June 1st 2020

Dear Children

I hope you and your families are well and you have all managed to enjoy sometime outside, during this spell of glorious weather.

As you will be aware from the considerable daily news coverage, the government has directed primary schools to open their doors, and invite pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6, into school. We enjoyed welcoming them back today.

For many reasons, not all children in the years mentioned will be returning to school. We respect this decision as your parents and carers know what is best for you and your own family’s circumstances.

If you are not one of the children who returned today, please don’t worry. Your teachers will continue to prepare your online learning lessons and they will still be expecting to hear from you to share any particularly exciting work or achievements.

Talking of achievements, I know you would all like to join me in congratulating Maisy Pinion in year 5. Maisy came 1st in the ‘Ascot Art Competition’ and was rewarded with a super prize for herself and a £1000 donation to the school. Well done Maisy, we are so proud of you.

Looking at all the wonderful displays created by many to say ‘Thank you’ to our key workers and the NHS, it is very apparent that so many of you have taken the opportunity, while in ‘lockdown’ to develop your artistic skills and find many creative ways to make the world a more beautiful place, for everyone. These have been difficult times for so many in our community; your pictures and messages have helped to lift everyone’s spirits and demonstrate how much you care.

No matter how busy you may be at home during this time, it is very difficult not to hear snippets of news and concerns expressed by politicians, and the media, related to children missing out on their education in school. These conversations prompted me to reflect on the meaning of education and whether it can only happen in school?

The Oxford Dictionary, describes the meaning of education as *‘an interesting experience that teaches you something’.* I would suggest, reading your letters and sharing your work, that being in ‘lock down’ with our families has certainly taught us many new skills and educated us all in so many ways. Some children have taken this opportunity to perfect their skills as bakers and bread makers while others have used the time available to explore the outdoors, grow vegetables and finally build a ‘Bug Motel’. For many families, there has been more time to play board games, go for walks, just be together and make memories of a time that you all share.

At 5pm most days, the nation tunes in to hear our Prime Minister Boris Johnson or members of his cabinet deliver important news about how the country, as a whole, is working together to stay safe or alert and protect our NHS and others in our community from becoming ill. Whoever delivers the updates for the government, begins by thanking us for caring for others and for being responsible citizens. All too often, young people may feel they are not being acknowledged and included in this address, but YOU ARE!

Never forget the part you have all played in following the Prime Minister’s directions for helping us safely get out of lockdown. The Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, addressed every child of school age in his address to the country on April 19th 2020:

*And to any young people watching, I wanted to say to you how sorry I am that you have had your education disrupted in this way.*

*I know how hard it must be and I would like to thank you for making the adjustments you have had to make.*

*I know you will be missing your friends, your teachers and your lessons. I want you to know that you are an important part of this fight too and I cannot thank you enough for all that you are doing.*

To all our children, whether returning to school or remaining at home, on behalf of all the teachers and staff at St Michael’s I would like to say a huge and very sincere thank you for the part you have played, so responsibly, throughout this challenging time. Listening to stories from parents and teachers I know you have all been amazing at working independently and looking after your adults at home. Remember, this has been a very difficult time for them also.

As explained, schools are still waiting to hear when the government feels it is safe for schools to invite all pupils back into school. Until then, please continue to practise the 6Rs, access the learning from your teachers on line, and seize every opportunity to educate yourself in an infinite number of exciting ways.

I look forward to us all being together soon.

Warmest wishes to you and your families,

Mrs Anderton