



Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 25th September 2020

All-through news

As passionate advocates of the all-through school, Alison Saunders and I continue to work closely together to ensure that our curriculum is planned from Reception to Year 13. This is equally true for our enrichment programmes and so the focus of this newsletter is for both of us in our separate editions to share what is happening, despite the restrictions that Covid 19 is placing upon our activities as a school. Our vision of “creating tomorrow’s citizens today” drives our actions and so engagement in sport and music are so often at the forefront of our planning for we know the importance of these for a person’s wellbeing.

We are excited to be announcing the launch of our new Simon Balle website on Thursday 1st October next week. The structure of the website is rather different to that which you are used to at the moment, because we are extremely keen for our website to reflect the unique all-through nature of our school. The curriculum is a very important part of the main menu where you will be able to visit the curriculum for your child, whether in Reception or Year 13, and understand what they will be studying across the year in all subjects. Equally important is the curriculum shown by subject, so that it is possible to see the progression in learning for science or for art or modern foreign languages, again all the way from Reception to Year 13. The website is designed to be as informative as possible for our whole parent body and our Simon Balle community - you can find practical information (for example, about use of parent pay or the latest newsletter) to information about staffing to understanding our values education, our extra-curricular offer and much more. Please do visit the website from Thursday - we hope that for current parents, and prospective parents, that it will reflect well who we are and all that takes place at our outstanding and thriving all-through school.

At Simon Balle, values education has always been part of our school ethos that helps ‘Create tomorrow’s citizens today’. The rewards and consequence system across the all-through school has been redeveloped to reflect some of our core values. We feel that these are integral to further developing good character traits within our students. It has been fantastic to see students rewarded across all phases for actively promoting our values. Over 6000 positive value points have been awarded so far this term. Points are awarded for displaying the following core values both in and out of school:

- Responsability
- Resilience and courage
- Aspiration
- Respect
- Community and kindness

These are just a few of the values that we harness at school, through our curriculum, assemblies and the wider life of the school. More guidance and information on character education will be shared with you throughout the year.



Primary news: teaching and learning

When I visited lessons this week, I was delighted to see our Reception children so engaged in the enriched curriculum. In music, they were singing 'Cobbler, cobbler' (do ask them to sing for you at home!), a song that required them to learn the pulse of the music as well as to enjoy singing. In Spanish, it is remarkable that children have already learned so many words - do try swapping 'good morning' for 'Buenos dias' next week! Outdoor child-initiated learning is already loved by the children, and our teaching of phonics, organised in groups to match precisely the level at which your child is working, is well underway.

We look forward to all Reception parents joining us for our second informative parent workshop on Monday 28th September at 9.30am. The focus will be on phonics and reading, and introducing Tapestry, our online learning journal. The workshop will begin promptly at 9.30am, so please do begin to join from 9.20am on - the code you will need for the meeting is meet.google.com/faz-etrs-gmb

I was fortunate to visit Year 1 whilst they were fully engaged in science and then computing. In science, children are learning to identify parts of the body and Mrs Getley and I were impressed by the precision of the children's drawings, labelling each part of their face. In computing, the children are being introduced to programming. Having drawn their own maps, the beebots are proving to be great fun - essentially mini robots, the children must give them precise directions to enable them to move around with success. Year 2 were engrossed in mathematics at the time I visited - numicon is a wonderful resource that allows them to visualise numbers and to use this to aid recalling number bonds (and remembering that addition can be calculated in any order). In Year 3, children were learning a new grammar skill with coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and were most excited too to be introduced to a new text, linked to their history unit of learning, 'Meet Captain Cook.' We hope that parents with children in Years 1 - 5 are all using the bookmarks we sent home at the start of term - these have really useful prompt questions in different reading skills/domains (for example, inference or predicting). When I visited Year 4, children were fully engaged in a whole-class reading lesson using 'The Highwayman' - they were working hard to unpick characters' thoughts and actions, and using evidence in the text to justify their opinions. It would be great if parents could have similar conversations at home linked to children's reading books! And, finally, Year 5 have just been introduced to a text in their Literary canon - Tuesday. It is just so wonderful to use a picture book to inspire children at this level, even if they were confused to begin with!

I would like to take this opportunity to remind parents about Simon Balle expectations for home learning. We have seen some wonderful home learning completed already! This must be completed each week by all students please. Perhaps even more importantly, **our expectation is for daily reading at home from Reception to Year 5** - we aim for this to be enjoyable in every way we can! Research shows that daily reading is so vital for opening up future horizons, and we appreciate so greatly the partnership we have between home and school. Thank you for your support.

Other news

- Parents' week is next week for Years 2 - 5. All parents should now have their meeting slot, as well as instructions for how to join the virtual meeting and our parent protocols. We are so pleased to be able to offer meetings in this way and ask you to be punctual for your appointment.
- PSA- keep the date! Our active PSA (parent- staff association) continues to support the school, even though events this year will take a different format. It is with great sadness that we will not be able to host our highly popular winter fair but we hope to still work together creatively to ensure both that activities happen and the school is supported through funds raised.



There is an opportunity on **12 October at 8pm**, for parents interested to meet online. The annual general meeting will be followed by an informal time to share ideas and to start to plan ahead. We would love you to join us and will be sending out details shortly- so keep the date!

- Explorers' money owed. We understand completely that the end of Spring term was an incredibly challenging time for families and in school. However, we still have a number of families in Years 3 -5 with outstanding invoices for Explorers either for the spring term, or even dating back to last autumn. It is essential please that these are now checked and settled in order for our enriching club provision to continue for your child. If you have any queries at all please email finance@simonballe.herts.sch.uk Individual letters will follow next week where these are necessary.
- Dropping off and picking up from the Larch. Thank you for your support in making staggered drop offs and and pick ups work so smoothly. A reminder please that when you have collected your child/ren, it is essential that you leave the school site promptly to ensure that social distancing is adhered to. Please too remember how important our policy is about not driving to school. I do appreciate that I send lots of reminders about this, but feedback this week tells me that one or two parents who need parking places for children with medical needs at this time have not been able to find a space. I would ask you to please pull together as a community so that those who need to park can do so. Thank you for your support.
- Lost property. Due to the hot weather, I think, we have so much! We are returning everything that is named to children in class, but we will put out some big tables in the playground on Monday during the staggered drop-off so please do check and take anything that is yours. Please remind your children too to collect jumpers, cardigans etc at the end of break and lunchtime!
- COVID 19 update. Please see attached with this email an update from Jim McManus, Director of Public Health (Herts County Council). Updates include the new regulations on public gatherings, what HCC is doing to keep education settings safe and information on self-isolation, testing and symptoms.

As always we thank you for working with us at this very difficult time. It is a pleasure to see our young children thriving in their learning and enjoying all that school life can offer. Wishing you all the very best for the fortnight ahead.

*Best wishes,
Rachel Kirk (Vice Principal)*