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Annual Message from Grendon Underwood Combined School - 2020

Dear Parents, Teachers, Pupils and Residents of Grendon Underwood,

As a school, we have had a wonderful year: we have a thriving roll and are gradually developing our curriculum provision to reflect more connection with our beautiful rural setting, the outdoors, and creative / practical subjects, as well as the core curriculum.

Last year, in the Year 6 SAT results league tables, we were second in Buckinghamshire for the number of children reaching the expected standard in writing, reading and maths at the end of KS2. We also received a letter from the Education Secretary congratulating us on our Maths results which were in the top 10% of the country. We are very proud of these achievements.

We have developed a great partnership with the Roald Dahl museum in Great Missenden, and have celebrated with them a love of books several times this year. We continue to be well supported by our Friends and Governors.

We have a new Governor, James Sherriff, who has responsibility to develop our relationship with the local community. We know that James has lots of connections and as a parent of children at our school and at secondary, he is the perfect choice.

Thank you for all support this year as we try to develop safer parking and driving choices from our parent community - we have found some success in our Walk to School promotion, for which children are rewarded with monthly badges if they and their parents have made choices to walk, scoot, ride or car share to and from school: this has reduced some traffic, but we do need to keep working at it.

We continue to see Angela and David as our vicars every month as they share an assembly with the children, and although we weren't able to visit the church this year for Harvest or Christmas, we took part in preparing some lovely materials for the memory box which went in the church roof during its renovation.

School closed on 20th March this year, due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Since then, we have been developing remote schooling, which is provided via Google Classroom and other platforms, including our website, to parents and children.

Undoubtedly this is a very challenging time for us all - homeschooling isn't an easy option, and its success has been variable. Our parents are incredibly resilient however, and we have excellent relationships on which to build the support our children need. So teachers, whilst home schooling their own children, have carried on with planning and delivering lessons in virtual ways. We have grown better at it and look to develop even more next half term.

During this time, we offered children of key workers, vulnerable children and those with special needs a place at school if the children couldn't safely be looked after at home. This offer was a joint one with Marsh Gibbon school and has taken place partly on our site and partly on theirs, with great success.

As you will know, there is a phased return for schools planned from 1st June and we have been doing lots of work preparing - reopening is far more complex than closing the school. Things will look very different for the children we welcome back (Nursery, reception, Y1 and Y6 as well as the group of children already mentioned) - there will be no soft toys or furnishings, no school lunches, play will be different and, although we think it will be practically impossible, we will try to socially distance.

We know that we need to live alongside Coronavirus now and so we're doing our best to make everything as safe as we can and to help our parents get back to work.

There will be more activity in the school from this time onwards, and we hope that our families will respect the instructions and information we have given them in order to make this a less anxious time for the village community too.

Best wishes, Beth McLaren, Headteacher