



Chestnut Lane School

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105 Chestnut Lane

Amersham HP6 6EF

Telephone: 01494 727415

Email: office@chestnutlane.bucks.sch.uk

Website: <https://chestnutlane.bucks.sch.uk>

Headteacher: Mrs Gemma Rehal
BA (Hons) Primary Ed, PGCE SENCo

4 April 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In the summer term 2021 we decided to undertake a debrief of the school's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. As this period presented enormous challenges to schools we wanted to ensure that we gathered all of the information available to us, so that we could draw out 'lessons learnt' for now, and in the future. We asked all parents, staff and governors to provide feedback, specifically focussed on the partial closures in the spring term 2021. The responses have now been analysed by the governing body, and we would like to share a summary of our findings.

Thank you to all of the parents and guardians who contributed to the feedback. In total we had responses covering 32.8% of pupils on roll with us at the time. The feedback illustrates a wide range of views, but there was a common theme that this was a challenging time for everyone, as captured in the response below:

"It was a dreadful time for everyone – pupils, parents who work, parents who don't work and teachers."

It was clear that the age range of our pupils also had a huge impact on family's experiences during partial closures. We know that engaging young children with remote learning is difficult, and that virtual interaction with their peers, and their teachers, can never compare to in-person social opportunities. As a school, we echo the following comment:

"Online learning for younger years is not productive and should not be a tool used for teaching on more than extraordinary occasions."

From your responses we understand that flexibility, and consideration of different circumstances, was, and continues to be, essential. *"The flexibility of having options to do more or less work as you could or wanted to was good and avoided too much pressure on kids or parents."* Our example timetables provided a structure, and set out expectations, but we understand the need for families to make things work for them.

We are very grateful to the parents and guardians who engaged with the school during the period, to participate in conversation, and help us to evolve our offer. We know that things weren't perfect, and as we have learnt, we also know that getting everything right, for everyone, wouldn't have been possible. However, we benefitted greatly from listening to parents who opened up a dialogue with us.

We would like to reiterate that we always welcome parents and guardians sharing concerns with us, so that we can work together to find solutions, and improve outcomes. It was therefore very disheartening to have received a small number of unpleasant, and unconstructive comments, as part of the feedback, which affected the morale of staff.

The governing body would like to acknowledge, and pay tribute to, the hard work and flexibility of the school's staff during this unpredictable and concerning time. Despite having their own worries for themselves, and their families, they worked conscientiously, in highly pressured circumstances, to meet the needs of all children, as best they could. We know that these sentiments were echoed in many of the comments we received. We would like to specifically mention the huge role the office staff played in supporting communication, and continuing to be the 'front door' to our school. Their contribution was invaluable.

We know that a central part of school's responsibility is for safeguarding all children. During the partial closures this was harder, as we did not see the children regularly. We were actively monitoring those who had previously been identified as vulnerable, but were less aware of those children for whom situations may have changed whilst they were away from school. Moving forward, we will be ensuring that we tighten our close surveillance of, and support for, families that we do not have regular contact with in school.

This is what you said...

- Virtual consultations benefit working parents, are more inclusive, and limit childcare concerns.
- A bank of videos explaining some of the methods used in school would be useful.
- Collins Big Cat ebooks is a good scheme to have, and provides access to a wider selection of books.
- Timely, positive and empathetic communication from the school is important.
- The community aspect of school was lost during the pandemic. Partnership between the school and the parents is essential.
- The children, parents and staff need to be confident and competent at using virtual platforms for remote learning.
- Live remote learning sessions should be more 'teaching' focussed.
- Utilising the parent body's skills may support the school.

This is what we are doing...

- Continuing to offer hybrid parent consultations, with in-person and online options, as well as hybrid options for ad hoc meetings requested across the year.
- Creating [Parent Video Guides](#), which have been added to our school website, and will continue to be developed overtime.
- Renewed our subscription to Collins Big Cat ebooks in December, which is available to all pupils, and is in line with our phonics curriculum.
- Working hard to improve our communications, to make sure that changes in guidance are shared with parents as soon as possible. We have aimed to be reassuring, and mindful of different experiences.
- Made rebuilding of the school community a key whole school priority for this year. We are pleased to have had some in-person events return, volunteers coming back in to school, and to be able to share with parents in new ways, such as Tapestry and Instagram.
- Committing to exploring age-appropriate options for online learning, to complement our current homework offer. We hope to see the children and parents use this way of learning more regularly, so the transition to online is easier. Staff are engaging with further training to build their confidence in this area.
- Continuing to review our offer, so that if whole classes were again moved to remote learning, we would look to structure direct teaching of daily objectives and methods into short, age-appropriate, live sessions.
- Discussing areas where expertise within the parent body can be used to support the work of the school. We would like to draw on parents' knowledge to enhance our curriculum and support our projects. We are particularly interested in maximising the potential of the class reps' role.

We hope you find this feedback of interest. If you would like to discuss any aspect in more detail please contact either of us via the school office.

Yours faithfully



Mr Tim Hillier
Chair of Governors



Mrs Gemma Rehal
Headteacher & SENCo

