



12th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

As we reach the end of this very busy half term, I would like to thank everyone in our community for their valiant efforts. It says a lot about the calibre and team spirit at Rackham that we have reached half term without having to close any bubbles in school. I am always proud to be the Headteacher of such an amazing school but this is more true now than ever before. The relationship between the school and our community is excellent and only by us working together and trusting each other have we managed to keep each other safe. I would also like to thank the staff at Rackham for continuing to be diligent every single day in their efforts to maintain our bubble integrity and keeping our families safe.

Recently, there has been a lot of media attention about lost learning and the need for children to catch up. At Rackham, we were quick to identify gaps in learning following last years' lockdown and the gaps were addressed appropriately and with speed. Sowing the idea that children haven't learnt anything whilst they have been out of school is dangerous and is not what we discovered when the children came back last September. Our chief priority when all children return to school is to ensure they feel happy and safe and are given the freedom to learn and enjoy being a child. Talking to primary aged pupils about 'lost learning' will do no good for their wellbeing and children can only learn when they feel happy, calm and supported.

There has also been a lot said about the effect of lockdown on children's mental wellbeing. I think it is worth remembering that when pupils returned to school last September, we had anticipated a situation where pupil wellbeing would be very low but this was most certainly not the case. All staff commented on how refreshing it was to see that our pupils were just as engaged, happy and positive about life as always. This is a reflection of the love, support and care they had received from you. As all of our pupils will know, resilience is one of Rackham's 5Rs, and pupils have a solid understanding of what it means to bounce back from life's challenges and reach out for support when they find this difficult. I am confident that with the continued support of their loved ones and the continued efforts of our team in school, Rackham pupils will return with a genuine zest for life and willingness to engage and learn together.

You will have noticed that we have continued to ensure our curious curriculum is delivered remotely, with a genuine focus on developing the whole child and not just English, Maths and academic progress. It would have been easy to concentrate solely on providing online, academic learning this term but we have very deliberately made sure opportunities have been available for our pupils to develop themselves in other ways and we continue to promote this idea to our parent community. Wellbeing is the pre-requisite for learning and progress, which is why our ongoing work on mental health and wellbeing is so important.

I would like to politely remind parents again, that it remains crucial you are not allowing your children to cross bubbles. We have recently been made aware of a few families who are mixing with each other out of school. The efforts we are making in school to ensure bubbles remain separate are undermined completely when a family chooses to arrange play dates and other activities that mean pupils have close contact with other pupils not in their bubble. We are working hard to remain supportive in these circumstances, but I am conscious that if polite reminders are repeatedly ignored, we may need to consider a more robust

approach. The Local Authority and the local police force are ready to support us if we need to take this approach.

Lastly, I hope that we can see the light at the end of this particular tunnel and that we will see all children again in March. I know that all the staff at Rackham are looking forward to seeing our pupils return to school and we are grateful to have been afforded time to prepare for this eventuality. As of yet, we have no information from the DfE about how the return of pupils may look and we are anticipating further information about it on or after Monday 22nd February. I am confident that we will be able to plan for pupils to return effectively after this. I am reluctant to label this 'school reopening' because as we all know, we have never closed.

I will be instructing all staff to ensure they are well rested over half term, so please be mindful that Seesaw approvals and class emails will not be maintained during this period. It is crucial that our staff feel ready to face the new challenges that inevitably next half term will bring.

We will need to continue to track and trace staff and pupils up until Sunday 14th February. In order to ensure these arrangements work effectively, please adhere to the following:

- Parents to seek tests via testing centres rather than via postal tests as this can significantly delay confirmation of results. Results are normally forthcoming in 24 hours via test centres.
- Parents must notify school if children have symptoms after schools close.

The Covid reporting email address to use after Friday 12th February 2021 is:
covid19results@rackham.cambs.sch.uk

Some parents may be concerned that next week will feel like a struggle without the structure of remote learning and we understand this concern. However, it is always worth remembering that children often can and do achieve remarkable things when left with their own imaginations, safe in their homes and that they often find it easier to entertain themselves than we might give them credit for. If they have some toys, some books, plenty of love and a chance to get out into the sunshine occasionally, I am sure they will enjoy the half term break and benefit from the freedom it affords them.

I would like to thank you all again for your remarkable efforts supporting your children, your families and our school community.

Kind regards,



Bridget Harrison