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## Upper School Newsletter

### Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am so pleased to write to you to say that we have had such a fantastic first couple of weeks of term. The students and teachers alike have all had big smiles on their faces and it's so wonderful to have our studios filled with music and dancing once again.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new students and teachers Mr Josh and Miss Leah, who have all joined us at this rather unusual time. I hope you are all settling in and managing to get to know everyone in your bubbles, albeit from a distance!

Also, we are very happy to have recently welcomed back our first group of pre-school children into our Saturday morning Preparatory dance and tap class. These lucky nine children from our Lower School do not have to social distance within their bubble group, so they can enjoy a very 'normal' dance class. We plan to extend this special opportunity to more of our Lower School children on a Sunday morning starting after half term. These new Sunday morning classes will be for 2-4 year olds, so please spread the word to anyone who you think may be interested in enrolling their child as we are likely to have a few spaces available for new children to join us.

Thank you, parents / carers / students for your patience and support whilst we have put into action all of our new procedures. Overall, we feel everything has come together very smoothly and so our students have been able to enjoy their classes as much as usual even though most are in mixed level groups and have social distancing measures in place.

Thank you also for your positive feedback and kind messages, especially with regard to how safe you and your children feel with our new procedures in place. We are confident that we are doing everything we possibly can in order to keep our students safe, including recently having a brand-new ventilation and air conditioning system fitted to add to our long list of risk mitigation actions.

Please read below for a review of some aspects which have arisen over the last two weeks and further information.

Thank you very much.

## Sickness information

If your child feels unwell and you are unsure whether it's a common cold or possible case of Covid-19 and therefore you do not know whether to bring your child to their dance class, then the NHS have a helpful online diagnostic tool for children over 5 years to help you understand their symptoms better and also to work out if they need to have a Covid-19 test.

The link to the online tool is: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

If you still have concerns or are unsure about your child's health, please always contact your GP or healthcare provider.

**If your child has symptoms / suspected / confirmed case of Covid-19 or has to take a test, then you must inform us immediately and you must not bring them to their class. This also applies if a member of your child's family, or someone with whom they have been in close contact has symptoms or, if your child / someone with whom your child has been in close contact have been advised by NHS Test & Trace as 'a close contact' to isolate at home.**

## Punctuality for classes

Following our 1<sup>st</sup> September email clarifying arrangements with regard to arrival time slots for each bubble group and the problem with arriving late (i.e. after the start time of your child's class), unfortunately, we have had some difficult situations whereby parents have not respected this policy.

I would like to remind you that we currently have in place the policy of not allowing any student into the studios who arrives after the start time of their class in order to ensure that there is no crossing of students from different bubble groups in the corridor / toilet area which would increase the risk of transmission of Covid-19 and potentially, the number of families needing to isolate in the event of a confirmed case.

The arrival slot for most groups is 15 minutes before the lesson start time and in our 1<sup>st</sup> September email, we asked you to try to arrive at the start of this slot. If you are aiming to arrive at the start of the slot but then in fact, arrive after the start time of your lesson, then you would be arriving 15 minutes late. We hope this clarifies our position about why we are seemingly so 'inflexible' with regard to lateness. As you can imagine, we hate turning children away from their lessons but the safety of our whole community must take priority at this time.

Please also be aware that if your child misses the first lesson of their session, then it is very unlikely that they would be allowed to come into the studios for their second lesson of the session, due to the same safety considerations described above.

Lastly on this matter, please do not enter the rear staff car park any earlier than your designated 15-minute arrival time as there may be another group waiting with which you must not mix.

## Your child's physical, mental and emotional health

In our start of term newsletter, we asked you to get in touch if you needed to inform us about any new physical (including injuries) or mental health conditions that your child may have been experiencing since they last attended classes with us, or to provide an update about any situation about which we were already aware.

We received very few responses to this request and are conscious that at this time in particular, many children may be experiencing mental and emotional health difficulties about which our teachers should be made aware.

Also, with regard to physical injuries, as some children have not danced for several months, we need to be certain that they are fit to dance full-out in their classes since our teachers will be increasing lesson intensity from now onwards.

Please do let us know any information, so that we can look after your child in the best and safest possible way. Thank you.

## **Contacting your administrator**

Our office is manned as much as possible however, our staff have numerous additional responsibilities at this time and therefore may not be available to answer the phone. Please leave a voicemail or send an email and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience.

For NHS test and trace purposes and for the well being of your child, please ensure you inform us if any of your contact details need updating. Thank you.

## **Hair and uniform reminder**

We understand it's challenging to get your child ready for their dance class at this time when we are not able to open our changing facilities. Therefore, we ask that you do your best with their uniform and hair and please focus on the points below. Thank you for your cooperation.

- Bare feet and convertible tights without dance shoes are not permitted at this time. Students must wear suitable dance shoes for ALL classes.
- If your daughter is wearing the lavender leotard, make sure the label is on her left when she puts it on (i.e. the front 'scoop' is higher than the back which is the opposite way round to a normal vest) otherwise it becomes very uncomfortable for her!
- Please, no vests or pants underneath any leotard, biketard or catsuit - they look unsightly and spoil the line of the body.

- Children in those Pre-Primary classes which do not have a parent helper are, at this time, permitted to wear a non-regulation (but tight fitting) top or jumper that they are able to remove and put back on more easily than a cardigan, without help from an adult.
- Girls wearing black leotards for ballet or tap classes may wear a black cotton lycra crossover ballet cardigan if they are cold in the studio and also their SLDS sweater for warm ups only.
- Children who are not able to put on and do up their own tap shoes must have them put on by their parent / carer in the car park before they enter the building as the corridor supervisor / teacher will not be able to help them.
- Please make sure long hair is neatly and tightly tied back and long fringes / hanging sections of hair are pinned back with kirby grips as hair in the eyes makes it impossible for the child to use correct eye focus. A classical ballet bun is compulsory for all girls with long enough hair in Pre-Primary ballet and grades above.
- Hair styling for girls in Grade 2 modern plus - please ensure long hair is tied back in a style suitable for modern dance so that it doesn't hinder your child's progress in dance. Hairstyle needs to be suitable for turning as well as lying down on the back of the head. A pony tail, bunches or a classical bun are NOT suitable. French plaits tucked under, a side bun, or 2 small buns on sides of head are all acceptable.
- Please do not wear any large items of jewellery which can be dangerous, and body or hair oil should not be worn (it makes the floor slippery and dangerous).
- Please ensure all shoes and items of uniform are named.

## SLDS sweaters

If you would like to order a school sweater for yourself / your child, then please refer to attached information and ensure you place your order and make payment by BACS by **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October**.

SLDS sweaters are the only sweaters that are permitted to be worn for warm-ups in classes and so are a worthwhile addition to your child's uniform for the colder weather.

## Reminder - auditioning / taking classes with another dance organisation

Please note the following from our school terms and conditions:

**Students at SLDS may not audition for nor attend another dance school (including CAT schemes and Associate classes) unless prior written permission has been granted by the Principal.**

The reason we have this rule in place is so that children have consistency in their dance training. Also, so that potential timing clashes between classes can be discussed and understood in advance of acceptance onto any training scheme.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, or in future you find that you would like your child to attend additional dance training outside SLDS, then please email me before applying to audition.

## **Books missing from our school bookshelf**

Over the summer break, we noticed that some books had gone missing from our wonderful reference bookshelf in the waiting room. We do not mind if your child borrowed a book and has not yet returned it, but ask that you please check at home for any of the books listed below as some are sadly, irreplaceable because they are now out of print. Please return any books you find to the Corridor Supervisor when you drop off or collect your child and no questions will be asked! Thank you very much for your help in restoring our book collection.

ANTIGONE (Jean Anouilh)

KEEPING TOM NICE (Lucy Gannon)

MY MOTHER SAID I NEVER SHOULD (Charlotte Keatley)

CYMBELINE (Shakespeare - version by JM Norworthy)

DANCING: THE FIRST 75 YEARS (Derek Parker)

THE BOOK OF TAP (Eleanor Rowell)

PREVENTING DANCE INJURIES (Solomon and Cerry)

FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSICAL BALLET TECHNIQUE (RAD)

TAP DANCE AMERICA (Constance Valis Hill)

ASPECTS OF FOLK DANCE IN EUROPE (Harrold and Wingrave)

## **Second-hand uniform sale**

Thank you so much to parent volunteers, Ros Walton and Jemma Johns, who organised and manned the recent second-hand uniform sale under far more complex circumstances than normal. It was an extremely well organised event which raised a brilliant £259.00 for our show costume fund, bringing the total amount in that fund to £1,072.00, to go towards costumes for our next show.

Please keep hold of your outgrown dance shoes and uniform for the next sale and we will send more information in due course.

## **Future planning and lesson content**

Unfortunately, as so much is still unknown, we are not in a position to confirm the weekly timetable for January 2021, nor the show performance and examination dates for next year. Until we are able to move forwards with these plans, we are also not able to inform you about lesson content next year.

However, I can confirm that after the forthcoming examination session, children will stay in their current Bubble groups (the safest and simplest solution) and teachers will continue to work on ISTD syllabus content / training exercises, but at the next level. Therefore, most classes will continue to be mixed level. Fortunately, our teachers are very skilled and so are able to maintain their exceptionally high standards even when they are teaching classes of mixed ability levels. Additionally, Bubble groups will remain small and therefore students will continue to benefit from one to one feedback.

## **Side Return Lights**

Please note that we are in the process of getting the side return lights working again. So hopefully you won't be waiting to collect your child in the dark for too much longer!

## **Forthcoming examination session**

Lastly, I and all of the SLDS team would like to wish all of our students who are taking examinations this and next week the best of luck. It's fantastic that you finally have the opportunity to show the examiners what you can do - it's been a long wait since our March session was postponed due to Covid-19.

Please contact your Administrator if you have any questions.

Best Wishes,

Miss Zoe

Principal

South London Dance School