

As I was drinking my cup of tea an early morning surprise text arrived from my daughter Isobelle, “Pinch, punch first of the month, white rabbit – no returns!” Not only was I surprised at the timing of the text (teenagers awake before lunchtime??) but it took me a moment or two to realise that rather astonishingly July had indeed arrived and somehow the final month of the academic year was upon us and whilst I couldn’t quite remember where June had gone, she was right it was in fact the first of July and 16 weeks since lockdown had begun.

What can I say? It’s been quite a year!

As a teacher with over 22 years experience in schools, I can honestly say that despite the many July’s I have encountered in my career, none have been as surreal as this one! Usually, July is a month of excitement and celebration. The testing period is over, residential, sports day and our whole school day out have taken place and the children (and staff) are looking forward to the holidays and spending time with family and friends. So, this July has been rather different to those I’ve been lucky enough to experience before.

Last week, I sent out a survey to parents via Microsoft Teams to get some feedback from you and your children on the lockdown experience and how the new phenomena known as home-schooling had worked for you all. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and reflections on what has been the most challenging times for us all. If you haven’t responded it’s not too late and we’d love to hear your views.

All your comments will be shared with the appropriate staff so they will have some insight into the mental health and well-being of our children as well as their personal experiences of lockdown. The Brockley Way motto – Only my best is good enough has never been so unifying. It has clearly been our statement of togetherness, not just for staff and the children but for our whole school community. Never before have we shared so much in the experience of learning, nurturing and caring.

On behalf of all the staff, thank you so much for your support over the last few months – we really couldn’t have got to this final month without you.

So, with Friday upon us and with it the end of this extraordinary academic year and, the end of this prolonged period of lockdown teaching and learning aka home-schooling, what have we all learnt?

It would appear a huge amount of learning has been taking place both in and out of our homes. Children and parents have learnt new skills and taken up new hobbies. Businesses have been started to provide services to key workers and companies – children have raised funds for charities and have supported the NHS by staying home and staying safe. School has achieved the virtual Sports Award which was a fantastic accomplishment! So when you think about it has July really been that different to all the others? We still have so much to celebrate.

When we return in September we will enter our ‘new normal’ and we can’t wait! The opportunity to be together again (bubble permitting) couldn’t have come sooner and

whilst I appreciate the staggered starts, finishes and temporary change to closing might be a challenge, in combination they should keep everyone as safe as possible and minimise the risk of infection in our school.

Thank you for your support and kindness as parents and carers you've been incredible! To our gorgeous, wonderful children you've been stars and have absolutely demonstrated The Brockley Way throughout this strange time!

To our magnificent Year 6 children as you embark on the next adventure known as secondary school. Cast your net wide. Be courageous about meeting people, and having a go at something you haven't done before. You've got this and are going to be fantastic!

To our school community that really understood and supported our ethos in supporting everyone during this difficult time and to my amazing team – I honestly can't thank you all enough for your dedication, hard work, commitment and support. You've been incredible and I thank my lucky stars that I'm part of your team.

So reflecting back on this incredible and unbelievable period of time; on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March I used Vera Lynn's 'We'll meet again' song as my quote to try to understand what was happening in the world and today as the theatre buff I am I began to think about the song I could quote in preparation for September and I think this one is rather apt:

"The sun will come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun! Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs, and the sorrow 'til there's none!"

So here is to September and being together again in our 'new normal' and getting back to The Brockley Way as we know it and hopefully the sun will be out on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September as we welcome everyone.

Wishing you all a fantastic, safe and happy summer.

With very best wishes.

Caroline Rodgers