



Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We have made it to the midpoint of this half term, and despite the fact that we have lived and worked with these restrictions in one form or another for almost a year, we are all feeling unsettled. This inevitably affects our daily rhythms and mood swings, as we react to the unexpected and unknown. But, we can and should bathe in the small positives we have in our daily lives. No matter how trivial they may seem, the everyday little positive things gather together and give us a thread of gratitude to hold onto through the difficult spells. Try to take time to stop in the moment, and look for the positive. Sometimes we may feel we have to look hard to find it, but it will be there, and could make a small difference to the rest of our day.

Last week felt exceptionally tough for everyone. It was Week 3 of remote learning and understandably the novelty has definitely worn off for a lot of families. The dark, cold and rainy/snowy weather has not helped and we have all have felt the strain as we try to juggle our own jobs, supporting our children and all the additional stresses of living through a pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity thank and congratulate the combined efforts from our parents during what has been an incredibly challenging start to the year. Whatever your personal circumstances, we at Rackham have been amazed by the efforts from our families. If your child has had lots of microwave meals, stayed up too late, played on games consoles more than usual and not completed all of the available school work...that is ok! We know our pupils are safe, loved and cared for which is of course the most important thing of all. To re-iterate the messages in previous correspondence, we are mindful of the fact that a lot of work is made available by our staff but all we ask is for pupils to do their best and not to cause themselves undue anxiety or worry about school work. Everyone's circumstances are very different and we recognise that fully. This is very much a marathon and not a sprint. Completing all work set by our teachers is not a competition and your children will not suffer in the long term if they prioritise wellbeing over work completion.

Reflecting back over the last 11 months, there is much we have learnt to re-evaluate and assign greater value to. For us in school, it has reaffirmed that children really are the life and soul of our school day. Individual bubbles and absent children diminish so much of who we are as a family, and individuals, because our connections to each other are weakened. A sentiment I know is felt by many families who have not seen loved ones often, or for some not at all, over the past year. But there is hope on the horizon that life will become closer to normal in the coming months, even though there is some distance still to go until we get there.

With wellbeing very much at the forefront of our minds, we have set up a pastoral "check – in" facility that pupils may wish to access if they feel isolated or lonely or would just like to talk to a member of our pastoral team about anything that might be worrying them. Often when children can sense the stress and additional

workload placed on their parents, they might feel reluctant to talk about their feelings, for fear of placing additional burden. We would like to offer a known, friendly ear to these pupils.

Pupils can register a wish to speak to someone via a very simple online form which can be accessed on Seesaw. We will share this information with our pupils in our class zooms so they all understand how and why the resource might be accessed. This service will be staffed by Miss. Smith, Mrs. Pooley and Mrs. Harrison and one of us will make telephone contact with the children within 48 hours (hopefully sooner).

I would also like to share with our community a '[Rackham Family Playlist](#)' that we have created on Spotify for our pupils and their families. All staff were given the opportunity to share some music tracks which help them to feel more positive about life, when things are feeling tough. The playlist is very eclectic, but we hope it will help our community feel more connected. Music is a very powerful tool and sometime it is easily forgotten about due to the hectic nature of our lifestyles. If you are able to play a track from the playlist in the morning to inject some positivity into the day, that would be fantastic. Some of the tracks are more suited to younger age groups and some older. You know your children best and will know which tracks they will enjoy. Some adults might also enjoy the positive vibes too, it is great music for car journeys.

Please note, if you do not usually use Spotify, you can still listen to our playlist by signing up for a free account. We will share this playlist on our school website under the 'Covid Mental Health Resources' section and we will pin it to our twitter page too.

Lastly, it is Children's Mental Health Week next week, and all teachers at Rackham have planned some excellent activities to reflect this. I would like to thank our PHSE Lead and Mental Health Champion, Mrs. Hailstone for her efforts promoting this with our pupils and teachers.

We have been in awe of the tremendous work you have put in to help children access their learning, while you are juggling work and other commitments at home. We do not underestimate the challenges this type of learning brings. We hope the advice and support our staff give helps you to be realistic in what can be achieved in your family circumstances, without the worry or guilt that you are not getting it right. Every family's unique situation is recognised, and as previously stated, there is no one way of making it work for you.

Take care and stay safe,



Mrs. B. Harrison  
Headteacher

