Dear Parents

As Governors we feel it is important to communicate with parents as we live through these unprecedented times. On Monday 11th May governors met ‘virtually’ for the first time with only two unable to attend. The minutes of this meeting will be formally approved after our next meeting in June and will then be published but I want to take this opportunity to highlight a few points in advance and inform you, our parents.

We are delighted that we now have our full quota of parent governors, Chris Bartup (attending his second meeting) and Amy Husband making her ‘debut’. We welcomed them to our meeting and are sure they will be a great asset during their term of office.

**Covid 19 and re-opening the school**

The main focus was being informed of the school’s response to Covid 19 and I’m sure Mrs Batson will provide much more information on this over the next 2 weeks. As governors we are truly grateful for the tremendous efforts being made by our wonderful teachers to provide support for you parents as they (with your help) encourage our children to engage with the resources, such as Tapestry and Class Dojo, being provided to maintain their education at this difficult time. Our meeting took place the day after Boris Johnson’s announcement about the partial reopening of schools to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils. I am sure we are all agreed that we want all our pupils to return to full-time education as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

More information about what re –opening may look like will be sent in due course after a rigorous risk assessment has taken place.

**School finances and Marketing**

The other main issue we discussed was the projected school budget for next year; these are often mundane matters but we think it is important that parents are made aware of the probability of a deficit in our budget. The projected shortfall is something we will address over the coming weeks and months with support from the local authority. This will include a review of how we best ‘market’ Our Lady’s in the local community and our wider catchment area. You parents are the best ‘marketeers’ and your children are the best ‘advert’ for prospective parents considering where to send their children to primary school. Our Catholic parish extends over 18 local villages and we are very fortunate to have such a wonderful and inspirational Chaplain in our parish priest, Fr Teddy. But, of course, we are conscious that for some parents and prospective parents our Catholic ‘label’ can be off putting as many may believe their child would not meet the required Admission criteria. Our simple message is *Learning to love; loving to learn;* in today’s largely secular society we believe it is important that all children have the opportunity to experience God’s message but, at the same time, we would not want our Catholic nature to discourage some parents from considering Our Lady’s as their first or second choice of school for their young children. Whatever we may put on our website it is you parents who are the ones who can best convince prospective parents to consider Our Lady’s for their own children.

We will provide further information in due course but one other matter some parents may be able to help with is the appearance of the school from the Leamington Road. Chris Bartup has volunteered to look into this and may be looking for help with equipment and labour to improve this shortly.

**Staffing**

Our wonderful ‘front of house’ bursar, finance and office manager, receptionist (you name it she does it!), Sheila Davenport, is retiring at the end of June after 13 years of dedicated service to Our Lady’s. We hope we will have the opportunity to formally recognise her contribution at a later date but as a governing body we want to thank her and pay tribute for her wonderful contribution and support. Mrs Batson will update you on this and other staffing changes in due course.

**Thank you**

We want to conclude by thanking all parents for your support and understanding during this very difficult time. For many parents of school age children the demands of home-working with home-schooling have been immense whilst others have continued to work or have had the worry and anxiety of being furloughed or facing the prospect of redundancy. In addition, some of you may have become victims of this dreadful virus or have even lost loved ones. We want you to know that you are all in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

Stay safe and God bless

Peter Griffin

Vice-Chair on behalf of Our Lady’s Governing Body