



Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 23rd October 2020

All-through news

We are all looking forward to our half term break next week as this has been an extraordinary half term of what has been a remarkable last six months in education. Staff and students alike are tired and not only weary of the new norms but we know some anxiety is already expressing itself in what might be happening in the future.

Parents frequently ask about how we are helping students' wellbeing and we wanted to communicate with you some of the many things we have already done along with our future plans. As senior leaders we know of what is happening in many schools across Hertfordshire. Each school has interpreted the return to school in various ways but we believe that our actions have helped so many students to refocus and feel good.

All of our children and young people are continuing to do practical subjects. At secondary level, this means cooking, designing, using specialist art and technology equipment and carrying out scientific experiments. All students are active in their PE lessons, and now within extra-curricular sports too, and playing music. This in many schools is not the norm. Our children and young people are enjoying their breaks and lunchtimes, simply playing or mixing with their friends in their year groups. We have not limited the curriculum to all days of maths and english, catch ups and interventions. Our curriculum is allowing for discussion, focusing upon global events and is relevant, not exam/ test driven. Our school based counsellor continues to support both students and staff. Within our primary phase, before and after school clubs have continued. Like secondary, the curriculum remains broad - see more detail in the primary phase letter below. Wellbeing is supported in a range of age-appropriate ways.

It is not surprising that a small number of our students and their families have been adversely affected during this pandemic. For some this has meant loss of loved ones, whilst others loss of jobs. We are thankful for the support we have been given so we can help families, including with food parcels and referrals to other community agencies. Some of these same children have returned to school really troubled and so we are endeavoring to support them initially by personalising programmes.

Indeed, at this time, it is so important that we continue to drive and promote our values education as we believe that this is fundamental to growth and personal development. Our PHSE (personal, health and social education) programme is strong and is addressing wellbeing. Here at Simon Balle, we have been involved with the charity "Action for Happiness" <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/> working with them to develop ideas for schools. We have used this approach at secondary level and it was always our intention that James Pooley and I roll this out to KS2 this coming half term. Do take a look at the materials and resources both for young people and adults! Endorsed and developed by the ex Headteacher of Wellington College, Sir Anthony Seldon, this is a powerful programme.

The PSA at its annual general meeting is planning some of its usual activities for families in the coming months, albeit in a different format, so I urge you to support them. This again will bring back some form of normality as well as fund raising.



Primary news

Teaching and learning

This week has been assessment week for Years 1 - 5 in the Larch. It has been important for us to gauge exactly where children are in their learning so that we can ensure our planning for next half term is focussed precisely in the right areas. Children have been wonderfully motivated to achieve their best and have enjoyed the tasks set. For example, in writing, all children in Years 2- 5 watched this short video and retold the narrative to show us their excellent sentence structure, grammar and punctuation, vocabulary and more. It is quite fun so you and they might wish to watch it again! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YSxJnqCr8I>

As written above, though, our broad and balanced curriculum remains central. When I visited Reception this week, children were reflecting on their new learning this half term- there was much to share, but please particularly look at the Tapestry posts to see children's rapidly developing Spanish vocabulary and their skills in music. In Year 1 science, the children have been exploring autumn - from the signs of autumn, to trees, clothes and special days, there is lots to explore. Year 2 have continued to develop their depth of historical understanding in relation to Hertford. This week, Miss Riddle's Dad wrote to Year 2 telling them about all the differences from when he was growing up here - they were surprised to learn of the tin baths, the streets full of boys playing cricket and girls playing skipping! Year 2 have been fortunate to engage with some inspiring artefacts - for example, a large photograph of Fore Street to compare the past to now. Year 3 have particularly enjoyed art this week, where staff have been helping children to slow down and take great care with their sketching of self-portraits. Miss Blackman has been impressed with how children have used lines to help understand proportion. Year 4 have shown great maturity in both their values education and history learning this half term. This week they have been using their understanding of Black Lives Matter to compare similarities and differences with the suffragette movement - they have been listening to one another and justifying their reasons as they talk. Finally, Year 5 have been evaluating their learning across this half term in science - from friction to gravity, water to air resistance, they have been summarising the new knowledge gained.

Creating tomorrow's citizens today: Primary behaviour guidance

Mr James Pooley (Assistant headteacher) and the primary leadership team met earlier this half term to discuss the behaviour for learning policy, mainly to ensure that it remains age-appropriate for our first Year 5 cohort (and Year 6 to come) and to ensure that it supports children in their transition to the Simon Balle secondary phase. Our ethos and our many ways of rewarding excellence have not changed (for example, the 'sunshine', house points, values certificates, star certificates and more!). Our principles are as follows:

We value everyone for who they are and what they bring; we care for every member of our community and each of us needs to take responsibility for making our school a great place to be. We are therefore "Creating tomorrow's citizens today".

We want to celebrate and reward students each time they actively promote our values, display good learning behaviours and make our community a better place by the actions they choose to take. This makes for good character. However when students go against this, and do not respect our community rules nor live up to our high expectations, they need not only to receive sanctions to remind them of what is acceptable, but also be educated to understand how their behaviours affect the others within their community.

As you will have seen, our house points are now explicitly linked to our values, so, for example, in Years 5 and 6, it will be particularly important for children to show the value of responsibility (for example, by putting a consistently high level of effort into their home learning). Year 5 children are currently incredibly motivated by achieving positive house points; they do, however, also know that we have introduced the possibility of negative



house points (Year 5+ only), if children do not demonstrate our values appropriately. We hope and anticipate that these will be applied only very rarely.

As always, it is incredibly important for us to ensure that promoting positive behaviour and managing any concerns with behaviour are dealt with through a strong partnership between school and home. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to speak with us.

We are keen within our newsletters this term to introduce each of our new primary leaders to you: **here is Miss Riddle leading PE/sports across the Larch:**

As I think about the famous quote by Nelson Mandela, “**Sport** has the **power** to change the world, It has the **power** to inspire. It has the **power** to unite people in a way that little else does.” I can only think this is currently true for our sporting journeys at Simon Balle. I have thoroughly enjoyed spending time this term with children throughout the Larch to see the progress that they are making with their physical journeys. I have also not just seen their progress but the enjoyment they are getting out of their PE lessons and extra-curricular provision. The children have had so many opportunities already this term from football, tag rugby, archery, netball, swimming, invasion games and throughout these I have seen just how inspired and motivated the children have been to reach their full potential.

As we look ahead (when we hope things will calm down) we are excited about the prospect of playing our first matches representing Simon Balle. I have had many children saying to me every single week, ‘When can we play, I can’t wait!’ Representing the school is a big commitment and we will be asking the children to follow our school values that Miss Boyce spoke about in the last newsletter. In addition to these we want to encourage the children to enjoy competing, do their best, play by the rules, accept the decisions of all officials and be a good winner and loser. It is so important to us that the children demonstrate these values in every area of their school life not solely in the classroom. It has been so lovely to see sportsmanship displayed in all areas of our PE curriculum this term. I have seen children congratulating individuals even if they haven’t won, supporting others when they need help when they are challenged with a new skill and clapping their friends to get to the end just to name a few. The children really are showing the values in all areas of their learning and I really am so impressed with the way they support each other.

In the meantime we are really looking forward to continuing our PE provision, aiming to develop the skills and attitudes needed for **every** child to have a lifelong participation in physical activity and healthy living. Children will have the opportunity to explore and develop their skills in dance, games, gymnastics, swimming, water safety and outdoor adventure activities throughout the year in all year groups. We have already started swimming for children to continue their swimming journeys for those currently in Year 4 and 5 and we look forward to all children in Year 1 to Year 5 having swimming lessons by the end of the year. We are also excited that we will be able to offer children in Year 5 the chance to be sports leaders, a very big responsibility! Year 1 children will also have the opportunity to take part in the balanceability programme, helping children develop gross motor skills, spatial awareness, dynamic and static balance, bilateral coordination and confidence in a safe, challenging but fun way.

I am very passionate about raising sporting achievement and improving the health and well-being of all our pupils and recognise the vital contribution PE can have on the lives of young people. Please do email me (riddlem@simonballe.herts.sch.uk) if you have any questions regarding your child’s sporting journey and I would be happy to help in any way that I can.



This fortnight's spotlight: **Football, written by James Gavin (Year 5)**

On a Monday Mr Leonard teaches Year 5 and 4 football. This term we have learnt to dribble, turning and passing. Next term we are doing shooting. I have enjoyed playing tournaments and matches the most. We have played with big goals and small goals.

Other news

- **Catering.** At Simon Balle All-through school, we believe passionately in the importance of good food. This is for so many reasons, from physical and mental wellbeing, to enjoyment, to the social aspects of dining, the importance of a balanced and nutritional diet aiding concentration in learning, and more. Last year, therefore, the governing body invested financially and in time to a tendering process so that we could ensure our all-through caterers share our vision for food. As you will know Accent catering began with us at the start of September 2020. You can read more here:

<http://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/daily-life/canteen/> and <http://www.accentcatering.co.uk/>

Crucially, their meals are made with 98% fresh ingredients and, as a result, the quality of what is served is in line with our ethos for what is best for the children - something we cannot compromise on. That said, it has, of course, been an incredibly challenging period for us in school and the restrictions with Covid-19 have made the very start of the year 'bumpy' - for example, there is no way we can safely introduce a salad bar at the moment. As with any new provider, new systems also needed to settle - for example, children being able to select their meal at the counter, and Accent ensuring that they provided the same quality of meals for children with allergens.

We have now completed two rotations of the four week menu. Accent and Simon Balle are incredibly keen to work in partnership and to seek feedback from parents and children. Informally, we have already acted on feedback - for example, 'Turkey a la king' was not as popular as other dishes, and so we have swapped this for a Roast gammon. We would now like to ask for formal feedback so that we can analyse these findings - please comment only on your child's experience in the last four weeks because any issues prior to this we hope have now been acted upon. **Please complete the survey here** - <https://forms.gle/BRSTvoaRmcxsaaeQA> This survey will remain open until Wednesday 4th November. We have asked you to include names so that we can seek more information where necessary - thank you! Even if your child does not currently eat school meals, please complete the survey as we are also working to review, with you, the quality of packed lunches as part of our vision.

- **Extra-curricular provision.** We are very proud that we have been able to run a full extra-curricular offer this half term. So many thanks to all! We will be seeking feedback from the children and from parents as next half term proceeds but with numbers remaining high for all activities we are incredibly grateful that parents continue to believe in the importance of these activities, even though, for many, childcare is not needed in quite the same way with fewer parents commuting. The breadth of provision for Explorers has been incredible - I smiled one Wednesday evening as I called out 'science this way, orchestra this way, archery just over here!'. We are equally delighted that KS1 clubs will begin after half term. 91% of our Year 1 and 2 children are signed up to at least one extra-curricular club and we look forward to welcoming children to their chosen activities. We are sorry that we cannot manage to fulfil every request - some clubs, through the nature of the activity (for example, photography or baking) have a maximum capacity. If your KS1 child is not yet signed up to a club and is interested in anything from art to choir to drama to hockey to running, please do be in touch with Mrs Harding.



- We hope that children can still enjoy **Halloween and fireworks** evening this year, though we understand that normal celebrations will have been considerably curtailed. Please be aware of the following sites to support the understanding of current regulations (for example, in relation to the rule of six people as a maximum):
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/latest-news/2020/herts-leaders-advise-stay-safe-and-have-spooktacular-halloween>
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/latest-news/2020/halloween-and-fireworks-stay-safe>
- Please see attached with this newsletter information regarding applications for **Free School Meals**. We fully understand that circumstances are changing for some families at this time and we want to help if we possibly can.
- Thank you for all of the wonderful **Harvest donations** which will be delivered to Hertford Food Bank. We appreciate the generosity of our families and we know that these goods are greatly needed and will be gratefully received.

Dates coming up

- Week beginning 9th November - parents' week for Reception and Year 1
- Wednesday 11th November - virtual remembrance day service
- Monday 16th November - Emma Carroll virtual author visit for Years 4 and 5
- Wednesday 18th November, 6pm - virtual parent workshop for Year 5: 'Looking forward at Simon Balle All-through school' - please see letter sent with further details. Please join here:
meet.google.com/ino-wmas-xnx
- 30th November - the launch of our Larch virtual open day for Reception admissions 2021-2022
- Friday 27th and Monday 30th November - Occasional days
- Wednesday 16th December - Christmas lunch - more information to follow
- Friday 18th December - End of term

Please do watch out for news of our Reception nativity performance- Born in a barn. We are pleased to announce that this will go ahead and that every child in Reception will have a special part. The performance will be filmed so that we can share this with all families - more information to follow!

Please also watch out for details of our music performances in the next half term. Mr Taylor is, as ever, passionate about ensuring our musicians have the opportunity to perform! More to follow.

Wishing you all the very best for half term. We understand completely that this may be a challenging time for families, but we hope too that you are able to rest, enjoy time together, read and play games, go on autumn walks, cook exciting new foods and regroup ready for the new half term. With many thanks for all of your ongoing support and the wonderful messages of thanks that we have received.

*Best wishes,
Rachel Kirk (Vice Principal)*