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Annual Report from Grendon Underwood Combined School to Grendon Underwood Parish Council - 2021

It has been a very unusual year at school, however we are emerging cautiously and as safely as we can from everything the Covid pandemic has meant for us. The year has been spent with a mixture of physical and online learning, with teachers, governors, parents and children having to learn very quickly how to make the most of technological solutions in order to stay in touch as well as to teach and to learn. The year has required us to change in many ways, adapting to guidance and legislation repeatedly, using our space differently and thinking of creative solutions to problems. In December we were able to bring the joy of the Nativity to even more people than usual by filming our children's performances and providing them on DVDs for families and friends! We have supported our parents and they have supported us through these difficult times and as a result the relationships are stronger and more meaningful. Like most, we have had friends, family and staff members affected by the pandemic, however we have been fortunate enough not to have had to close the school fully, only partially when government legislation asked us to only open for critical worker children. Our processes, including restricting visitors and one-way systems have helped to ensure everyone's safety. Our children have been incredibly resilient and continue to show strength of character, spirit and resourcefulness, likewise our incredible staff. In light of the ever-changing environment, we adjusted our curriculum and have provided more time outside in Forest School and more time in our beautiful new art room, enabling children to express themselves and to build strong mental as well as physical health as they grow and learn.

Our school site has been developed this year in a number of ways and we plan further improvements. One of our playgrounds has been resurfaced and we replaced the gates at the front of school and at the back of our car park. As well as this, we have benefited from East West Rail's mitigation scheme and their suppliers who have donated fencing for our Wild Wood and have put it in place, helped by school and parent volunteers. The children also love our new playground equipment, which was built in March, and which includes lots of challenges for them, whatever their age. We look forward to resurfacing the second playground and the staff car park after some essential drainage work. In the near future our outdoor classrooms will be refurbished and we have expanded Forest School into the school field via a new gate. In November we launched a new website, up to date, refreshed and engaging, with some wonderful photographs of the school. We also continue to work with the Roald Dahl Museum in Great Missenden and Waddesdon Manor, both offering us virtual workshops. A local artist has created for us a beautiful mosaic, with every child's involvement, and we hope to have this mounted on our outside wall during the summer months. These are just some of the projects we've been working on as we continue to provide excellent holistic education for our children.

Our community police officers help us to encourage safe parking choices by parents driving into the village and we promote walking / scooting to school still, with grateful thanks for the use of the village hall car park during drop off and pick up times. Angela and David have been in touch throughout the year and we've appreciated Angela's lovely online contributions at key times in the Christian calendar. We hope that some physical visits might be possible in the new academic year.

The summer term brings events such as sports days (last year's was virtual of course!), school trips and performances. It's going to be my last term at Grendon Underwood, as I leave to specialise in working with people who have literacy difficulties. Many thanks for the community support during my three years here, I know I will be leaving the school in a strong and sustainable position and I wish everyone the best of luck moving forward.

Beth McLaren, Headteacher