



BROAD CHALKE C. OF E. PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Chair of Governors: Mrs Louise Hall

19th March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Reflecting on the past 12 months

This week marks a whole year for all of us since the start of when the global pandemic started to affect us. This time last year, we never would have thought that we would have to queue up outside of shops, that schools and even churches would close and that our everyday lives would change so dramatically with many of us unable to see our close friends and family members.

I certainly never thought I would be leading a school through a pandemic! It has been a year like no other and I've been reflecting on how far we have all come as we have travelled through this time together.

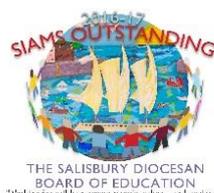
I will never forget the feelings I had on Friday 20th March 2020 when it was the last day for us all to be together in school with everything 'normal'. We had our whole school assembly and all the children and staff sang together 'Love Shine a Light'. I'm sure I wasn't the only one who felt like crying but of course we kept on smiling and singing to lift our spirits. At lunchtime, I remember helping to serve lunches and squirting tomato ketchup in a heart shape on the children's plates to make them smile. There were lots of tears that day especially when the children said goodbye to friends and staff at home time. None of us wanted our lives to change and for schools to be closed to all but a small number of children and none of us knew what the next few weeks and months would hold. Although, I did know that keeping everybody safe would always be my top priority.

I remember that day with great sadness because it felt at the time that life and our wonderful school, might never be the same again. But of course, we always have to have HOPE and now, 12 months later, that hope for good health, for freedom, for normality feels stronger and tantalisingly close although we must still keep to the rules in order for normality to resume.

The Autumn term was a fresh new start for everyone with new routines and it really was all going so well. It was devastating to only return for 1 day in January and then to go back into lockdown again with no time to prepare ourselves or the children and yet everyone rose to the challenge. All of the staff went the extra mile to support the children using very recently acquired skills with technology such as Zoom and Seesaw. Our teaching assistants deserve a special mention for stepping up to lead classes who were in school (we had 78 children) whilst the teachers were practically glued to their screens, planning the learning and responding to it on Seesaw or on Zoom.

It was, therefore, a great relief to parents and staff when we were all allowed to welcome the children back last week on the 8th March 2021. Over the past year, we have all got used to the 'new normal', and accept that life at school, as in the wider world, has to work in a different way. The children have been incredible; they have shown great resilience and adapted quickly to all of the changes. The staff have never been stronger as a team, supporting one another as well as the children and their families. We all wanted to do the best for our community and to help our country to get through the crisis.

It is said that teaching is a 'work of heart'. You can not come into this profession half-heartedly; it is a true vocation. But school staff need to be taken care of too. When you become a headteacher it is like your staff are your class. You encourage them and care about them just as the staff care for all the children, except as a headteacher you are responsible for absolutely everyone. Obviously, the children have to be my primary concern but I know that if I don't look after my staff, the children won't get the best possible education and the staff will not be able to do their jobs well if they are overly stressed. The wonderful support we have had from the overwhelming majority of parents has been very much appreciated.



Parents were asked to do an almost impossible job during lockdown. Working, parenting and teaching are three different jobs and it's very hard to do all three at the same time. So parents, please remember when you look back at that time, that if you found it hard it wasn't because you were doing it wrong, it was hard because it was just too much and you could only do the best that you could do at the time. Having said that, we had excellent engagement through Seesaw and we think you did an amazing job! We know that nothing beats teaching in person in school, no amount of online learning or Zooms can ever come close to what we do in person because it's all about relationships.

Nothing is more important to me than caring for and giving children the very best start in life. I have faith and I have to trust that we are going in the right direction and making the right, carefully considered decisions. The public has long been sold this idea that you judge a school by results. Now, with no results to go on and no Ofsted inspections currently, parents are finding that there are better ways to judge schools. You can judge a school by its care, its compassion, its professionalism and the dedication shown to children and families day in, day out. Hopefully, one good thing that will come out of this pandemic will be a new found respect for those who keep our society running and we recognise the true worth of all keyworkers.

I would also like to give a special mention to my governors, especially Louise Hall, who have understood the pressures which schools have been under and who have given their support throughout this challenging time.

Whilst life at school is not back to normal just yet, it is SO GOOD to have everyone back and these photos are a reminder of some of the fun which we have been having.

Y6 Bikeability

It turned out that Y6 Bikeability was a great way to welcome back our Y6 pupils. It was fun, it was active, it was different and it meant we had a smaller group of children in the classroom.



World Book Day

The children looked amazing on World Book Day with children dressing up as their favourite book characters and the teachers organised various fun book themed activities.



Red Nose Day in aid of Comic Relief

We decided to have a 'Red Clothes Day' instead and again the children really got into the spirit of things and were excited to wear their own clothes to school. We also managed to raise money for Comic Relief who are helping many individuals and organisations impacted by the COVID19 pandemic.



Finally

I honestly believe that fun is just as important as working on catch up and re-prioritising what our children need to learn, although please do rest assured that we are doing that too!

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Amanda Brockway
Headteacher