To: Parents/Carers at Little Gaddesden School

14 May 2020

Dear all,

We had a “virtual” Governing Body meeting earlier this week and I would like to share some of the key discussion points with you in this newsletter.

**Life under Lockdown**

Governors and staff recognise that “life under lockdown” is very different for each and every one of the school’s pupils and their families. Within that, some children may be enjoying being at home, others may miss the routine of school and seeing their friends and teachers. It is a worrying and stressful time for many families and despite adults best intentions, children can pick up on the stress around them. We all have “good days” and “not so good” days; however, if you are concerned about your child’s emotional wellbeing please do speak to their teacher. They may be able to help and if not have lots of knowledge of where to go for support. Whilst the school is providing work and learning online, we know that you are not trained teachers. We are also aware that some parents are trying to juggle work and “home-teaching” and have wider families to care for. Many families are having to prioritise who uses computers and Wi-Fi and your homes are not equipped to be a school!

Please do not worry about getting through the learning provided especially if your child is becoming anxious or it is causing confrontation. At this time of crisis, family relationships are more important to the children than completing any piece of work. Success comes in many forms; on some days this can be just getting through the day. Learning can also mean doing some simple fun things like playing cards, or a board game or watching a TV programme that you like together. Forget what everyone else is doing and sharing; your child will learn differently to their friends. As and when school resumes, the focus will be on making sure that pupils have not missed out key parts of their learning and supporting pupils whose needs will differ. The focus at the moment has to be on your children’s well-being and your own well-being.

**Welcome to Lorna Elkes, our new Headteacher and thank you to all our staff**

We would like express our sincere thanks and admiration for Lorna Elkes, who has taken over as the new Headteacher at our largely virtual school, and is now navigating a path for pupils and staff as we potentially move towards a phased return to school. The usual expressions like “baptism of fire and “need to hit the ground running” don’t really suffice!

Governors would like to thank all the staff for adapting quickly to the rapidly changing circumstances, and for their creativity and resilience in supporting the school and its pupils. It is not necessarily straightforward for staff, who maybe having to share a desk, phone and Wi-Fi signal at home, as well as look after their own families. I have also been asked to mention how much the staff love to be sent pictures or some feedback on the work – please keep them coming!

**The Phased Return to School**

As you know, on Sunday the Government announced its desire to get primary pupils back into schools, in stages, beginning with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. We now know that a phased return to school **may** begin at the earliest from 1 June.

It is worth underlining that decisions regarding whether the phased reopening can happen will be taken at national level and based on scientific evidence. At the same time, each school is responsible for completing a risk assessment to determine whether it is able to **safely** partially re-open and what sort of provision can be offered to pupils. Safety of the whole school community remains the top priority.

Some guidance was issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on Monday and additional guidance is being developed DfE and Herts County Council. Once further guidance is received, the school will be in a better position to complete its risk assessment and share plans for a phased return to school.

**IT and Online Learning**

An application for government funding to support the installation of Google’s G-Suite for Education platform and provide training on using it has been submitted. This is a suite of Google tools and services that are specifically tailored for schools and will streamline online learning. We are hopeful that installation can take place within the next fortnight. Thanks again to Lorna Elkes who was very quick off the mark with this; the Government only announced its funding package on 24th April 2020.

**School Budgets**

An important part of a governing body role is to ensure that the school’s financial position remains healthy, so that it can continue to provide an excellent education for its pupils. This involves agreeing a budget at the start of the year and monitoring it regularly to ensure it remains on track. This week we agreed a budget for the new (now current) financial year. The potential impact of lockdown on pupils’ learning was a key consideration and the new budget allows for a modest increase in staff next year to address this.

Schools are required to publish a summary of the year-end financial position. The figures for the end of the last financial year (2019/20) show that the school is in a good position and are summarised on the attached table and pie chart.

With all good wishes to you and your families

Briony Sutcliffe

Chair – Little Gaddesden Primary School

On behalf of the Governing Body

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| **2019-20 FINAL BUDGET POSITION** |
| **Budget Area** | **Budget2019-20** | **Actual Spend2019-20** | **% of total expenditure** |
| **Staff & Related** | **£385,185** | **£414,396** | **78%** |
| **Premises** | **£40,053** | **£35,864** | **7%** |
| **Learning Resources, ICT, sports provision etc.** | **£56,205** | **£42,555** | **8%** |
| ***Comprising:*** |  |  |  |
| ***Learning Resources*** | ***£26,629*** | ***£18,788*** | ***4%*** |
| ***ICT*** | ***£18,977*** | ***£16,719*** | ***3%*** |
| ***Professional Services (Curriculum)*** | ***£10,599*** | ***£7,048*** | ***1%*** |
| **Admin & Professional Services** | **£18,495** | **£17,903** | **3%** |
| **Catering** | **£23,217** | **£22,527** | **4%** |
| **Total Expenditure** | **£523,155** | **£533,245** | **100%** |
| **Revenue Income** | **£523,625** | **£549,260** |  |
| **Revenue Balances** | **£51,228** | **£67,243** |  |

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