



YORKE MEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNOR NEWSLETTER



July 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff at Yorke Mead,

We are writing to you at the end of what must surely be the most challenging school year in Yorke Mead's history. The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, known as Covid-19, has changed the lives of almost everyone in the world. You may recall that the first Covid-19 cases in the UK were discovered on 31 January, but life went on reasonably normally until early March, when items such as pasta, hand gel and toilet rolls seemed suddenly to disappear from the shelves of our supermarkets and local stores. Then, on 18 March, the Government announced that all schools would close at the end of that week, and so, along with every other school in the country, normal life at Yorke Mead was brought abruptly to a halt, and a new, unreal phase started, with the school being open without most of the children being there, only the children of essential workers and vulnerable children were permitted to attend. The strangest Easter holiday anyone can remember followed, where, apart from essential workers, we were all advised to stay at home. A debate about when schools might reopen soon followed, with a widespread recognition that a whole generation of children were missing out on their education. On 24 May, the Government announced that schools were being allowed to take more children from 1 June, but only pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could return, and under the most stringent conditions, including social distancing in 'bubbles' and frequent hand washing. That is essentially where things stand today, though the Government has recently announced that schools will open for all pupils in September, and that all parents will be expected to send their children to school, though schools will still be expected to maintain certain restrictions on social interaction between children.



Looking back, around Christmas time we were enjoying a fairly normal school year and Governors were discussing with the Head and Senior Leaders the continuing agenda of how Yorke Mead can improve and provide the best possible education for its pupils. We are now in a completely different world, where we cannot be sure how quickly the pandemic will recede or rule out the possibility that there will be a resurgence later in the year. In these conditions it is vital that the Yorke Mead community works together to do the best we can for our children. Everyone reading this newsletter will have been affected in a different way by Covid-19: some will be workers in the NHS and other essential services who have been helping to deal with the virus; some will be teachers and other school staff who have looked after the children of those workers at school; many will be parents and carers forced to be at home by the lockdown and doing their best to help their children keep their education going; some will be those in the vulnerable and critically vulnerable categories who were advised not to go out at all in lockdown and, sadly, some will be those who have lost loved ones in these last few difficult months.



In these challenging times there have been rays of light; every day the Yorke Mead Twitter account has revealed great examples of children doing amazing things at home or at school; social media has been a great comfort for many stuck in self-isolation. Above all, the willingness of the parents whose children have been at school since 1 June to give up their last three days so that the pupils in Years 2 to 5 can come back and start feeling their way back into school life, has been splendid example of how our community can work together to make the best of this unprecedented and demanding period of all our lives.



By the time you read this letter, Governors will have held their last meeting of the school year. It will, of course, be held online, in accordance with the Government's Covid-19 guidance, and we, along with most people, have had to get used to conducting business via our PCs and laptops. The Governors have recognised that this has been a uniquely stressful time for Mrs Pollard, the Senior Leaders and all the staff who have been working at school during lockdown. They have been part of the national effort to allow essential workers to get on with their vital jobs, and have then had to cope with helping those children who have been allowed to return to school to understand the unusual restrictions which have had

to be placed on their natural desire to mix together. We should not underestimate the risks to their own health that staff have faced, and we are extremely grateful for their efforts in keeping the school running during the height of the pandemic. Our attention has now turned to planning for September and we will be working with the staff to ensure we are doing everything possible, consistent with the advice given by the Government and Hertfordshire County Council, to ensure that children are safe at school, and that their education can get back to normal as quickly as possible.

As always, the end of the school year means that our oldest cohort of children will be leaving us, and we regret that this year their departure has to be in such difficult circumstances; we wish them all well for starting in their new schools next term. We hope that they and everyone reading this letter will have some better times ahead in July and August, as lockdown is hopefully further eased, with the opportunity to get away from home, meet family and friends again and enjoy some holiday. Have a good Summer break!

Charlotte and Derek

Co-Chairs of Governors

