

Cheselbourne Village School
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Dear Parents and Carers

What a couple of years we have had!

When the children began a new school year in September 2019 no-one knew what was coming. Over Christmas and New Year 2020, word crept this way of a virus in Asia, and we weren't concerned. It was so far away. Jump forward a couple of months and the whole world was unrecognisable. Schools and businesses were closed, we weren't allowed out of our homes except for very limited reasons and we were all isolated from friends and family.

Teachers and Governors were quick to respond, and "School at Home" soon began. Since then, all staff at Cheselbourne Village School have worked tirelessly to make sure that work was set for children whilst at home and that they provided a safe and clean working environment when children were in school. The workload has been immense, and I applaud all staff for their resilience and the commitment that they have shown during this difficult time. Our current year 3 and 4 didn't return to school again until September 2020 and missed so much. I would particularly like to thank Mrs Collett for picking up the two extra days a week from Easter this year so that these year groups could finish this school year without further disruption to their learning. The stability and familiarity that this has provided for them will certainly have made a difference.

Governors have worked hard behind the scenes to agree risk assessments and respond quickly with the Headteacher to rapidly changing government guidance. If you thought that schools had advance warning and more time to prepare, you are unfortunately mistaken. We had to quickly wrap our heads around virtual meetings and technology hasn't always been our friend. We have some governors who have not even set foot in the school and have only known virtual meetings. Several virtual interviews were conducted to fill vacancies as they came up and this was particularly challenging. We usually like to see people teaching and interacting directly with children before we hire them! I thank all of the school governors for adjusting and continuing to support the school through this challenging time.

The pressure on the Headteacher in particular was immense and Mary See did an incredible job in putting together plans, risk assessments and policies, whilst also continuing with all the usual things that a Headteacher has to deal with. I know that many late nights and weekends of work were involved!

We are forever indebted to Jyotsna Chaffey for stepping in and carrying the school through to the end of the year. There are not many people that would be willing to come out of (early!) retirement to temporarily lead a school during a pandemic. It has been such a huge relief to know that the school has been in such experienced and capable hands whilst we were recruiting a new Headteacher to join us in September.



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I would like to thank parents and families for efforts with home learning and working with teachers and other staff to ensure the best outcomes for children. As a working parent of two myself, I am well aware of what a challenge it was to juggle school at home with work and other commitments – particularly if you were having to learn *with* your child!

The majority of parents have continued to communicate well with teachers and have been supportive and understanding. It is natural that there might sometimes be disagreements between parents and teachers, but it is essential that we all work with each other and recognise and appreciate that everyone just wants the best for the children. The governors expect all staff to be treated with respect at all times and will tolerate nothing less. Those of you who are familiar with the home-school agreement will notice a new addition to it in September as we want to reinforce this expectation. It is also important to realise that staff may not be able to respond to every email straight away and I thank you for your patience.

I applaud the children for all of their hard work over the last couple of years, both at home and at school. They have all made an incredible effort, overcome challenges and have continued to thrive despite such difficult circumstances.

I hope that everyone has a restful and enjoyable summer break. We look forward to welcoming you all back in September for a fresh new start.

Best wishes

Anna Bendall
Chair of Governors

