



# Secondary phase newsletter

*Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today*

**Friday 25th September 2020**

## **All-through news**

As passionate advocates of the all-through school, Rachel Kirk (Primary) 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 from that which you are used to at the moment because we are extremely keen on 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:

- Responsibility
- 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.



## Secondary news

### Mark Taylor, Director of Music:

Music must carry on and so we are ensuring that this is done as safely as possible. Yes, things are a little different, but our core ethos has not changed, that is creating lifelong musicians. Music is so much part of the lives of our musicians and the joy of returning to live music in school is apparent.

We are following government guidance regarding all aspects of music - guidance that is regularly updated. We have screens in rooms, ventilation, enhanced cleaning, sanitiser everywhere and protocols for every form of musical learning. Lessons continue as normal and will do so, whether in person or if needed online (google meet). Students will need to leave a little longer to get to lessons in the secondary phase and ensure in primary that instruments are in the music room ready.

Our ensembles have also returned safely, making changes to ensure appropriate distancing, facing forward, correct room size and ventilation, seating plans and registers. We have planned and tested to ensure all is safe. We have completed extensive risk assessments and had all our plans checked.

We have had to adapt. Our musicians have had to get used to things sounding different. However, as we have adapted, the amazing sound has returned. It is so important that we do not lose sight of our core ethos in these challenging times - having fun and making music, safely. That unique buzz of our music is back. Hurrah, "team Music" is back and very much alive!

### Daire Brennan, Head of PE and Sport:

The PE Department has been welcoming students back for a new academic year filled with hope and enthusiasm ready for the sporting year ahead. We have begun the year with a focus of reintegrating students back into PE with the aim of preparing them for a successful and enjoyable year of physical activity, Sport and Sports leadership, alongside a wealth of additional opportunities. Therefore our key focus for this half term is to provide students with the knowledge and understanding of how to;

- **Prepare** for exercise, activity and/or elite performance
- **Perform** to their best ability with a key focus on mastery of skills and techniques
- **Recover** from activity in preparation for the following day's session, competition or with a focus on preventing injury.

The first 2 weeks of term has been focussed on preparing students' for the bi-annual Quad kids (fitness) assessment which will take place towards the end of October, in order to allow students' adequate time to prepare.

We have equipped students with a range of strategies to support their fitness development which they can complete at home on a regular basis. To support your child please see the following links;

[Couch to 5k](#)

[Week by week plan to fitness - NHS](#)

[Benefits of exercise](#)

[How to improve strength & flexibility](#)

[Strength & Flexibility exercise plan](#)

This week we have introduced a variety of sports activities, whilst closely following the government COVID 19 H&S guidelines as well as giving students the option to continue with our fitness programme.

Going forward we are planning to introduce extra-curricular activities over the next few weeks where we are, as above adhering to government guidelines as well as following safety advice from the National Governing



Bodies. These clubs will take place on the days where students have curriculum PE, therefore there will in the majority of cases, be no changing required. Clubs will run from 3.30-4.20pm. Once the club has finished a member of staff will escort students to the school entrance by the swimming pool for students to be collected or walk home of their own accord. Finally, if you have any PE related questions please contact me via email on [brennand@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:brennand@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)

### **Our librarian, Janet Syme**

... along with Kevin Belsey, has worked tirelessly for many months to ensure that the library remains at the heart of our learning community. The term has started well in our libraries and it is great to see Year 7 students, in particular, enjoying browsing our new stock: graphic novels and books to celebrate Empathy Day in June are proving particularly popular. Year 7 students seem to be settling well into the library routines of Accelerated Reader with its online quizzes. Students have been making suggestions for new books for our library and are managing the sanitising before browsing and rota for different year groups using the library on separate days of the week. All library books are being quarantined for 72 hours before they are returned to the shelves.

Special mention goes to Year 8 student Charlie Howes who read all 3 shortlisted books (in Category 3) for the Children's Book Award given by the Federation of Children's Book Groups ([www.fcbg.org.uk](http://www.fcbg.org.uk)) and the only award in the country voted for entirely by young people. Well done Charlie! We are hoping to restart our Y7-9 online Book Club soon and there is a special (free) raffle at the moment for students to win a £20 Waterstones book/gift card to celebrate 10 years since our main library was significantly remodelled. It is fabulous to see the library flourishing: encouraging reading for pleasure whilst also supporting teaching and learning. Details of our exciting programme for the annual Book Festival (16-20 November) will be revealed soon, but first, we will be creating attractive displays in both libraries to mark Black History Month.

### **Other news**

- **Open morning- a virtual experience**

We made the correct decision several months ago to change the format of our annual open morning. In fact, all of the other local secondary schools are also inviting parents of Year 6 children to an online experience. We will be posting several videos explaining the vision of the school, how the teaching and learning is organised alongside how we care for our students. Even if you do not have Year 6 children you may be interested to view these recordings as we hope they will help prospective parents and students get to know the “character” of our special school.

- **Online parents evenings**

We are aware that many parents were disappointed that we could not run our parental consultations during the late spring and summer terms last year. We did use online tools to meet with Year 12 parents but this was naturally easier as students traditionally only study 3 subjects. We are now signed up to a new online system which we believe parents will find really helpful. Indeed many parents and quite rightly so were getting frustrated by the traditional parents evening, which was incredibly busy and frequently overran. A managed online schedule of meetings hopefully will be beneficial to all.



- **Trips**

The Department For Education is currently banning all residential trips and any day trips would need to carry out extensive risk assessments. Trips and visits are an important part of school life and it has been with great sadness that we over the past few months have had to cancel or postpone many trips including the Y7 residential trip, geography field trips, the annual trip to the World War 1, Battlefields, the music tour and the ski trip. We are currently awaiting further decisions on some other events. However, we do hope that once these restrictions are over we can resume our rich menu of activities. We do thank you for your support.

The current arrangements within the school to keep our young people safe are working well but we will need to put in further plans as the weather changes. We will of course continue to update you as soon as changes occur.

- **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 continue to work together creatively to ensure both that activities happen and the school is supported through funds raised.

There is an opportunity on 12th October at 8 pm, 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!

- **Easter Holiday**

After consultation, we have moved the dates of the Easter holiday to 29th March 2021 to 9th April 2021. This is in line with most other Hertfordshire schools. Spring Term 2021 ends on Friday 26th March and Summer Term starts Monday 12th April.

- **Supporting links**

At the bottom of the newsletter please find the appropriate links, the flyers for Supporting Link's online workshops that aim to help young people with Transition and change, Teenage years and Anxiety and stress.

- **COVID 19 update**

Please use this link to read an update from Jim McManus, Director of Public Health (Herts County Council) Please find the letter at the end of the newsletter.

Updates include the new regulations on public gatherings, what HCC is doing to keep education setting 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 so many of our young people enjoying their learning and remembering why it is so important for them to be back in school.

*Alison Saunders*

## Director of Public Health

Prof Jim McManus, FFPH, CPsychol, FBPsS,  
CSci, FRSB, CharteredFCIPD



Hertfordshire County Council  
Public Health Service  
County Hall  
CHO231  
Pegs Lane  
Hertford SG13 8DE

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Supporting nurseries, schools, colleges and other education settings to respond to Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

I appreciate that many of you will feel anxious about your child(ren) returning to school. I am writing to update you on the work we continue to do, in order to keep pupils, students and our teaching and school staff safe. Since I last wrote to you, government has also introduced new national regulations on gatherings.

This letter is to update you on the following topics:

- **New regulations on gatherings**
- **What we are doing to keep education settings safe**
- **Infections are rising in Hertfordshire: Play your Part**
- **Provide information on self-isolation, testing and symptoms**

In an appendix to this letter I have provided information about symptoms of coronavirus, self-isolation, managing symptoms, getting a test and support for people who are self-isolating which has been written with our NHS colleagues.

### **New regulations on gatherings**

As you will probably be aware, from Monday 14 September, Government changed the regulations about gatherings, which mean that in most circumstances, the maximum number of people allowed to meet in groups either indoors or outdoors is **six**.

More detailed information about these regulations, including the penalties which can be imposed on illegal gatherings, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

As I said when I wrote to you recently, a number of cases of infection have been linked to social events in Hertfordshire. It is important that we continue to adhere to the rules including new rules on gatherings if we are to avoid an escalation of infections and further restrictions placed by Government on our daily lives.

## Keeping education settings safe

We are working to ensure every education setting in Hertfordshire complies with the national guidance on being COVID-19 safe. All education settings in Hertfordshire, from our childminders through to colleges were asked to complete a risk assessment based on their own individual circumstances. This covered their buildings, other facilities and also considered the intake of children they support at their setting.

Based on these assessments and following strict Government guidance which you can read in full at, <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>, each education provider worked over the summer to prepare their classrooms and shared indoor and outdoor spaces to implement measures that allowed children and staff to remain safe.

In addition to making physical changes to their settings, they also planned new timetables allowing staggered start and finish times, alternative lunch and break times and planned for classes and year groups to attend and learn in restricted bubbles.

Since children returned to school and normal routines and activities have resumed for many residents more generally, we have been closely monitoring positive cases of COVID-19. We are putting in place the following further support:

1. We are developing further tools and guidance for our education providers to help them implement prevention measures and ensure they are clear on how and when to report cases.
2. Guidance for determining close contact has been created specifically to help schools plan and deliver teaching bubbles in a way that means they can deal with COVID-19 cases with the least disruption to your children's education. This should help reduce the need and number of children asked to self-isolate unnecessarily.
3. All education providers have access to a dedicated local authority helpdesk for advice and guidance.
4. We have created a local support team made up of health professionals, environmental health, health and safety officers and teachers who are contacting and visiting schools to provide them with advice and support to deal with COVID-19 issues.
5. All schools have considered children who are vulnerable because of health conditions as part of their risk assessment and they will continue to do so.

We are working with nurseries, schools and colleges to support their teachers and other staff members to understand and follow the guidance on social distancing measures and best practice on hygiene to keep themselves, as well as their pupils, safe.

## Infections are rising across Hertfordshire: Play Your Part



The numbers of people infected are rising across Hertfordshire and nationally, especially in younger people. In the last few days, the numbers of people admitted to hospital have started to rise again in Hertfordshire. Almost every area of Hertfordshire at the time of writing is experiencing a rise in cases. We will do everything we can to keep the virus suppressed for as long as possible, but we will only succeed if everyone adheres to the measures which will prevent transmission.

It remains important that we continue to do everything we can to prevent the virus from spreading. To protect ourselves and our family members, you need to:

- wash your hands regularly or use sanitiser
- keep your distance from people (2 metres remains the advised distance)
- wear a face covering where required or advised
- self-isolate if you have symptoms

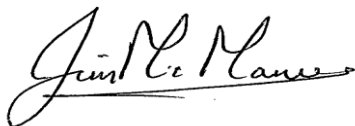
These four things are part of the countywide **Play Your Part** campaign. You can read more at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus).

### Concerns and further information

I hope this letter goes some way to reassuring you that we are doing all we can to protect children and young people from the virus. If you still have concerns relating to your own personal circumstances, I'd urge you to speak with your school or college to try and resolve these with them directly.

We will keep updating information on the County Council's website for parents and education providers. For regular updates and the latest information relating to childcare and education, please visit [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/returningtoschool](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/returningtoschool).

Yours sincerely



**Jim McManus**  
Director of Public Health

## Important information for parents and carers

### The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you are not sure whether you or your child's symptoms suggest that they have coronavirus or an everyday cough or cold, you can consult this online NHS symptom checker: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

If your child(ren) or anyone in your household develops what could be coronavirus symptoms, they should **not** go out or attend school unless they have had a test and their test results are negative. At the end of this letter is a brief guide to the rules on self-isolation set by national government.

### If you develop symptoms: self-isolate and get a test

If you think that you or a family member has coronavirus symptoms, self-isolate immediately. You will find more details about how to do this below.

The next thing to do is to seek to book a test. If you have internet access, go to [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) to book a mail-order or drive-through test.

Testing is run by national Government, **not the County Council**. We continue to work with Government to improve testing access and availability and continue to work with them to resolve the capacity problems in their system, but the County Council is **not** in charge of testing.

In recent days, this service has been very busy, and some people have had problems booking a test due to capacity issues in the laboratories that process the results.

New testing slots are added hourly, so please keep checking, and self-isolate while you do so. Additional laboratory capacity is being added, but in the meantime, areas of the country where there are significant outbreaks are being prioritised.

If you cannot access the internet to get a test, call 119 instead. **Ringling 119 will not help you to get a test if there are no tests available on the national website and 119 is not an advice line.**



Hospital Emergency Departments (A&E) **will not** test you or your child(ren) for coronavirus. Hospitals have a limited number of tests available which must be prioritised for people who are waiting for planned procedures or who are waiting to be discharged from hospital.

If you don't have COVID symptoms, **please do not book** yourself a test. Doing so only makes it harder for people with symptoms to get the test they need.

## Self-Isolation

The rules on self-isolation vary depending on whether or not you or someone in your household has symptoms. You should read and follow the guidance here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-long-to-self-isolate/>

## If your child is asked to self-isolate as part of a school bubble but does not have symptoms

If your child is part of a school bubble but **does NOT** have symptoms they may be asked to self-isolate:

- Self-isolation means you do **not** leave your home for fourteen days because you have or might have coronavirus (Covid-19). This is to help stop the virus spreading to other people. The reason for fourteen days is because it can take that long to show symptoms
- Your child(ren) should not leave the house and **cannot** visit family, friends or attend any activities or parties, even if these are outdoors. They **cannot** go out to exercise, use public transport or taxis
- Being sent home does not mean that your child(ren) has coronavirus and you should not book a test for your child(ren), unless they develop symptoms
- Other members of your household will **not** be expected to self-isolate due to child(ren) being sent home in a school bubble **unless** the child develops symptoms, in which case the rules on testing and self-isolation apply above.
- If your child(ren) develops symptoms while self-isolating at home, your entire household must self-isolate immediately and you should book a test for those with symptoms.
  - You should check the period of self-isolation which applies here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-long-to-self-isolate/>

I appreciate these rules can seem confusing, but they are designed by the Chief Medical Officer for England to help us prevent the spread of the virus. I have tried to set them out in ways that are as clear as possible.

## **Families who have a member who is or was shielding**

We understand that for parents and carers of children or a family member who were previously shielding due to health conditions at the beginning of the pandemic, the return to school may feel especially difficult. Government have provided guidance specifically for these families which you can read at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#history>

Schools have considered children with health conditions as part of their risk assessment process.

## **Managing coronavirus symptoms**

There is currently no specific treatment for coronavirus, but you can often ease the symptoms at home until you recover, using the advice on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-treat-symptoms-at-home/>

You **must not** go to a pharmacy, GP practice, clinic or A&E department if you have coronavirus symptoms. This risks spreading the virus to vulnerable people and reducing the ability of the NHS to help people who are very ill.

If you become concerned about managing your coronavirus symptoms, or suspected coronavirus symptoms, go to <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>. This is also the web address to use if you have been asked to get an isolation note for your employer, if you have been asked to self-isolate.

## **Financial help, employer's isolation notes and help with shopping while self-isolating**

You can find information on how to obtain self-isolation notes for employers and information on how to get help with shopping and other essentials here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/help-and-financial-support-while-youre-self-isolating/>

# Talking ASD & ADHD Workshops:

## TRANSITION AND CHANGE

For parents and carers of children aged 2-19yrs with suspected or diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.



**Monday  
5th October 2020  
9.30 - 11.30am**

### We will help you to learn:

- How children feel and behave when experiencing change
- How to prepare children for changes such as starting a new school.
- How to support children during and after change by helping them to manage their emotions using effective stress reducing strategies
- How children learn from new experiences and what to expect.
- Where to access further help and support.

### AN ONLINE PARENTING COURSE DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME VIA ZOOM



Full details on how to access and use this will be offered.

### OPEN TO PARENTS AND CARERS ACROSS HERTS

'I tried the techniques and was amazed at the outcome.'

### Pre-booking essential via Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/talking-asd-and-adhd-transition-change-for-parentscarers-in-herts-registration-120014463491>

Or contact **Supporting Links**  
**QUOTING REFERENCE SL402**

**01442 300185**  
**info@supportinglinks.co.uk**  
**www.supportinglinks.co.uk**



This workshop is provided free to parents by Hertfordshire County Council

# TALKING ASD & ADHD WORKSHOPS: ANXIETY AND STRESS



For parents and carers of children aged 2-25yrs with suspected or diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

**Thursday  
12th November 2020  
9.30 - 11.30am**



## We will help you to learn:

- The difference between stress and anxiety
- Understanding anxiety related conditions amongst young people with ASD and/or ADHD.
- How to spot the non-verbal signs of stress.
- Common triggers amongst neurodiverse children, particularly during the current pandemic.
- What an anxious child needs to feel safe and how to provide this.
- Strategies to engage anxious or stressed child.
- The early warning signs of mental health problems.

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## OPEN TO PARENTS AND CARERS ACROSS HERTS

'I have been on a few courses to help me with my son, this was by far the most helpful.'

## Pre-booking essential via Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/talking-asd-and-adhd-anxiety-and-stress-for-parentscarers-in-herts-registration-120512416883>

Or contact Supporting Links  
**QUOTING REFERENCE SL403**

**01442 300185**  
**info@supportinglinks.co.uk**



This workshop is provided free to parents by Hertfordshire County Council

# Talking ASD & ADHD Workshops: THE TEENAGE YEARS

For parents and carers of children aged 2-25yrs with suspected or diagnosed Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.



**Wednesday  
2nd December 2020  
7.30 - 9.30pm**



## We will help you to learn about:

- Teenage brain development and how it affects a child with ASD/ADHD.
- Reducing conflict by learning how to respond effectively to difficult situations.
- Strengthening your parent/child relationship.
- How to agree appropriate boundaries and teach risk assessment.
- Adapting our parenting approach to help our teens become independent adults.
- Where to access further help and support, both locally and nationally.

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## OPEN TO PARENTS AND CARERS ACROSS HERTS

'I tried the techniques and was amazed at the outcome.'

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Or contact **Supporting Links**  
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