



End of School Year 2019-2020 Letter to: Parents, Carers, Staff, Governors & Valewood PTA Volunteers

Friday 17th July 2020

Dear Team Valewood,

Where do I start and where do I end with this, my final letter of this academic year? It's true to say that no one has encountered a school year like this- ever! And here's hoping, that we won't ever have to, again.

Summer Term 2

We have all had an exceptionally busy term at school and at home, as you all well know! I am sure that you join me in thanking all of our staff: cleaners, teachers, teaching assistants, parent support advisor, administration staff, site manager, kitchen staff, lunchtime supervisors and wrap-around care staff for all their hard work and commitment over the past year. I wish them all plenty of rest and relaxation, before we come back in September.

Go Valewood PTA!

We are, again, very grateful to our fantastic PTA volunteers who work, tirelessly, behind the scenes to put on the best family events, throughout our school year. Our PTA team, led by Mrs Duffy, continued to help organise and raise much-needed funds to help boost class resources, alongside planning for longer term playground projects. This year, although we have had less events due to COVID-19, the funds you have all helped to raise over recent years, enabled the PTA to pay for wonderful outdoor play equipment for the children; they have resurfaced the outdoor play space for Team Reception and they have also resourced our reading curriculum for Autumn Term 1. THANK YOU! Thank you to all our staff, governors and families who turn up and support our varied events. Your generous contributions are much appreciated. We are all looking forward to the time when it is safe to all come together again, for more exciting fundraising events. Until then, the PTA will be setting up the 100 Club Lottery which has already exceeded 100!

Extra-Curricular Activities

As always, many children have taken advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to them, up until the enforced closure of school. Well done to all of our pupils who pursue their passions and put in the extra effort to achieve their goals. Thanks to all our staff who give up their lunchbreaks and stay behind after school to run the clubs too. Clubs have included Art, Storytelling, Sign Language, Film Club, Book Club, Singing, Drama; Drawing, Minecraft, Multi-Skills, Circuit Training, Judo, Fencing, Football, Athletics, Gymnastics & Revision Club to name but a few. Although we are unable to set these up from September, we are looking at ways we can re-introduce extra-curricular clubs, in a safe and manageable way, as we progress into the Autumn term.

End of Year Tests/ Assessments for Early Years, KS1 & KS2 for 2019-2020

As I am sure you are all aware, none of the statutory testing/ teacher assessments went ahead this academic year. The Standards & Testing Agency have confirmed that assessments, tests and end of KS2 SATs will all be going ahead in 2020-2021. At the start of our Autumn term we will not be formally testing the children. However, we will be gathering evidence through classroom observations and classwork to evaluate each child's starting point, to enable us to plan ahead, from September, with purpose.

Rights Respecting School

Our UNICEF Rights Respecting School Ambassadors and members of our Children's Leadership Teams have continued to inspire our work, embedding the UNCRC across our daily work. I am proud to be a part of such an outward looking, self-less community where our children put the needs of others before themselves. It is quite humbling listening to our well-informed children. Empowering their leadership is something we will continue to prioritise next year.

This year, our leaders have continued to challenge the use of single-use plastic; have run our Fair Trade Fortnight, promoting Fair Trade awareness; have built strong links through their community work with our neighbours; the STEM leads led on our Science & Technology Fairs; our lower junior children built habitats for endangered animals whilst others looked at digital technology in school and made suggestions regarding how we can improve it. Most recently, Isabella Sweeney and Ellie Bainbridge have put pen to paper to voice their comments to the PM regarding the current affairs' Black Lives Matter campaign and to our MP questioning him as to his stance on school closures during COVID.

Back in December, some of our outspoken leaders took up the challenge I set them - to write a manifesto to share ahead of our 'VPS Charity- General Election' in school. I will never forget how every single child in school made their way into my office to cast their vote, following a hustings in the Hall! Having listened to all the different leaders (promoting their chosen charity) the children voted for *Guide Dogs for the Blind* with *Water Aid* coming a close second. Although our plans were halted, mid-year, I know the legacy that our current Team 6 children will leave will spur the others into good work, as we all return to school from September. (I will miss our Children's Leadership Team 6 buddies: Ryan, Miah, Henry & Hollie reminding me that 'it's time for the meeting, Ms Tantouri!' and I will miss their copious minute taking too!) We are proud to be raising the leaders and encouraging the talents of our future working generation and we are proud to see them initiate and take the lead in the many opportunities Valewood has continued to provide. Long may this continue.

Our Twitter feed this year is not only full of our Valewood school adventures but it is, moreover, since March, also full of the wonderful examples of resilience, initiative and drive; from the children's and families' efforts during lockdown. Your stories and photos, shared from home, have inspired us all. Everyone has played their part during lockdown and for that, we thank you all. A year, like none we have ever known, in pictures- well done everyone.

Early Years' Intake for September 2020

It was not surprising to learn that we are, again, highly over-subscribed. Unfortunately, this has led to many families feeling disappointed because they did not get a place. I attended 13 online appeals this week and with none granted, our Reception 'tiddles' are 30 in total for September. Thank you to all our families for their patience during this time. We are all very much looking forward to our new little ones starting at Valewood in September.

End of Term Good Bye and Good Luck to Mrs Sunter!

Today we say farewell and good luck to our teaching assistant, Mrs Sunter. Mrs Sunter has worked in every year group and has been an excellent team member and PPA lead across our school. As much as we are happy for her, as she moves on to a new adventure, she will be greatly missed by all the staff and the families for whom she has been a great support. We thank her for her hard work in sensitively supporting children 1:1 and we also thank her for the contribution she has made to improving children's outcomes across the curriculum. I know the children and staff will have many fond memories of Mrs Sunter and we wish her, and her family, well as she says goodbye to Valewood.

Valewood Governing Body

Our Governing Body continues to provide expert challenge and support. With the wellbeing of the children at the heart of every decision that is made, the governors enable our school to maximise potential and provide the highest quality of education possible. I thank our governors (who are busy, full-time, working parents/ local residents themselves) for their vision, hard work, their time, their guidance and their challenge.

OUR VALEWOOD CLASS of 2020

An end of year letter would not be complete without mentioning our CLASS of 2020. What a crazy, end of Valewood year this class has had to endure. I am pleased that we were able to get Team 6 back together, at least for the last two weeks of school, and I thank all the staff who made this possible. I am sure that you can all appreciate why Team 6 was prioritised as it would have been very unfair for this class to end their Valewood journey as it did in March.

I want to say good luck to all our talented and skilled Team 6 children as they take their first, big step to secondary school- be proud of yourselves; always be kind and have courage- believe in yourselves. We are very proud of you and all of your many, varied achievements, over your Valewood years. This class, in particular holds a very special place in all our hearts and we have promised the children a proper 'send-off' when we can all get together properly. Children, we know that you will share our Valewood Values wherever you go and we wish you all the best. Roll on the next chapter...you will be brilliant! ☺ Thank you to all the Team 6 parents and carers for all of your patience this term; your continued support and commitment to our school. For those who are leaving us, without younger siblings still in school, we will miss you all. Good luck for the future.

Take Care & Stay Safe

I am pleased (and also relieved) to report that we have succeeded in getting to the end of the school year, with no isolations recorded and no child COVID-19 cases and for that I am extremely thankful, as I know others have not been so fortunate. I thank you all, for your careful consideration of our control measures and risk assessments and for your unrelenting

commitment to ensuring the highest level of care and education for all the children- for those who have been patiently working from home and for those who have been able to return to school. 93 children returned to school with no children, eligible to return, on a waiting list. That is remarkable, given the circumstances.

Thank YOU!

I would like to thank YOU- all our parents and carers. Your continued support of our work is very much appreciated. Thank you for all your encouraging comments and emails which we receive throughout the year. This year, more than ever, you have demonstrated your support by doing so many lessons/ activities and so much learning with your children at home- from jumping up and down with Joe Wicks; to dancing 'dough disco' with Shonette Bason-Wood; to writing with Jane Considine; to downloading all the White Rose Maths materials and completing them at home- WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL for everything that you were able to do in the most challenging of times. Whether that was to go to work and drop the children off at school or stay at home and work/ learn from home, your contribution to keeping the teaching and learning going, whilst also helping to keep our local community as safe as possible, is recognised and is much appreciated by all of us at Valewood.

I understand that everyone's lockdown story has been different. No two homes have lived out the same story. We all have our own tales which we will share in years to come, I am sure. I will remember many things from this academic year...

- *From sharing our love for the children and our school through song (and screwed up pieces of paper);*
 - *to painting rainbows on school windows, care home doors, playground stones, our hearts & minds;*
 - *to finding knitted rainbows and heart-felt chalk-talk on rainy pavements;*
 - *to Valewood PTA's celebration of Team VPS's positive journey with individual rainbows to wear;*
 - *to being cheered on difficult days by the kindness of the anonymous and the not-so-anonymous;*
 - *to living and breathing our Valewood Values every day, whether in school or not;*
- ...and smiling gratefully, when those same values were secretly, purposely placed and entwined on our school's exterior- keeping us all together. Because, although we have been apart for some of the time this academic year, I know that we were never alone. I hope that you all felt that too.*

I have missed you all so much and I am very much looking forward to seeing you all in September for more Team Valewood fun and adventures! On behalf of the team at Valewood, I wish you all a very happy and wholesome summer holiday time.

See you all on Thursday 3rd September- ready to start the new school year, with a smile.

I can't wait to see you all! Until then, take care and look after each other.

With every good wish,

Helen Tantouri

Headteacher

	<u>Important Dates to Note for Autumn Term 2020</u>
2 nd September	INSET Day – STAFF ONLY
3 rd September	Children return to School for Autumn 1, as per the Back to School Plan

All other dates will be confirmed at the start of the new school year.

Polite Notice: If you are buying school shoes with laces, we hope the children learn how to tie them over the holidays, if they do not know how to do so already! 😊

