

CofG letter - July 2020

Dear Families

When I wrote to you at Easter, the school had been shut down for most children for several weeks and we were all learning to deal with the challenges that this caused.

I think that at that stage we hoped that things might fully return to normal before too long.

Sadly, this was not to be and home education became the norm for many weeks and when things eased we were only allowed to bring the youngest children back to school initially and even this was only possible by limiting to groups of up to 15 children.

As you know, lack of space and existing staffing levels meant that the school had to operate a two shift system but this did at least mean that the younger children could make a start towards a more normal school experience.

Fortunately, the systems set up by Mrs Moss and Miss Townsend were devised in such a way that they would allow all the children to return on the same two shift basis when this was allowed.

Even so half the children had to wait for a further period until we were given permission from Government to allow them to return.

The guidance was framed in such a way that the decisions on which classes should return and when this should be was largely left with individual schools. However, the BFS Governing Body took the view that it was in the best interests of the children for them to be at school if at all possible and was keen to get all the children back as soon as the relevant Risk Assessment had been cleared and this was done in two further phases.

I have enjoyed seeing happy children on their way to and from school each day again!

The exceptionally high attendance rate shows that you were very supportive of this approach to the return and I believe it showed your trust in Mrs Moss and all her staff to take all reasonable precautions to safeguard the children.

The next step has been to provide the option of Holiday Club for both the morning and afternoon session groups and as you will be aware planning is underway.

The current aim of the Government is for all schools to be open to give a full time education to all children in September and we anticipate that the relaxation in the number of children allowed in any bubble to 30 will mean that this can be done with relatively little change to the procedures.

Unfortunately, certain whole school activities such as assemblies, sports days and parental visits to class events will still have to be deferred and we can only hope that this important part of the overall package can be reinstated very soon as they play a major part in providing a 'family' experience at Blackwell.

I know that Mrs Moss has mentioned in her letters that there will be a significant impact of the shut down on the financial position of the school but I should like to reassure you that we started the financial year in a good position and have ensured that only essential expenditure will be authorised until we are confident that it is affordable.

Our major aim was to ensure that we could maintain the staffing levels and this has been achieved even though we were not allowed to use the furlough system for those staff who came under the guidelines.

We have invested heavily in the school facilities in recent years and, while there are always further projects under consideration, I do not feel that one year with no major project should cause concern – and if all goes well we should be able to return to our projects list in the next financial year.

At the recent Governing Body meeting we thanked Mrs Moss and all the staff for their truly outstanding efforts in keeping in contact with us all, organising home learning and preparing for the phased return of all the classes and the full return in September.

I am sure that you will join with us in recognising what a mammoth effort this has been and how fortunate we are to have such exceptional staff.

My best wishes to you all.

Hugh Evans

Chair of Governors