



16th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Well, the 2020 / 21 year has been unprecedented to say the least. We have all faced challenges that we could not have imagined only 18 months ago. As we approach both the end of year and (hopefully) the shift back to some type of 'normal' the Governors would like to extend our thanks to everyone. The team at Rackham have worked tirelessly through this year to ensure that our children continue to get the best possible education despite the situation thrown at us. In that, they have succeeded brilliantly, maintaining teaching at school, at home and sometimes in both places at the same time. However, none of that would have been possible without the support, engagement and amazing efforts of our parent / carer community. Thank you for all your support.

In a recent meeting of the Governors we reviewed the attainment data for this year, as well as feedback from the Local Authority on the school's performance. The results are excellent. We are in a position where we have seen much lower impact on pupil development as a result of COVID than most other schools and our recovery has been fast and effective.

So, while this year has been a challenge (and I am sure we are all pleased to see the end of it), we can start the summer in the knowledge that the team work between school, Local Authority, staff, parents / carers and children has delivered the best outcome we could have hoped for. Again, thank you!

Of course, the pandemic is not over and next year brings a new set of challenges as we review all Covid safety measures, continue to execute our catch up plans, form new class groups and continue to evolve our school to be the best it can be.

With regard to classes, the Governors are aware some of the structural changes and merging of year groups that we have had to make to classes in Reception and KS1 are uncomfortable for some. Unfortunately, this has been necessary as a result of the situation the school finds itself in. Low intake (due to low regional birth rates) over the last few years means that the number of pupils we have in the lower years (Reception, Y1 & Y2) are not sufficient to allow for year specific classes (a sad reality due to the school being funded on a 'per pupil' basis). As a result, for next year we have had to introduce a Reception / Y1 class for the first time. This is unavoidable and a direct result of funding limitations. When this situation became clear earlier in the year, the school brought the matter to the Governors. We worked with Mrs Harrison and the Local Authority to consider every option open to us and agreed that the creation of a mixed class was the only viable route. This is an approach successfully used by many schools already and we have been working with some of those schools as we adopt it at Rackham. We do of course run mixed year groups throughout the rest of the school, so already know how to make this structure successful. The placing of children into these classes always runs the risk of being contentious and so the decision was taken by the Governors that this should be done by age alone. We have not given the school discretion to place children on any other basis. Only the oldest children in Reception will be placed in the

mixed year group. This minimises the learning gaps in that class and provides the only viable approach to class allocation. I'm sure you understand and agree that the track record of excellence at Rackham (highlighted by this year's results) demonstrates our focus on every child as an individual and their personal development needs - this will not change.

At the end of this term we will be saying goodbye to a few members of staff: Mrs Baxter, Mrs S Smith, Miss Murray and Miss Lockwood. The Governors would like to extend our thanks for all of their hard work as part of the Rackham team and wish them all the best for the future. We also look forward to welcoming some new staff: Mrs Ball will join Year 6, Mrs Ward will return from maternity leave and we are delighted to welcome Mrs Berrett back after an extended absence. We also have Mrs Speed and Mrs Lewin joining the TA team.

As we approach return in September, you will see the school engaging to get your input on how we revise our approach to COVID safety, we will be running new Governor elections and providing more detail on what our new children can expect.

We hope that everyone in the Rackham community will have a restful summer and look forward to coming back for a fantastic new year.

Regards,



Simon Karger
Chair of Governors, on behalf of full Governing Board

