

16th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are nearly at the end of a very surreal academic year and one that we will certainly remember for many years to come.

I hope you have all managed to stay safe and well and navigate your way through the challenges that we have all faced. As our lives were put on hold and our freedom restricted, we have been forced to take life at a different pace and our priorities have changed significantly. Things that seemed so important at the beginning of the year have become minor issues, as we focus all of our energy on keeping our family safe and protected.

At the end of March school life changed dramatically and the routines that we took for granted were taken away. Suddenly families were together for 24 hours each day, juggling work with home schooling and trying to keep little ones from going stir crazy, whilst trying to encourage older ones to take regular exercise. What a challenge that has all been!

However, there have been many positives if you look for them. Community spirit was at a high in the early days as we really were “all in it together” and many of us parents realised that this time spent together, cocooned in our little families, may never happen again and should be cherished.

In schools across the country, classrooms and halls were eerily quiet, but the doors were never fully closed as teachers made provision for children of key workers and for those who needed to be in school for a variety of reasons. Safe “bubbles” were created, and staff carried on coming in everyday to keep those children safe and secure. We thank all of our Branfil Key workers who continued to come to work throughout this period.

Children at home were not forgotten as our teachers planned a home school curriculum, adapted for home learning and that included some fun and interesting topics to keep everyone entertained. Teachers became entertainers, presenters and stars of the small screen as every effort was made to stay connected as a school community.

As schools partially re-opened and some pupils were welcomed back, teachers were impressed and proud of how well these children adapted to the new rules and restrictions and their sensible behaviour and attitudes were a credit to their parents and the school.

It is with great sadness that we had to accept that not all pupils could return just yet. They have been working hard at home, but we know that they have missed out on the benefits of being in school, even for a limited time. We cannot wait to see them all in September.

We say a sad goodbye to our current year 6. A very different ending to their primary school days than their predecessors. We wish them all the very best of luck as they move onto the next stage in their education and we hope to keep in touch with them and hear about their achievements.

As the oldest pupils move on, we look to welcome our new intake in September. We wish them lots of happiness as they join our school family.

As we are busy planning for a full return in September, we are looking at how we can marry the recommendations from the DFE, our Local authority and our own school risk assessments with the needs of our pupils, staff and wider school community. Our priority is safety and the health and well-being of us all. Alongside this we want to provide some much-needed routine and a form of normality for the pupils and families, which they have missed throughout this period.

We cannot underestimate the strain that has been placed on the mental health of many of us. Some parents have struggled to adapt, and many pupils have missed structure and social interaction with their friends. Our school staff have also had to adjust to the enforced way of working. Physical well-being has also suffered, and we cannot ignore the financial strains that many have faced.

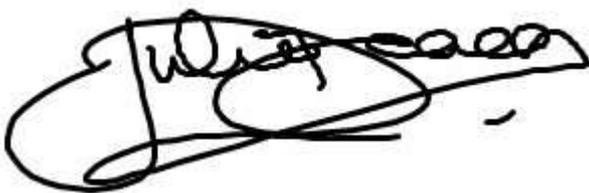
Coming back to school is going to have a huge impact on many in our community and we are going to have to work together and support each other through this. Some will be keen to get back to “normal” as soon as possible while others will still have anxiety and concerns around being back in the wider school setting. Everyone’s circumstances are different, and we need to respect each other and how we are feeling. I am sure that we can listen to each other’s concerns and find ways to reassure and support families so that every child can get back where they belong, at school in a safe and secure way.

Mrs Sansom and our senior leaders are working alongside all staff and governors to find a solution to any issues and to adapt school life to fit in with the safety and health requirements. Government guidance recognises that every school has a unique set of circumstances with differing needs of pupils, families and staff. Alongside this are the practicalities that every school has to deal with around the available facilities and access to classroom, hall and communal areas. Please try to support the school, as you always do, and respect the huge amount of immensely difficult work that has gone into finding a safe way of welcoming all of our children back to school in September.

We cannot wait to see you all again and look forward to many happy times next term, to make up for everything that has been taken away from us this year. The Branfil values have seen us all through this difficult time and will sustain us all in the future.

Enjoy the summer break as best as you can. Stay safe and we look forward to happier school days to come.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Deacon', written in a cursive style.

Julie Deacon
Chair of Governors

