jewellery. For health and safety reasons, jewellery should be kept to the minimum permitted within our school uniform policy. In particular, earrings must be removed for PE. Children need to be able to participate fully and safely in their PE lessons. Please therefore ensure earrings are removed before children arrive at school on their PE day.

PE Days

We will be sending PE day information out to you. Children should come to school wearing their correct school PE uniform on PE days. They do not need to bring their uniform to change into. Please remember that PE kit should follow the school's uniform expectations and should not be replaced with branded sportswear. There will be no PE in the first few days of term.

Curriculum Information

During the first week of term, class teachers will also send home a curriculum letter. This will provide an overview of the learning taking place during the term and other useful information specific to your child's class. Please take some time to read this so that you know what your child will be learning and how you can support them at home.

Water Bottles

Children are encouraged to bring a named water bottle to school every day so that they can remain hydrated throughout the school day. Water bottles should contain water only.

Developing Independence

One of the most valuable things we can do together is help children become increasingly independent.



As adults, it can sometimes be quicker to do things for children. However, learning to manage their belongings, remember equipment, organise themselves and solve small problems are all important parts of growing up. Parents can help by encouraging children to carry and organise their own belongings, enter school independently where appropriate, complete age-appropriate tasks for themselves and take increasing responsibility for being ready for school.

Reading to your child and listening to them read regularly also remain two of the most valuable things you can do at home. For our younger children, independence will obviously develop gradually. Our aim is not to rush children but to give them appropriate opportunities to do things for themselves and develop confidence.

Attendance Matters

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to make good progress. Every school day matters. When children miss school, they miss teaching and learning that can be difficult to recreate. Regular absences can also affect children's friendships, routines and confidence in the classroom.

We therefore ask parents to make attendance a priority and ensure children arrive at school on time each day. If your child is going to be absent from school due to illness, please contact the school office on each day of absence, following our usual absence reporting procedures. The school is not able to authorise holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Illness

We recognise that children become unwell from time to time and there will, of course, be occasions when they are not well enough to attend school. If your child has diarrhoea or vomiting, they should remain at home for **48 hours after the last episode** before returning to school. For other illnesses, please use your judgement about whether your child is well enough to participate fully in the school day. If you are unsure, please contact the school office.

A Few Important Site Reminders

As we begin the new academic year, please remember the following expectations:

- The staff car park is for staff and authorised visitors only. Parents and carers should not drive up to the school unless specific arrangements have been agreed with the school.
- Dogs are not permitted on the school site, except appropriately authorised assistance dogs.
- Children arriving by bicycle or scooter must dismount before entering the school grounds.
- We strongly encourage children cycling to school to wear a cycle helmet.
- Smoking and vaping are not permitted anywhere on the school grounds.
- Children and younger siblings should not use school play equipment before or after school unless this forms part of an organised and supervised school activity.
- Please supervise younger siblings carefully while on the school site.

These expectations help us keep the school site safe and manageable for everyone.

Security on the School Site

Keeping children safe is our highest priority, and we need everyone's help to maintain a secure school site. If you need to enter the school building during the school day, you must enter through the main school entrance and report to the school office. Please do not enter through classroom doors or other entrances



unless you have been invited to do so or are accompanied by a member of staff. We must know who is inside the building at all times, both for safeguarding purposes and in the event of an emergency. At drop-off and collection times, we also ask parents and carers to leave the school site promptly once children have been dropped off or collected. This allows us to secure the gates as quickly as possible.

Who Should I Speak to if I Have a Concern?

We know that, from time to time, questions or concerns will arise. Most issues can be resolved very quickly when parents and school staff communicate openly and work together. To make sure concerns reach the right person and can be dealt with efficiently, please follow the school's communication process.

1. Your Child's Class Teacher

Your child's **class teacher should always be your first point of contact** for routine concerns. They know your child, work with them every day and are responsible for their day-to-day education and wellbeing. In most situations, the class teacher will be able to answer your question or resolve the concern.

2. Your Child's Phase Leader

If you have spoken to the class teacher and the matter has not been resolved, the next step is the relevant Phase Leader:

Explorers Mrs Watson

Adventurers – Mrs Baker

Voyagers – Mr Bunting

The Phase Leader will look into the matter and work with the teacher and parent to try to find a resolution. Miss Peers may support the Phase Leader where additional senior leadership involvement would be helpful.

3. Head of School – Mr Bolton

If the issue remains unresolved following involvement from the Phase Leader, it can then be escalated to Mr Bolton, Head of School.

4. Executive Headteacher – Miss Morris

In the rare event that a matter remains unresolved after these stages, Miss Morris, Executive Headteacher, will review the issue and liaise with the relevant parties.

Our communication route is therefore:

Class Teacher → Phase Leader → Head of School → Executive Headteacher

Following this process enables concerns to be dealt with by the person closest to the situation in the first instance and prevents unnecessary delays caused by a senior member of staff having to go back through several people to establish what has happened.

Communication with School

Clear and effective communication between home and school is really important to us.

Emailing Members of Staff

All emails for members of staff should be sent through the school office email address.

When emailing, please make it clear in the subject line who the email is intended for by writing:

FAO: [Name of member of staff]

For example:

FAO: Mrs Watson – Year 1 query



The office team will ensure that your email is forwarded to the appropriate member of staff. Using one central email route helps us manage communication effectively, ensures messages are directed to the right person and reduces the risk of important correspondence being missed. Please remember to follow the school's communication process when deciding who your email should be addressed to. For routine concerns relating to your child, the class teacher should be the first point of contact.

Response Times

We will always aim to respond to emails within **48 working hours**. This does not include weekends, school holidays or periods when members of staff are not working. Teachers' priority during the school day is teaching and caring for the children. We do not expect staff to monitor or respond to emails while they are teaching, during evenings or at weekends. There may also be occasions when a member of staff needs to gather information or speak to colleagues before they can provide a meaningful response. Where this is the case, we would rather take the time to provide an accurate and helpful response than reply quickly without having all the information.

If Something Is Urgent

If your concern requires a response more quickly than our normal 48-working-hour timeframe, **please telephone the school office**. The office team can then establish the nature of the concern and ensure it is passed to the appropriate member of staff with the necessary urgency. Please do not rely on email for something that needs immediate attention, as staff may not see an email straight away.

Working Together Respectfully

We genuinely want parents to raise concerns with us. We would much rather know about a problem and have the opportunity to address it than allow frustration or misunderstanding to grow. There may be occasions when parents are understandably worried or frustrated, and we will always listen to concerns and seek to understand them. However, communication with school staff must remain respectful and constructive, whether it takes place face-to-face, by telephone or in writing. **Aggressive, abusive or threatening behaviour or communication towards members of staff will not be accepted.** The school operates a zero-tolerance approach to abuse towards staff and volunteers. Our aim will always be to work together professionally and positively to achieve the best outcome for the children.

Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is important to distinguish between a routine concern about your own child and a safeguarding concern about the safety or welfare of a child. The communication process outlined above is designed for routine questions, concerns or issues. If you have an immediate safeguarding concern about a child, please do not follow the normal communication route or wait for an email response. Please contact the school office or a member of the school's safeguarding team immediately so that the concern can be dealt with appropriately. Similarly, please do not rely on email if you believe a safeguarding matter requires an urgent response. Telephone the school so that we can act promptly.

Keeping Parents Informed

Good communication is not simply about responding when parents contact us. It is equally important that we keep families informed about what is happening in school. Mr Bolton will continue to produce his regular Deanshanger Downloads, sharing news, celebrations, reminders and updates about life at school.



Class teachers will also continue to send their termly newsletters, providing information specific to your child's class and learning. Please take the time to read school communications when they are sent. We will work hard to make sure important information reaches families, but communication works best when information is read at both ends!

Key Dates for the Year

One message we have heard clearly from parents is that you would like more notice of important school dates, particularly regular events such as Sports Day. We completely understand this. Families have work commitments, appointments and other responsibilities to organise, and receiving dates earlier makes it much easier to plan. We have listened to this feedback. We have therefore created a year diary containing already planned, key dates for the academic year. We hope that sharing these dates at the beginning of the year will help families plan and, where necessary, arrange time away from work for the events that are particularly important to them. These dates will be sent out to you in the next few days.

While we will give as much advance notice as possible, the diary cannot include every event that will take place during the year. Schools are busy places and opportunities sometimes arise during the year that we would not want our children to miss. Some visits, sporting events, performances and activities also depend upon external organisations and cannot always be confirmed months in advance. There will therefore inevitably be additional dates added throughout the year. Where this happens, we will always aim to give families as much notice as reasonably possible.

Arbor and School Communications

We use **Arbor** to support communication with families and to manage a number of important aspects of school administration. Please ensure that you can access your Arbor account and that the contact information we hold for you is correct. We must have your current email address, up-to-date telephone numbers and correct emergency contact information. Please check Arbor and school communications regularly so that you do not miss important information, letters or reminders. If you are having difficulty accessing Arbor or believe any of the information held about your family is incorrect, please contact the school office.

Clubs and Additional Opportunities

Throughout the year, children will have opportunities to take part in clubs, sporting activities, visits, performances and other enrichment experiences. Some of these can be planned well in advance and will appear on our year diary. Others arise during the year, sometimes through external organisations or opportunities that become available at relatively short notice. We want our children to benefit from these opportunities, so there will inevitably be occasions when additional information and dates are sent to parents during the year. Where clubs or activities require booking, information about how to register and any associated arrangements will be communicated separately.

Supporting Children with SEND

We are committed to ensuring that every child at Deanshanger can access learning, participate fully in school life and make the best possible progress. Children develop at different rates and may require different levels of support at different points in their school journey. If a child is identified as having an additional need, their class teacher may make adaptations to classroom teaching, provide additional resources or arrange targeted



interventions to help them access learning successfully. It is important to remember that supporting a child with additional needs begins in the classroom. If you have concerns about any aspect of your child's learning or development, your child's class teacher should always be your first point of contact. For more information on our SEND team and provision, please see separate document attached.

Looking Ahead

There is a great deal happening at Deanshanger, and we recognise that some of the changes outlined in this letter are significant. They are also purposeful. We are strengthening leadership, creating clearer systems, improving our learning environments, developing our approach to inclusion and establishing consistent expectations across the school. Some changes will be immediately visible when children return. Others will develop throughout the year. What will remain constant is our ambition for the children. We also want parents to feel that communication is clear, that they know who to approach when they need help and that, when something does go wrong, there is a straightforward process for addressing it. There will undoubtedly be things we continue to refine as the year progresses. We will continue to listen, reflect and improve while maintaining clear expectations about what we believe is best for our children.

We have worked incredibly hard over the summer to prepare for this next stage of Deanshanger's journey, and we are genuinely excited about the year ahead. Most importantly, we are looking forward to opening the gates, welcoming our children back and seeing the school full of life and learning again.

Thank you for your continued support and for working in partnership with us. We wish all of our children and families a very happy and successful start to the new academic year.

Miss Morris
Executive Headteacher