

COVID-19 UFFINGTON CHRONICLE

21st July 2020



Dear All

Way back in March, I decided to write to you all as a way to keep everyone informed of the developments as the coronavirus situation evolved and thus the Uffington Chronicle came into being.

Today, as the last day of an extraordinary school year is upon us, I am once again at my desk writing what might be the last edition of this weekly update.

The last few months have been something of a rollercoaster ride as we have been seemingly bombarded by government advice on a weekly basis; just as we thought we had something in hand, another change would be announced. But we have survived, embracing a period of rapid change to keep our school open through turbulent times. We have had to be creative, resourceful and resilient. I remember a headteacher colleague asking me during the very first week of lockdown whether I was 'on Zoom' – I didn't like to admit that I'd never heard of it, and just said "no"! And here we are some months later, *almost* competent in Zoom, MS Teams *and* Google Classroom with multiple virtual appointments every day.

I am proud to reflect that we have managed to keep the school open throughout, doing our bit for the national fight against the virus. Once again, I would like to thank all those staff who willingly stepped in to care for the children of keyworkers, even during the school holidays. There is no doubt that the shift to remote education was a challenge for teaching staff; we were certainly taken firmly out of our comfort zone as we developed new ways of working to ensure continuity of learning. We must, of course, also acknowledge the efforts of our children and their parents who were also forced to work in a completely new way. I know from my own experience that it is no mean feat to support home learning while also working full-time. For so many families, this was further compounded by the expectation that everyone should work from home wherever possible. Add to that those families with multiple children all trying to learn together, frequently with limited access to the technology upon which so much of our learning offer relied – there are not many teachers who can effectively teach children across the age range all at the same time with access to a single laptop! Words cannot express my appreciation and gratitude for the efforts of the whole school community over recent months.

The last day of the school year doesn't feel like the last day; the lack of all those events which shape the school year means that there is a slightly surreal feeling among us. But we do want to do our best by the children and families who have been with us over the past seven years right to the very end. This year, a significant proportion of our Year 6 leavers are

the youngest of a number of siblings who have passed through the Uffington doors – we have one family whose association with the school has spanned eighteen years and so for them, this really is the end of an era.

This afternoon's Virtual Leavers' Celebration will be an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of this most extraordinary of years. It cannot be the same but we hope that it will be a memorable experience for the children and their families.

The coming weeks will give us all a chance to recharge our batteries, free from the stresses of the relentless demands of recent months. The virus has not gone away but we have a plan which, with the continued commitment of the whole school community, should help us to return to school in September refreshed and ready to move along the road to 'recovery'.

Many thanks to you all for your continued support; the past few months have tested our resilience but the way in which we have pulled together is testimony to our strength in working together to make our school the best it can be.

I would like to wish you all a good summer, at home or away!

Helen