13th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Usually at this time of the year, the governors report to parents on the progress the school has made over the last year - we talk about the progress made against previously set targets, staffing structures, and the schools finances along with any other high and lows. I think it is fair to say, this year that just didn't feel right. The world is a different place and our school along with it.

First, I want to say a huge thank you to the wonderful Russell Lower School community. As always you have been incredibly supportive to Mrs Walker and her team.  Thank you for continuing to support your children's learning at home.  None of us ever imagined we would find ourselves attempting to home school - often whilst working from home, or sending our children to school whilst their friends stayed at home. It has been a very anxious and stressful time and emotional roller coaster for many of us. Your support is appreciated and makes Russell the fantastic school that it is.

During this period of time, the governors have continued with their role - virtually like the rest of the country- to support and challenge the school. Governors were heavily involved in the risk assessment and decision to reopen the school to Reception and Year 1 at the start of June. It has been wonderful to hear from Mrs Walker how well the children (and parents/carers) have adapted to the new normal. The fact that around 90% of our children from those year groups have been back in school is fantastic.

It is now more important than ever that we look forward to September. The government has issued guidance on how schools should operate, and we were all mightily relieved that it involves the return of all year groups, full time! The governors will continue to work closely with Mrs Walker and all the staff, to get the school ready to welcome everyone back in September.

I know many of you (and I count myself in this too) are worrying about the time at school your children have missed. Russell is busy putting detailed plans in place to accelerate all children's learning when they return. First and foremost, we will prioritise your children's well-being, ensuring they are happy and feel safe. The children will then be in the best place to learn.  I know that teachers have been (or will be) in touch with you to talk through any concerns you may have and to pass those into the teachers for the next academic year.

As Mrs Walker said in her Keeping in Touch letters, we were incredibly sad and frustrated that we were not able to properly return our year 4 pupils before they move on to middle school. We wish those children the best of luck for the future and know that they will continue to make Russell Lower proud of their achievements.

We also look forward to welcoming our new starters for September 2020.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs Walker, Mrs Bunney and all the staff for all their hard work, commitment and dedication to our school, during a year we will not forget!

Nicolette Ford

Chair of Governors.