



September Monthly Newsletter

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01582 738810

admin@somerlesjuniorschool.co.uk

www.somerlesjuniorschool.co.uk



Head Teacher's Comment

We have just completed our first week of the new school year. I have been delighted with the children's positive attitude in their new classes and they have come back to school looking very smart!

The children are enjoying more freedom because of the lifting of some Covid restrictions: Year 6 prefects are now able to perform duties across school, all children have access to more exercise equipment at break times and they can chat to friends and siblings from other years outside. Unless there is a local outbreak, we are no longer working in the same situation as last year where classes might have to all self-isolate at home, as the guidance has now changed (see below) and this has reduced anxiety for children, parents and staff.

Year 6 were the last group to self-isolate last year and this came right in their final week. I was very grateful to the team of staff who came in during the last day of the school holiday to put on a big leavers event for these children. It was wonderful to be able to give them a fun time and a proper send off. In this month's newsletter, you can see photos of this and of events from the end of the summer term.

One of our aims is to "strive for continuous improvement" and so we value feedback from all members of the school community. Inside this letter, you can see the findings from the July parent and pupil surveys.

Mr Hunt

Covid restriction changes – new guidance for close contacts of a positive case

Children who are close contacts of a positive case are no longer required to self-isolate. This means that we will not need to close a year or class 'bubble' just because one child or member of staff tests positive.

However, we still wish to avoid the spread of coronavirus and so we ask that you comply with the following guidance:

- No person (adult or child) should come on site if they have Covid symptoms or have tested positive
- If someone in your household tests positive, we ask you not to send your child into school until they have first received a negative result from a PCR test. If this test is negative, your child may then attend school but should take home (lateral flow) tests until 10 days have passed from when the positive test was identified. (Free test kits are readily available from local pharmacies and other places in town)

Additional holiday date

An extra bank holiday has been announced for 3rd June 2022 for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Department for Education has reduced the school year by a day to allow schools to close that day or on another day.

As we will be on half term at the time of the bank holiday, we will close at another time to provide this extra day off:

Both Somerles Junior School and Somerles Infant School will be closed on Friday 3 December 2021.

Inside this newsletter: Extreme fun day Sports Day Zoo Trip Year 6 Leavers Day Survey Results Video Performances

Starting a new school year

After the long summer break, it was wonderful to be able to welcome the children to their new classes. The children soon overcame their new-term nerves and began to enjoy themselves in class with their new teachers and on the playground where they now have much more freedom.

Year 3



Year 4



Year 5

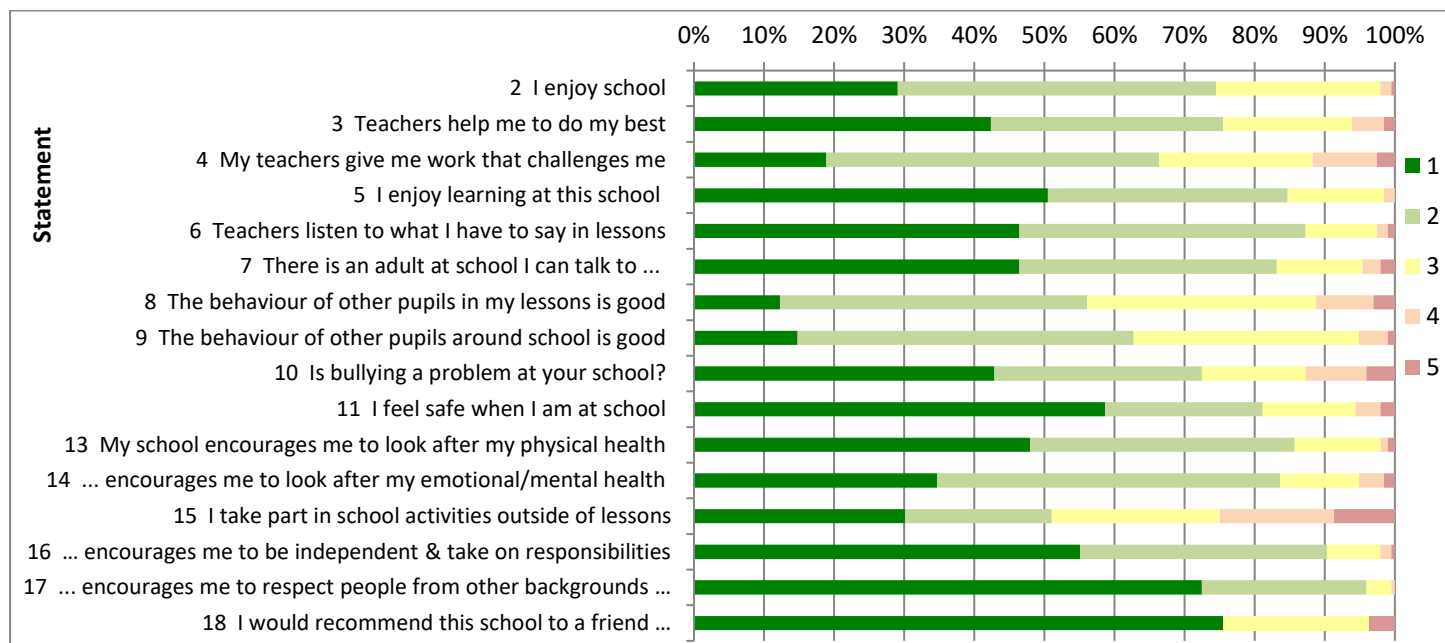


Year 6



Getting feedback – Pupil Survey July 2021

In July, the children took part in a survey and had a chance to let Mr Hunt, the staff and the governors know how they felt about their school. As you can see, the pupils feel very positive about the school - even more positive than in our last survey, despite the difficulties of the Covid disruptions. Here are the responses:



Key to responses (this varied according to the statement but was usually one of the following):

Response	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
or	All the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Almost never	Never

There were four additional questions:

Q12. What makes you feel unsafe at school? Q19. What do you like about the school?

Q20. What would you like to be improved at the school?



When asked what they liked about the school here are some of the positive responses:

"Everything because everyone is trying to make the school happy." "Everything because it is a kind and safe place."

"When you come to the school and get used to it makes you feel like you have a 2nd home."

"I like that it is always fun and there is always something new planned each day."

"I feel as if I could talk to someone if I was feeling worried very easily."

"It helps you to grow up strong and have a growth mindset. It supports you whenever you're stuck."

"It's a friendly, loving school and have enjoyed this school all the way through!"

"Everyone is kind and caring" "It is a kind and safe place to be and for you to make friends."

"I learn from mistakes that I make. I have to listen and work so hard."

"There's always someone there to help me when needed." "Teachers because they are kind and respectful."

"My teachers encourage me to be independent." "Nothing needs to be improved because the school is perfect!"

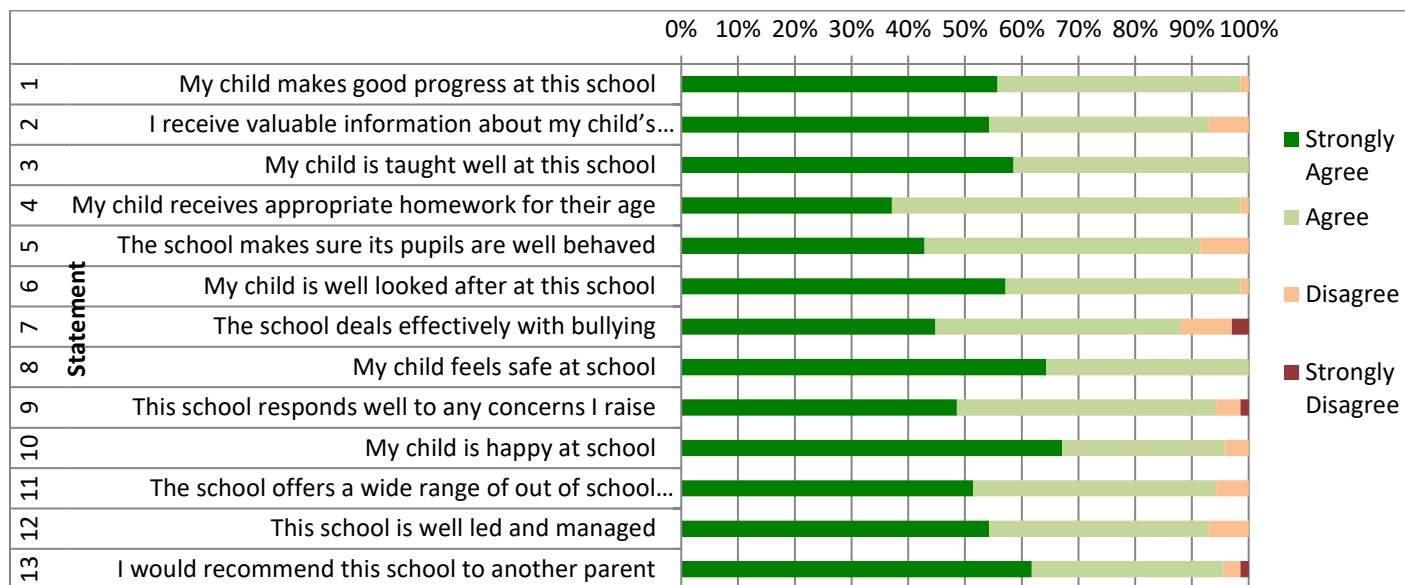
The children also gave us feedback on what they thought could be improved and Mr Hunt and the staff work to respond to some of these by:

- Meeting with our caterers to improve lunches further and teach the children about nutrition
- Investigating the possibility of installing outdoor water fountains for summer
- Reintroducing the sale of cereal bars by responsible students at break times
- Continuing to teach children about being kind through our Values and Wellbeing lessons.

Getting Feedback – Parent and Carer Survey July 2021

When reports came out in July, we launched our annual survey of parent and carer opinions and received 70 responses. We are grateful to parents and carers for providing us with their feedback.

We were pleased to see that the responses were overwhelmingly positive.



Some examples of positive feedback:

"The teaching staff are always professional and approachable and work so hard to motivate the children and keep the school a high achieving, fun and friendly place to learn. Our child has improved so much over the last difficult year and we love how his teacher challenges him to keep improving."

"I think Someries juniors has been great at giving the children a well-deserved fun time, after such a hard year for them all, regarding covid. They know what's more important than grades. Mental health! Well done for that!"

"An amazing school with fabulous staff who really do care about the children and their families. They have done a fantastic job at keeping Covid at bay and making sure everyone is as safe as possible, well done Someries Juniors!"

"Great school overall, nice teachers and staff. I would definitely recommend this school. I feel you always have the best interests in my child."

"I think the past couple of years have been extremely challenging with Covid and I am so impressed with how all staff have dealt with the situation. I have always felt my children have been well looked after and cared for and given a sense of normality."

"Thank you Mr Hunt and team for making Someries such a lovely school environment for my son to learn and grow."

"During a very difficult period for our family the support from Mr Finch and the school was superb as it has been on other occasions."

"I truly appreciate the hard work and effort of all the staff and the fantastic leadership during our children's most difficult times during Covid-19. Thanks to their support and encouragement, our children's mental health was not affected as much as it could have been, would the attitudes have been different."

Acting on suggestions:

We will introduce further improvements following parents' and carers' suggestions:

- Set morning reminder texts to go earlier rather than at 8am
- Check use of home/school communication books
- Monitor use of house points to ensure that there is consistency
- Remind pupils at start of year of behaviour expected to and from school
- Further improve the quality of school dinners
- Keep staggered starts and the children continue to make their own way to class (Years 4 - 6) so that there are fewer adults around classrooms.



Highlights from July

Performances

Last year, we were unable to invite parents and carers in to watch children perform. Instead, the children worked on a number of videos that their families could watch at home. These included Christmas plays, class assemblies and music performances.

Year 6 Leavers Production

Individual memories, lip sync, solo piano performance of *Dance Monkey*, group performance of the *Junkyard Funk* on improvised drums, rendition of *Hall of Fame*



Year 5 Guitar Performance

Year 5's music teacher, Mr Merriman, was impressed with the children's attitude and learning throughout the year. So that families could see how far the children's skills had progressed, staff recorded a mini-performance that included numbers such as *We Will Rock You*, *Old Town Road* and *Three Little Birds*



Year 6 High School Transition

Covid restrictions and staffing shortages meant that not all high schools were able to offer on-site transition mornings. We were pleased that the children going to Queen Elizabeth School were able to attend two on-site transition days in their own bubble. We hope that all our Year 6 leavers are now enjoying their new schools.



Sports Day

Our annual sports day took place on 15 July with lower phase competing in the morning and upper phase in the afternoon. Children competed in house teams and each phase's competition was made of two parts: the first was a carousel of activities where children had to use range of sporting skills; the second stage was the track events with individual and relay races, using our new athletics track.

Sport Carousel

Dressed in house colours children aimed to score as many points as they could for their house across eight events: football shooting, standing long jump, cricket bowling, beanbag throw, footgolf, target throw, hockey dribble & javelin throw.



Putteridge sports leaders

Each activity was a Putteridge High School student. These Year 7 athletes - all ex-Somerles pupils - were great role models for the children and we appreciated their help very much. They represented their new school well and we were very proud of the responsible citizens that they have become!



Track events

There were 50m and 100m sprints and 4 x 50m relays - all cheered on from children in their houses.



Fieldwork - Year 5 Zoo Trip

To help them with 'Living things and their habitats' for Science, Year 5 went to Whipsnade Zoo where they saw an array of animals in different habitats.



Year 5 used their Maths at the giraffe workshop. They recorded what their giraffe was doing (in 15-second intervals) and then presented their findings in a bar chart.



Extreme Fun Day

Back in May, children had raised funds for the school council by completing sponsored workouts with Montell Douglas. The school councillors used these funds to plan an *Extreme Fun Day* for the last week of term. These children planned the event, consulting with their classes. They opted for a range of inflatables and fair stalls on the field for half the day and quieter fun activities for the other half



Some school council members turned up very early on the day to help set up. We would like to thank the councillors for planning such a great event. Our thanks go also to Miss Perini and Mrs Whiting who made it happen and to their team of volunteers who helped it run so smoothly. It was a great end to the year!



Year 6 Leavers Fun Day

Sadly, in the last week of term, Year 6 children had to self-isolate due to a number of Covid cases in their classes. This meant that they missed their last day, as well as the Extreme Fun Day, Sports Day and their leavers disco.

So that they still got their share of the fun, the teachers invited the Year 6 children into school for a fun day of their own on August 31st. This was a great chance to celebrate the end of their junior school days and to say a proper goodbye to each other before they began their high school adventures.

They enjoyed fun on a range of inflatables and danced together in the playground disco. There was also food, cake, awards & ice creams



Outdoor Classroom and Shelter Appeal



We hope to be able to go ahead with our outdoor classroom and play shelter project in October.

If you shop at the Co-op, you can help us raise funds for this by nominating us as your 'community partner':

membership.coop.co.uk/causes/43438



Healthy Eating - a reminder of our policy

Last year, we implemented our plans to encourage healthier eating among our pupils. We have been very impressed to see the children responding well to this and bringing much healthier break time snacks - and to see how creative families have been in making packed lunches both healthy and tasty!

Reasons for a healthy eating policy

We wish to encourage healthy eating habits and improve the overall nutrition of pupils. We help pupils to develop a positive attitude to healthier eating through the curriculum and through pupils' dining experience in school. Schools are required to positively promote the health of its pupils and work around healthy eating is a key part of this.

School dinners

Our school caterers, Caterlink, who:

- supply children with more fresh food (95% of food is made fresh on site daily)
- use local suppliers
- use ingredients that meet high standards (including Red Tractor, RSPCA Freedom Food, MSC Fish green list and Food for Life Silver)
- make school dinners healthier, reducing the fat and sugar content.

Our school dinners meet the School Food Plan which ensures a balanced diet over the week and which restricts the amount of certain foods that can be served. Even items such as the weekly pizza are much healthier than similar items available from shops and takeaways.



Morning snacks

If your child brings a small healthy break snack, this should **only** be:

- a cereal bar (without peanuts) or
- fruit/vegetables

Children may not be allowed to eat their snack if it does not meet our guidelines.

(Some cereal bars may contain a lot of sugar, so please choose a healthy option!)



Packed lunches

The short-term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning. The longer-term effect of a poor childhood diet can be an increased risk to health in adulthood.

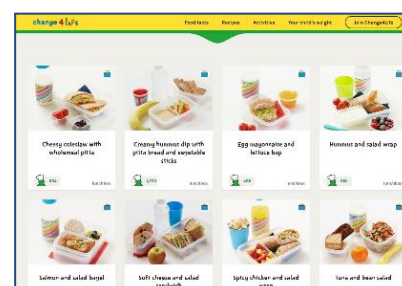
The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of schools to meet food and nutrition standards. In the past, the contents of some children's lunchboxes were unhealthy with high levels of fat, sugar, salt and very few fruits and vegetables.

Ensuring a healthy lunch can make the task of preparing your child's lunch more complex, but we hope that the long-term benefit to your child's health outweighs this inconvenience. Selecting ingredients with your child at the supermarket or discussing the healthiness of different items with them can be an excellent way of helping your child make healthier food choices.



You can find healthy packed lunch ideas at:

www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes



Packed lunches should include:

- at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day.
- meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus, falafel) every day
- oily fish, such as salmon, sardines, tuna, trout and mackerel at least once every three weeks.
- a starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other types of cereals every day.
- dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard everyday



We advise parents not to include the following:

- Snacks such as flavoured crisps
 - instead, include seeds, raisins, fruit bars, savoury crackers or breadsticks (no added sugar, salt or fat) which are a healthier choice.
- Avoid desserts that contain a lot of chocolate
 - instead choose alternative cake or biscuits e.g. fruit loaf, scone, cereal bar (low sugar).
- Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages/chipolatas should be included only occasionally.

Restricted items – these items must not be included in packed lunch

To ensure consistency and to keep packed lunches in line with food standards for school meals, packed lunches should not contain any of the following:

- drinks of any type - water is available for all pupils in clean individual cups in the dining hall
- chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches
- sugared, toffee or salted popcorn
- sweets or bars of chocolate
- crisps or any packet of savoury snacks **which are high in salt and fat**
- any products containing nuts (this is to protect our children with severe nut allergies)



Our midday supervisors have been asked to check packed lunches. If these items are found in packed lunches we will not allow the child to consume them and they may be confiscated. If this happens, a note may be placed in the child's lunch box to inform their parents and carers.

School calendar

Water bottles: to avoid sticky spillages, please ensure that your child's bottle only contains water!

This year: Term Dates for 2021-22

Here are this year's term dates. Please note that **there is now a holiday on Friday 3 December 2021**.

Please be aware that the school will close at the earlier time of 1.15 p.m. on the following dates this academic year (Castle Club will not be available on these dates): Friday 17th December 2021 and Friday 22nd July 2022

Autumn Term 2021	Spring Term 2022	Summer Term 2022
Start of Term: Monday 6 September	Start of Term: Wednesday 5 January	Start of Term: Wednesday 20 April
Queen's Jubilee Holiday: Friday 3 Dec.	Half Term Holiday: 14 to 18 February	May Day Bank Holiday: Monday 2 May
Half Term Holiday: 25 to 29 October	End of Term: Friday 1 April	Half Term Holiday: 30 May to 3 June
End of Term: Friday 17 December*		End of Term: Friday 22 July*

*The final day of the autumn and summer terms will end at around 1:15pm

Next year: Term Dates for 2022-23

These are the term dates for *next year*. They have been agreed with the infant school.

Autumn Term 2022	Spring Term 2023	Summer Term 2023
Start of Term: Monday 5 September	Start of Term: Wednesday 4 January	Start of Term: Tuesday 18 April
Half Term Holiday: 24 to 28 October	Half Term Holiday: 13 to 17 February	May Day Bank Holiday: Monday 1 May
End of Term: Friday 16 December*	End of Term: Friday 31 March	Half Term Holiday: 29 May to 2 June
		End of Term: Friday 21 July*

*The final day of the autumn and summer terms will end at around 1:15pm

Pupil Premium Funding

Learning support for your child and financial support for families

This grant provides support for families in the form of free school meals as well as free tuition and discounts on uniforms and trips. If you claim certain benefits then your child may be entitled to receive this help. You can collect a form from the School Office or you can apply online: [online application form](#). Our Family Worker will be happy to help.

Events this month

Harvest Festival - Tuesday 28th September 2021

Lower phase will be holding its Harvest Festival assembly later this month. Year 3 children will be contributing with some of their poems and reflections and we will have a guest speaker. At this time of year, we encourage each other to be grateful for what we have and to share with others.



We are therefore asking families if they would be kind enough to **send in donations of non-perishable food items** such as tins, rice, sugar, soups, packets, etc. Please make sure all items sent in are within the best before date. Children can bring these in from Monday 20th September to Monday 27th September and place them in the trolley at the front of school. These items will be distributed to local families by a food bank.

Playground Meltdown!

The first week of term was very warm. It became very hot on the playground at lunchtime, and ice pops were required to help keep the children cool!

