



Celebrating Learning Together

Friday 12th February

Dear Parents and Carers,

After a term that appears to have lasted about 25 weeks (it was actually six) we have finally reached the point where everyone can have a break from home learning (or school for those coming in). It's getting rather predictable to say what a strange term it has been. It's hard to believe that it is now a year since we first heard about Covid 19. I'm sure that very few of us could ever have imagined the huge impact it would have on everyone.

Despite this, the whole school community has pulled together to make the best of what is a very challenging set of circumstances. I have been really proud of the children and the way they have applied themselves to this new way of learning. Participation in the live lessons has remained high along with the submission of their work. We have tried to replicate normal school as far as possible without (hopefully) imposing too much stress on the children. It is a huge balancing act between ensuring the learning continues in a meaningful way so they are not falling behind with their work while trying to ensure we support the children's well-being and mental health.

Staff have done a great job in supporting the children both at school and at home. We have all faced new challenges ourselves. Teaching via Zoom is very different to doing so in class where you can get that instant feedback on whether children have understood something or need extra help. We will be able to take positive aspects from this whole situation not least, use of platforms such as Google Classroom and how this may be incorporated to support the children's learning in the future.

Thanks to everyone who attended assembly on Wednesday. Hopefully you liked the card the children made and the poem read by Betty, Lexi, Ryan and Josh in Year 6. I think it encapsulates the amazing support parents and carers give to the children at the best of times but has been even more so during the last year and since Christmas in particular. We really appreciate it and thank you all.

By this time next week, we may well know the time frame for children for returning to school. I do hear the odd rumour and I expect that you, like me, interpret the things Government ministers say and wonder if they are hinting that the 8th March date is/is not going to happen. What the last 12 months has taught me is there is little point second guessing these things and we are better off waiting to be told officially. Needless to say, when we know what is happening, I will let you know, not least any new arrangements.

In some really good news, we did receive a cheque for £500 this week from the Balsdon Trust charity as a contribution towards our new library project. Thanks to Mrs Hawker who completed the application. Thanks also to Mrs Coward (our Chair of Governors) and Mrs Shadrack (who came in on her day off) to work with me on repainting the library area. It is all looking very clean and fresh and

we are hopeful it will be fully complete in the next couple of weeks. It was light relief to have most of the day away from a computer screen and has certainly encouraged me to have a break from ICT next week – but maybe not doing any DIY at home!

If you are looking for things to do next week, RHS Rosemoor in Torrington is open, although you do need to book in advance. They have also got some nice home learning ideas which can be found here: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/gardening-children-schools/learning-from-home>

Tuesday was Safer Internet Day. The Department for Education has published a document to support parents in keeping children safe on line. You can find it using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

You may also want to look specifically at this link: <https://parentinfo.org/> which is a bit more digestible and includes some great ideas.

Hopefully the weather will be nice next week and the children can enjoy more time outside and away from the screen. Whatever you are doing (and we are all a bit limited in our choices) I hope you have a lovely time. I've been under increasing pressure at home to do some camping in the garden – not necessarily my idea of a relaxing activity (summer maybe but a cold February night under canvas???).

I will be in touch after half term with news (hopefully) of the return to school. In the meantime, many thanks again and wishing you all a lovely and well deserved half term break.

Mr Alford
Headteacher