



Wednesday 1st July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the last few days, we have been considering options that would allow all Rackham pupils to attend a face to face transition session before the end of term. We have been evaluating all Government and Local Authority guidance, and have considered a wide variety of factors (such as the purpose of the sessions, the resources, and time management), and whether the transitions sessions would provide benefits to outweigh the risks that are still present. I have this morning received further guidance from the Local Authority who remain extremely concerned about spikes and local infection in light of the recent issues in Leicester and have advised that virtual zoom meetings are preferable to short face to face meetings in school.

All schools face unique circumstances and unfortunately, a risk assessment of the best option available to Rackham (a 30 minute session, with 15 pupils at a time meeting on the school field, and following social distancing rules) would still pose an unacceptable risk level. We are also very concerned that it could be counter productive as it may create anxiety and confusion for our pupils.

Public Health England have been keen to impress that the operation of 'bubbles' is critical to contain the virus and without these there is a real prospect of outbreaks occurring. We are not permitted to ignore the protective measures guidance which include factors to consider such as:

- Any arrangements that are made for this term must be safe, be within the guidelines on social distancing (currently still 2 metres) and group size (a maximum of 15 per bubble).
- To avoid further risk of infection, any staff involved with any new groups should not have worked with another bubble in school within the last 7 days. The Local Authority have contacted Public Health England and this is the minimum period they consider to be safe (realistically it is up to 9 days).
- If we consider it desirable for every child to have some contact and introduction to their new teacher for next year, then virtual (Zoom) meetings would be preferable.
- Current bubbles cannot be closed to allow for creation of new bubbles and neither staff nor children can switch to another bubble without a break of at least 7 days. This means that our pupils who are accessing school at present would not be able to participate in any face to face transition meetings.

The outcome of our assessment is that we are sadly unable to offer a face to face transition arrangement for pupils at Rackham. Instead, like other Cambridgeshire Primary Schools, we have planned for a virtual transition package this term, with face to face transition at the start of September before the Autumn term begins.

Transition plan for this term:

- All current bubbles to remain functional in school until the end of term, as per guidance.
- Transition activities to be included in home learning plans for week beginning Monday 13th July. This will provide your child with the opportunity to introduce themselves to their new teacher in lots of different ways. Please look out for this when it is sent out on Friday 10th July.
- Zoom meetings with new classes and new class teacher. The details for this will be shared next week but we are anticipating these taking place in the week beginning Monday 13th July.
- Video messages from current and new class teachers. These will be shared before the end of term.
- Whole school Transition Assembly led by Mrs. Harrison.

Class allocation and end of year reports:

End of year reports and information about class allocations for next year will be shared electronically next week. We aim to ensure these are with you before 7pm on Wednesday 8th July, but this may change depending on what advice is released from the DfE on Friday 3rd July.

We are saddened that our pupils are not able to return to school for transition purposes but feel our alternative plan for transition will cater for them well. It is our hope that in September, we will be able to invite children into school to meet their new classes for a period of time during our Professional Development days before the start of term, but we await guidance from the DfE about September so cannot make plans for this yet.

I appreciate the news contained in this letter is going to make some parents and carers feel unhappy and I understand. However, we are not able to offer face to face transition meetings when the Local Authority advise against it. Importantly, I also do not want to jeopardise the incredible efforts our community have made over the past 4 months by breaking bubbles and enabling a potential transmission of the disease.

Please note that this decision has been made in consultation with our teachers, Senior Leaders, Chair of Governors and Local Authority.

I know that learning from home is proving more challenging than ever presently and I completely understand the frustrations and difficulties faced by families. Please know that we are doing everything we can to support you all and will continue to do so until the end of term.

All staff at Rackham look forward to seeing pupils back at school and we will share more details about how this will look soon after we have received guidance from the DfE. Thank you for your continued patience and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget Harrison

