



3rd April 2020

Dear Parents, Carers, Grandparents and friends of Rackham,

During these very challenging times I would like to share with you some thoughts. Firstly, a massive thank you for your resilience, fortitude and solidarity in a rapidly changing situation. I realise that the events taking place are unsettling for all of us. The Education Secretary has recently confirmed that 'Schools and other settings remain closed – except for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers.' I support this 100%. I know the importance of our school being open for these children and their families. I would like to thank the brave staff who are continuing to go into school during the Easter holidays to support these families. You are all heroes and we are truly grateful.

We are all feeling worried, overwhelmed and under pressure by everything that is happening around us. Watching the news can be a mind boggling experience which challenges us on every level: the sadness at seeing people suffer, the helplessness of wondering 'What can I do?' and the frustration of isolation.

Despite this challenge we must remember our core Christian values and be a people of hope. We must look for the good and try to be positive in all situations, despite how extreme it is. The thing that will keep us going is hope and the knowledge that this time will pass.

This week, we have seen hope and shards of light in many forms. We have seen hope on a national scale with the many brave people who have volunteered to support the critical work of the country. We have also seen the tireless and brilliant NHS staff and other critical workers who continue to put themselves on the front lines - supporting the most vulnerable and the people who need them. Furthermore, we have seen tangible examples of good in our local community. Witchford truly is a very special place and I feel so fortunate to be a part of it.

Despite the overwhelming challenges we are all facing, there have been lovely moments within the school community. If you are not yet a member of our 'Rackham Official School Closure and Isolation' group on Facebook, please consider joining it. Parents, carers and Rackham staff alike are sharing photographs and helpful ideas with each other. I am also using this platform and Twitter to post my daily video reading of a picture book for the children as well as whole school collective worship sessions. We are all adapting and coping as best we can and we will emerge even stronger. Light will emerge.

Distance learning not home schooling.

Please remember you are not 'Home-schooling' - we are going through an unprecedented time which has led us to a 'distance learning' situation. This is alien to us and we are all doing our best to adjust. If you decide your child is not going to engage with the work set by school and is going to spend time baking, watching tv or learning new skills then that is your choice. Nobody is expected to do every task - you may have days when the children do no school work and other days when they catch up - that's fine!

We don't yet know how long schools are going to be closed for but we do know that 'if you don't use it you lose it' so I would ask that you try to practise the essential skills of learning. Please try to ensure

that your child does some regular reading. As well as this, your child could complete some free writing each week - they could keep a diary, write a report about something or create a comic. For their maths work, your child could practise times tables/number bonds or complete practical maths work by following a recipe. Try to ensure they get some physical play/activity every day. All of my advice echoes the regular guidance you have been receiving from Mrs. Ward and the class teachers. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere appreciation of Mrs. Ward and all the wonderful teaching staff at Rackham for ensuring parents and pupils are supported at home as far as possible. It is an enormous task and one which has required very little involvement from myself due to the hard work and dedication of 'Team Rackham'.

The most important thing we can do at the moment is look after each other and try to stay calm and mentally strong. Please do not let school work and pressure to complete tasks be another stress in your life. Our lives have changed so dramatically and your love and support for each other is what matters most. We are learning to appreciate the small things and to be more grateful every day. Your positivity and good wishes mean the world to us. Please reach out to people, perhaps to those who you don't usually; they may need your support in a way you don't know.

If you are concerned about anyone, please support them and if appropriate, please contact us. If we can support you regarding a CONFIDENTIAL welfare matter, please contact us on:

office@rackham.cambs.sch.co.uk or lsmith@rackham.cambs.sch.co.uk

I truly hope you are all able to enjoy some more relaxing times during the Easter holiday. The Easter activities that Mrs. Ward has written a letter to you about are wonderful and I hope they are well received.

I will write to you all again before the start of the Summer term.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you all.

Kind Regards,

