

St. Michael's C. of E. Primary School

Friday 9th July

www.stmichaelscofe.co.uk

"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good"

Romans 8:28



Taking on challenges

This week, I have spent a lot of time with Year 6, taking me back to my final years of teaching. It all began on Saturday evening, just before England's quarter final which I was gearing up to watch when I had a message to say that Mrs Betteridge needed to isolate because of a relative testing positive for COVID-19, leaving their Activities Week in jeopardy. Within two hours, a back-up plan had been shared amongst staff and all was well, the game started and all felt positive in the right way.

Across Sunday and Monday, the Year 6 children faced some enormous challenges of their own such as the climbing wall and high ropes courses at Mersea Outdoors Centre. Though some claimed they could not complete these, so many pulled off incredible feats with the support and encouragement of their friends. Their sense of achievement was immense – the purpose of this annual week away is to generate just such a feeling of self-belief and confidence so that it sets them up for Secondary Transition. This year proved no different.



While I was away with Y6, having what must be said to be a brilliant time, Mrs Farran was dealing with challenges here at school as sadly she had to close both Foundation Stage classes as there were two confirmed positive cases. This caused the obvious concern to other staff as they returned on Monday. While I can say that no further infections have been reported, it has caused us to take stock and with the rising case numbers around the county and country, a few difficult decisions need to be made.



Transition plans in school have been altered so the children's first meeting with their new teachers may now have to be weather dependent as these will take place outside; no longer are we gathering in the Hall for Worship – that has gone back to Zoom only; and the Year 6's Disco plans have been totally transformed to ensure that it all takes place outside.

The biggest challenge we face though is our combined Sports Day / Community Day which I have hoped for for months now. Although this is planned for Monday 19th, when we believe all restrictions are to be lifted, this presents a concern for myself, many of the staff and possibly some of you parents. We know that case numbers are as high now as they have been for many months and just last night, I heard on the news talk of 100,000 cases relating to 1.5million people needing to self-isolate each week at the current rate of infection – it is within this framework that we need to work.

Because of this, I have had to make the difficult decision to cancel these events – I do not want to take the risk of causing anyone to have to isolate let alone become ill because of a gathering of this nature so close to the start of the Summer holiday. However, my intention is to take exactly the same idea forward to the beginning of the Autumn term (if possible then) so that we can begin the new school year with a Community Day and a celebration of all the things we can do together. We will however hold a final Sports Day for Year 6 and their parents on that Monday afternoon as we can keep the mixing of households and staff to a minimum.

You may be disappointed by this decision, not understand it or think it is wrong but I have to think of the wider implications. I'm not comparing myself to Gareth Southgate at all, but on Wednesday night when he substituted on and then took off Jack Grealish, many people couldn't understand it or were concerned, yet it all turned out well for the team and him. The England Men's National team now have their biggest challenge in 55 years; I'm sure most of you like me will be watching and willing them to succeed.



For us, there will be 8 days left in school and no doubt more challenges, but by working together as a united team, with the whole as our major focus, we can have our own success to celebrate in making it through two terribly disrupted years. I believe that this is in part to do with our Christian values of **Love** – we have done all we can to support each other; **Integrity** – we have always done what we believe is right; **Creativity** – particularly in the first Lockdown when we had to quickly do things differently; and **Resilience** – not just getting through this all but being ready to make the most of it. As Mrs Lockhart told me, and will be sharing with me next week, this Y6 have not suffered academically and the standard of their writing recently has been exceptional. I am sure this is true of many and for those who have been hit harder, we are here ready to help in any way we can as we move forward together.

Andrew Cumpstey