



London Borough of Havering
ENGAYNE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs S Sankey: Headteacher
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11th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Usually at this time of year I am writing to you to wish you a Happy New Year and welcome the children back into school. Unfortunately, this year that common greeting is tinged with trepidation as we are all still living with the uncertainty of what the immediate future will hold. It is with great sadness that we are unable to invite the majority of our pupils back into school and yet again we are thrown into the world of home-schooling and remote education.

We have been here before, although last March our methods were untested and the guidance from Government, the DFE and our Local Authority was sparse. However, as usual we rose to the challenge and the vast majority of our pupils engaged with home learning and many wonderful pieces of work were completed. The school focussed on staying true to the curriculum and adapted the work to suit the home environment. We also made the most of opportunities to learn new skills and embraced the chance to spend time outdoors in the natural environment and enjoy being with our families.

When our children returned happily to school in September, we were able to assess their progress and see where any gaps in their learning may have arisen. Priority was given to emotional well-being and mental health and it was reassuring to see how well the children settled back into school. Their resilience amazed us all.

The Autumn term was a success. Yes, there were many adaptations to school life and lots of new ways of working and playing together to keep everyone safe. In spite of all that, the children enjoyed their time in school and reports to Governors were very pleasing with lots of progress in learning and improved well-being. I have to pay tribute to the Senior Leaders and all Staff at Engayne, who planned so thoroughly and carefully, put rigorous, realistic and proportionate safety measures in place and as a result kept so many of our children in a safe and secure learning environment. While other schools struggled to stay open, our teachers and children were able to stay at school and continue to thrive for the majority of the term. Thanks must go to the whole school team for all their hard work.

So now to the present day and the situation in which we currently find ourselves. We do not know when we will return to school fully and we have no way of knowing how the return will be facilitated by the Government. What we do know is that while our children are at home, we must ensure they are safe and that the impact on their education is kept to a minimum. Our children deserve nothing less.

Every school has an obligation to provide a remote education and meet all Government expectations. However, each school should have its own remote learning policy and should adapt its provision to suit the demographic of the school, the needs of the pupils and the situations faced by staff. Ultimately, every school should have a unique offer. I am fortunate enough to be involved with other local schools, so I have seen first-hand how important it is to ensure that the policy is tailored to the individual school.



As a parent I have faced both school lockdowns, and with children aged between 10 and 20, I have been at the business end of home learning across several key stages. University, sixth form and secondary are very different to primary and it was with my youngest son during the first lockdown where I had to devote most of my time, helping him organise his workload and ensuring he covered everything that was set. Nobody can say it is easy.

I was fortunate to be at home and I had time to spend with my children. That is a luxury that many parents do not have. Schooling has to fit around working parents, sharing of devices and availability of quiet places to work as well as all the other commitments that we have. Simply expecting every pupil to have a workspace, a device, the capability to work unaided and the IT expertise to set up their lesson and work, is not feasible. For this reason, Engayne have ensured that the remote learning policy takes into account the diverse situations across our school community. Our offer is varied. There are online sessions planned to enable children to meet remotely with their classmates and discuss any issues or concerns with their teachers, as well as share work and successes. There are recorded teaching points which can be accessed at a time that suits families and revisited again if needed. There are worksheets and online work set, that can be completed independently and sent to the teachers for feedback.

The aim is for everyone to be able to access the work in the most convenient and helpful way. Please remember that the school can always be contacted via email for help, support and reassurance. There is no magic answer to suit everyone. All of our pupils are unique, and they all learn in different ways and at a different pace. In school the teachers can differentiate the work and they can respond in real time to the challenges that come up or the learning opportunities that arise. With remote learning this is much more difficult. Our teachers are working as hard as ever to prepare the curriculum and respond to the work. Most have their own families to support and keep safe and they are once again rising to the challenge as key workers. The Governing Body are proud of every single member of staff who has continued to work throughout this pandemic and continue to put the safety and education of the children first. I know you will want to join me in thanking them all.

Finally, please remember that we are all human and no one has the perfect solution to what is a very difficult situation. As parents we are not qualified teachers, but we are and always have been the primary educators of our own children. There are so many ways in which we are teaching our children life skills and supporting their well-being. We cannot replicate a school environment at home, and we will not always know the answers. Some days we will struggle to fit in all the hours of learning that we want to. Looking after your children's health and well-being is the priority and supporting them through what is a very unsettling and sometimes scary time. Please do not put undue pressure on yourselves. The school is there to support you and you can do your bit to support the school. We really are in this together and the sooner we can get our children back in school where they belong the better.

Please stay safe and look after yourselves and your family.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Deacon', written in a cursive style.

Julie Deacon Chair of Governors