Dear Parents/Carers,

This is my usual end-of-term letter, but slightly different in the current circumstances!

I wanted to write to send my very sincere best wishes at this difficult time. The whole Grove family are missing seeing the children and their families every day, and can’t wait till we can see you all again.

We recognise how hard these times can be, with lots of extra pressures – some of you may be self-isolating, worrying about your friends and family, working from home, worrying about money and now having to deal with a completely different home routine, whilst trying to home educate your children.

I therefore wanted to reassure you that your own wellbeing and that of your family should be your highest priority. There may be days when you just can’t get any home education done, and that’s absolutely fine, please don’t feel any pressure. It is just as important to just spend time with your children, doing things together. Go for walks together, cook with them, read with them, garden with them, peg the washing out with them, enjoy nature with them, make and create things together, sing and dance with them, and above all, keep being the kind, calm role-model your child needs through this challenging time.

Keep in touch with your network of friends and family as this time is incredibly difficult for everyone. Don’t obsess about what is being shared on Facebook, as it can look like everyone else is doing better than you – being there for your child is what is needed now. As an academy, we are still there to help. Please make use of our safeguarding email address (safeguarding@espritmat.org) or our office email address (grove@espritmat.org) to get in touch with us for help, support, queries – we can usually help with most things! Please don’t email the year group emails with queries, as these don’t allow responses to be sent, or even messages to be forwarded to the office.

We will post a link on Facebook to a site that has some good information for supporting parents and carers at this difficult time.

In these letters I always tell you how proud I am of what our pupils have achieved, and I will be doing that in a moment. However, I really feel I need to give a special mention to the Grove staff for everything they have done in the recent weeks. As you will be aware, we were given very little notice of the school closing and therefore the need to ensure children could be home educated. Decisions and actions that would usually take months of planning were implemented in hours, so I hope that we generally got these right. I have to give special mention to Miss Wynne who has been an amazing asset with her ICT knowledge, she has managed to implement a completely new online system – Purple Mash and get staff fully trained, along with training on video conferencing. Staff have worked tirelessly and fully embraced the challenges and changes, they have adopted completely different ways of working this week, with all contact being virtual – now we all have a good idea what each others’ homes look like, and there have, of course, been children running around in the background for those who are also parents! Some staff, have, of course, been providing childcare at Northwood Broom for the children of critical workers, and they have also fully embraced this challenge, and ensured that the children have had a lovely time – they have been outside enjoying the sunshine for most of the week!

Over the last term, there have been many lovely activities taking place at Grove. We have continued to offer a full programme of extra-curricular clubs, and are entering more inter-school competitions. This term a Futsal team competed, making us very proud. There have been lots of visits for pupils to enjoy with Year 6 pond-dipping at Central Forest Park, Year 3 visiting Hanley museum and Year 4 enjoying a day at the Dewa Roman museum in Chester. Our pupils, as always were a credit to us with their behaviour on these visits. Our ‘Friendship’ disco was a huge success, after being rearranged due to the unscheduled snow. I felt extremely proud of our pupils who performed in the Dance Extravaganza, with their Harry Potter inspired dance - they performed brilliantly! We also had a brilliant Sports Relief day, where we managed to get more than 500 people dancing at the same time, ably led by Miss Simpson and Mr. Hannon! Even though term was cut short by a couple of weeks, there has been still been so much happening, showing us yet again what very talented children we have at Grove.

This term we have welcomed another Grove baby (making 3 so far this year!) – Miss James welcomed Amelie Elizabeth on 20th March, weighing 5lb 1 oz. Mother and baby are both doing well and we can’t wait to meet her when this is all over!

I would like to thank parents and carers for engaging in the home learning that has been set. We know there have been some issues with Purple Mash, which have been down to the high volume of people using it, plus general high volume of people using the internet. It is so lovely to receive the photos each day to show us what children have been up to, it really makes our day.

I would like to finish by once again wishing you all the very best in these difficult and unprecedented times. We will do our very best to keep in close contact with you, via Facebook, text, email and website, and we hope it isn’t too long before we can see you all again. In the words of J.K. Rowling ‘we don’t need MAGIC to change the world, we carry the power we need inside ourselves already – we have the power to imagine better’.

Take care, stay safe, see you all on the other side.

Mrs. Carrigan