



Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 11th September 2020

All-through news

Dear Families,

Thank you for working with us to ensure that all of our young people and children have returned to school safely and are enjoying their learning. As an all through school, with over 1600 young people, there are many challenges and opportunities, and we look carefully at everything that is going on. It is inevitable that the secondary phase is seeing more changes and tweaks to their daily routines and thank you to their parents who realise that this is a work in progress. We are attaching a letter we received from Hertfordshire Public Health (via HCC) reminding everyone of the importance of taking our responsibility seriously as citizens; how we must not organise or take part in large gatherings with friends, family members or holding parties. The virus is with us for a while and we must not become complacent. We are of course reminding our older students of this fact.

As a school, along with dealing with the day to day operational things and ensuring high quality education, we are keeping to our school development priorities (including curriculum, assessment, character development) and also exploring what might happen in the following months. Our Governors Health and Safety committee continue to meet frequently to look at the latest guidelines and to monitor our work in school.

Thank you too to those new parents who have volunteered to become part of our "Parents Staff Association". May I remind everyone of the importance of this group who give generously of their time and also fund raise by putting on and supporting many activities which so many of our young people and their families enjoy. This year it will be a great challenge with the absence of the much loved 'Slice of Summer' and the 'Frost Fair'. We are holding our annual general meeting (AGM) on Monday 12 October at 8pm, a digital meeting. Further details will follow but please do dip in and see what plans we have. We will need you to support us!

Primary news

A very warm welcome to this new academic year to all families from Reception - Year 5! A warm welcome too is extended to all our new staff. It has been a busy but wonderful start to the term. I have been so pleased to see children engage in so much rich learning - from Spanish to music, from computing to place value in mathematics, from PE (Year 4 starting hockey was a highlight!) to reading. It has been a highlight to start term with a focus on Roald Dahl and all year groups are engaging in works by this enjoyable author - adapting his revolting rhymes, retelling the enormous crocodile from Reception's first story map, understanding just how disgusting Mr Twit is, learning all about Mr Hoppy and more!

On the subject of reading, I was delighted to receive so many entries to my summer reading competition. I have given 3 house points to almost 50 entries this week! I was so engaged by the reading recommendations and inspired by children's creativity in writing to me. I invited two governors in, Mrs Archer and Mrs Orpin, to judge the winners for me. All year group winners will be visiting me next week to choose a new book, and all entries judged to be highly commended will also be visiting me to receive a bookmark of their choice. Well done to all! Mrs Archer and Mrs Orpin wrote:



“Thank you for inviting us in as judges. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We thought the standard was very high and we particularly enjoyed the presentation. However, our winners were chosen for the detail of their description, the personal views expressed and their obvious connection with their chosen book. It is so lovely to see this enthusiastic community of readers.

Year 1: Winner - Felix (Badgers)

Highly commended - Olivia (Rabbits)

Year 2: Winner - Isabelle C (Foxes)

Highly commended - Dominic (Deer), Oscar (Foxes), Khush (Foxes)

Year 3: Winner - Kira (Wrens)

Highly commended - Zoe (Wrens), Isaak (Wrens), Isla U (Robins)

Year 4: Winner - Oshmi (Doves)

Highly commended - Lottie-Belle (Kingfishers), Joshua A (Kingfishers)

Year 5: Winner - Sophia (Swans)

Highly commended - Harry O (Mallards), Lola (Mallards), Summer (Swans).

Teaching and learning- at school and at home

The teaching of our Simon Balle values remains absolutely central to our curriculum and daily life in the Larch centre. Our value at the moment is Respect and we are exploring this value from every angle - respecting ourselves, respecting others (including a focus on the joys of diversity), respecting our school environment, respecting nature and animals, and much more. Whilst we cannot hold assemblies at present, I am recording a weekly virtual assembly for each class, promoting the importance of our value and encouraging each class to engage in a follow-up activity. For example, where have children seen the value of respect shown in the Larch this week? What synonyms or similar words and phrases can they generate for the word respect?

As many of you will know, we are so keen to involve and engage families with our exciting curriculum at Simon Balle. Our autumn term curriculum overviews are now published on our website for each year group from Reception - Year 5: please visit these <http://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/curriculum-overviews/> Please do talk to your children about their learning in each area and please do send any questions to the class teachers too. Thank you for your support.

As this term begins, can we please remind you too of the importance of home learning. We know that you rightly have high expectations of us in terms of support and challenge in each aspect of the curriculum. Just a reminder too that where children engage in daily reading at home, their love of reading and progress in reading is so enhanced. Please write or sign their reading records daily. Please do ask teachers for any guidance for each year of the Larch. With homework this weekend, Years 1 - 5 parents will also receive a practical guide to the year to inform you of practicalities you may wish to know. After the success of our virtual Reception evening earlier this week (thank you to all parents for your very positive feedback and support), further invitations to virtual workshops for other year groups will follow.



Other news

- We are delighted to let you know that we will be able to reintroduce swimming to the PE curriculum - so important as many children have been away from the pool for a long time and it is such a crucial life skill. Years 4 and 5 will be swimming very soon and a letter will follow for these year groups detailing all that you will need and a confirmed start date.
- Just a reminder for all please for our high expectations for school uniform. Children looked beautifully smart for their photographs today but please remember that hair clips/bands must be green, and that children must not have any nail varnish or wear jewellery. Thank you for your support.
- For Years 3 - 4, and particularly Year 5, it is a long morning in school. We are so pleased that fruit is now being delivered for Reception - Year 2, but please do feel free to provide a snack for any children in Year 3+. Fruit is to be encouraged, but if they are hungry mid-morning, please feel free to provide something additional which is also nourishing but healthy - for example, breadsticks or crackers, dried fruit bags etc (please avoid crisps, chocolate or cakes or cereal bars and, of course, nut free).
- In terms of communication with us, please can I encourage the following:
 - If you have a simple message (for example, who is collecting your child), please either add this to the correct class communication book in the Larch office or email larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk. These messages will be passed on to the staff that need this information.
 - Similarly, if you have a message about club communication or a medical appointment, the Larch email address above is best.
 - If you have a question about teaching and learning or curriculum, please feel free to email your child's class teacher. All email addresses are in the same form, with surname first, then initial letter, then as above. Mine is kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk Teachers will always strive to get back to you within 24 hours.
 - We are delighted this year to welcome phase leaders, as our Larch grows. Miss Emery leads phase 1 (Reception and Year 1), Miss Ridley phase 2 (Years 2 - 4), Miss Boyce phase 3 (Years 5+) and Miss Riddle is leading PE and all aspects of our children's physical education across the Larch. Please feel free to email them with any phase specific questions.
- In my next newsletter, sent fortnightly, I will make sure I write a section on dates for the term ahead. For now, I would like to inform you of Parents' week for Years 2 - 5. This will be the week beginning 28th September and all appointments will be by telephone. Information about booking slots will be with you shortly.
- A message from Mrs Syme in the library: We have now arranged a Larch Library timetable so that, as before, each year group visits the Library on their allotted day. Starting next week please ensure that your child's library book/s are in their book bags ready for returning in the library session. For those older students on free reading books from the Library please ensure books are with your child each day. As we still have many books outstanding from the lockdown period please have a look at home for these and return them on your child's library day too, if possible. The usual process of reminders for overdue books and invoices for very overdue books will start in a week or so. These are sent to the parent's/carer's email account.
 - Reception parents: please note that your child's library day is Monday but students won't be loaning books until later in the year and we will contact you about this when appropriate.
 - Year 1 Tuesday
 - Year 2 Tuesday
 - Year 3 Friday
 - Year 4 Thursday
 - Year 5 Wednesday



Please note that all returned library books are being quarantined for 72 hours before being taken off the computer system. If you have any queries about your child's library books please contact me by email in the first instance at symej@simonballe.herts.sch.uk so I can access records and liaise with class teachers. Many thanks. I hope you are having a good start to the term.

- Finally, it is, of course, imperative, that I remind you of our Covid-19 actions. All systems are in place within the Larch to minimise any risks - including, most importantly, handwashing and sanitising, and the bubbles we have in operation. Please continue to be highly vigilant of any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) - a new continuous cough, a high temperature and/or a loss of, or change in, a normal taste or smell. Please do contact us if you are unsure of what action you should take but the government guidance contained here is what we are following precisely and we ask you to do the same <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If your child has a normal cold, sore throat or any other minor ailment, they should attend school as usual - the government is committed, as are we, to ensuring that your child receives a full, enriching curriculum.

All that remains is for me to wish you and your children an enriching and fulfilling fortnight ahead.

*Best wishes,
Rachel Kirk (Vice-Principal)*