



18th March 2020

Re. Partial School Closure Continuation Thursday 19th March

I am writing to you as promised to provide you with our daily update on the current situation at Rackham and our position regarding school closure.

We are all so very grateful to the amazing Rackham community for your messages of thanks and support at this time. It is great to know our efforts are appreciated and that so many of you are supporting the difficult decisions we have had to make at this time.

Our staffing workforce has reduced further still. However, because of those parents who offered to keep their children at home today, we have been able to operate as normal. To those parents we are HUGELY grateful. We are incredibly fortunate as a school to have so many parents who are supporting us in our efforts to keep our school open and functioning. If our pupil numbers had remained the same as yesterday, we would most certainly have needed to close the school to all pupils in KS1 today. On behalf of all parents who have critical jobs supporting the nation in our efforts to overcome this virus I would like to offer a sincere thank you. It is a real privilege to be headteacher of a school with such an amazingly supportive parental community. You are all heroes. We hope you are managing to use the resources sent home for home learning without too much difficulty.

We remain incredibly thankful to those staff who are willing to work above and beyond in order to ensure our school remains open. Tomorrow we anticipate further reductions in Rackham staffing. At present, we hope to have three Rackham teachers in school tomorrow, two TA's with an ability to teach whole classes, one regular Rackham supply teacher and five teaching assistants. These women are remarkable, and I know they are appreciated by everyone within our community. Children will be placed into mixed classes as they were today, and there will be two teachers per year team phase (1-2, 3-4, 5-6).

After considering today's pupil and staffing numbers carefully and reflecting on how this morning has progressed in school, I have decided that **Rackham will remain open for Years 1-6 tomorrow, Thursday 19th March.**

I must stress to all parents and carers that this is a very fluid plan and I may well need to update you further this evening following Boris Johnson's national update this afternoon. Please consider turning notifications on for your emails if you haven't already because given the lack of consistency in government guidance and the speed at which things are progressing I may need to share updates with you late into an evening and do not want you to miss important information.

If you have kept your children off school today in an effort to keep our school open, thank you. If this is causing you considerable strain or difficulty, please know you are more than welcome to send them in again tomorrow. We have enough staff to provide adequate provision. I do not want any parents to suffer financially in their efforts to keep our school open. If things become too critical, we will remain open only to pupils with parents/carers working in front line roles such as doctors, nurses, medical technicians, laboratory scientists, healthcare workers, haulage workers and volunteers. If you are choosing to keep your children at home for other reasons, we will continue to ensure this decision does not affect your attendance record negatively.

In addition to this, I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to our teachers with underlying health conditions who are beavering away at home, supporting parents with home learning and supporting teachers in school with planning and resources. Just because you are not in school, does not mean you are not playing a crucial role. It is important for everyone to appreciate how hard you are all working behind the scenes.

With this in mind, I would like to announce some good news amidst this time of crisis. Mrs. Ward is currently self isolating at home not because of any underlying health condition, but because she is pregnant! I am sure you will all join me in offering our sincere congratulations on this fantastic news. This virus is serious and sinister but let us always remember the joy and magic of a new life being brought into the world. Remembering all that is good about humanity is particularly important for us all at this time of uncertainty. Our year 5 and 6 pupils were informed about this pregnancy yesterday and they were all very excited. We are all so proud of how Mrs. Ward has continued to handle her crucial role within Rackham under what must be a very daunting time for her. She has been an unwavering rock of support for all staff at Rackham throughout this process, maintaining high expectations from all but being supportive and helpful in every way.

I would offer like to offer my best wishes to all staff members and families of Rackham who are themselves poorly or who have loved ones who are poorly. We understand how difficult this time must be for you and would like to provide you with a genuine offer of support. Please telephone or email the school if you need help. There are people within the community we can signpost you to if we are unable to help ourselves. If there is one thing I have learned from my time as headteacher at Rackham, it is that there is no job too big for our staff. Schools are a public body and in times of crisis, we will be considered a key line of support within the community. Please do not hesitate to email or call us if there is something you cannot find the answers to. If we are too busy, we won't be able to respond but we will do our very best and will never consider a call for help inappropriate.

Lastly, thank you again to those parents who have sent in kind messages of support, biscuits, chocolates and flowers. It really lifts the spirits of all staff in school and we are so grateful. Our efforts as a school are only possible because of a supportive community and the Witchford community should feel proud of itself.

I will keep you updated as and when we have further announcements. I anticipate this may well be later this evening. Please share this message to other parents and carers from Rackham to ensure the message is received by all.

Take care of one another and stay strong,

Bridget Harrison.

