



Secondary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

13th November 2020

All-through news

Remembrance

Each year as a community, we have our own remembrance ceremony in our schoolyard, whereby all members of the secondary phase, joined by representatives from the primary, listen to readings, reflect and show respect to those who have given their lives. This year was to be no exception, and so a virtual ceremony was produced, whereby senior staff and students led the ceremony, with a series of readings and the "last Post" played by the Deputy Head boy, Louis Broad. We were able to use a variety of images from national and local sources, and music performed by our own musicians. You may like to take a look at the video made and share this with family and friends. It is obviously aimed at older students but would be suitable for upper KS2 students.

https://youtu.be/NrZ_tPr0128

All of our children and young people learnt earlier this week more about remembrance, for example why we wear poppies and whilst celebrating the role played by soldiers, also focusing upon other less traditionally recognised, for example, women and also those men from the British Commonwealth.

Our Year 5 students were given the challenge to write their own "cinquains" which speak so loudly of remembrance- perhaps next year we can get these students to actually read these in our ceremony. We are including three of these here:

Harsh war
Bold, brave soldier
Dangerous battleground
Scarlet poppies blanket the field
Be strong
(Miley Fairbrother)

The field
Friends played freely
Now brave they fight together
Battlefield fear, injured now home
Poppies
(Miles Wigget)

Soldiers
Risking their lives
Dangerous battlefield
Friendships will reunite again
Survive.
(Jacob Lee)



We believe that if we are “creating tomorrow's citizens today” it is important that our children and young people understand the past and have a sense of time and community. This equally reinforces our work on values and civic pride.

The quality and range of resources were again fantastic and we would like to thank those staff directly involved; in particular, Louis Broad, Mrs Harman and Mr Moss, the music department and musicians, and the history department.

The New Larch Centre Mini-Farm

Primary parents will know the exciting news that **our ambition is to launch Simon Balle All-through school mini-farm**. The mini-farm will be an all-through venture, and we hope that it will provide student leadership opportunities across both primary and secondary phases. Animals have an incredible ability to teach children (and indeed adults) so much. There are countless examples where the impact of animals has been clear, particularly working with children at times of need or vulnerability. At Simon Balle, having the farm as part of our community could reinforce and bring alive much of our values teaching and learning - responsibility, compassion, patience, kindness. It would be a farm for the all-through, positioned on the rectangle of grass by Reception and Year 1. Integrating its use through the curriculum would be easy - Early Years across areas, primary science, and learning for life across all phases. More than this, the daily life of the farm, together with the vegetable allotment area (being re-ignited now!), will provide students with another area of the school to which they belong.

Our practical plans include the following:

- Initially, we would like to welcome four rabbits, four guinea pigs, a tortoise (or two), and six hens.
- We will create a specially designed and safe fenced area, with double gates and enclosures.
- Some areas will begin empty where the farm could expand or where we could even welcome visiting animals.
- Finances have been carefully planned to include hutches and homes, food and bedding, vaccinations, storage and accessories needed (for example, gloves, brooms etc). We have links with local businesses who are prepared to help.
- I am already indebted to a number of parents who have specialist skills in this area who have helped the planning so far! Any other parents with the expertise to offer, please be in touch!
- Risk assessments are in the process of being written. Hertfordshire County Council is very helpful here and risk assessments will be developed overall for the farm, and for any individual children who may need this.
- We would be asking for family support with rotas for looking after the animals at weekends, bank holidays and holidays (in all weathers!) but we hope that this would be possible and welcomed by the community. Staff will, of course, help too and again, I am indebted to a number of staff members who have offered expertise in the planning so far.

Clearly, there is a huge financial implication here. As a school, we want to invest in the farm, because we believe in its potential (which is shown by research too). But we are writing now, following the agreement of our plans by the finance and resources committee of the governing body, to ask if parents can support us as well. If you can, please could you make a voluntary contribution via this [link](#). Gift aid is incredibly important as this will allow us to claim 25% more on each donation, where eligible. We thank parents across the all-through in anticipation of your support!

(Rachel Kirk- Vice-Principal)



Secondary News

After school activities

There has been much conflicting information recently about what schools can do and not do but it appears at last that clearer guidance is being published. The key principles are the same as during the day- keeping to bubbles and also adhering to the hand hygiene and distancing rules. We have run for some time our own after school child care, in our Larch centre and this continues. We will shortly be putting on our “enhancement” year activities, supporting our students with their learning. In addition, some musical activities and sports can now occur.

Simon Balle Welcomes Amazon Operations Manager

On Wednesday 11 November we were privileged to host Gaetan Vanet from Amazon for a virtual event with some Year 11 Business students. This was possible through the Speakers for Schools programme which puts high profile figures into schools to inspire young people. Gaetan explained how he manages 2500 people at various sites around the world. For his biography please see <https://www.speakersforschools.org/speakers/gaetan-vanet/>

Our students asked some excellent questions covering how the pandemic has affected the business, the vision of Jeff Bezos and Gaetan's challenges in his role. Our speaker gave some good advice regarding internships with Amazon and greatly inspired our students. This was the fifth time we have benefitted from Speakers for Schools live sessions and once again it was both very useful and stimulating.



PE November News

Physical Education has started well this half term with students experiencing a wide and varied range of activities. We have re-introduced a range of activities which enable students to practice new skills and techniques, as well as enhancing their physical and mental wellbeing. Activities which have been reintegrated into our curriculum are as follows;

- Table tennis
- Water activities

Simon Balle All-through school


- Developing catching, passing and support play through Ready4 Rugby
- Development of individual skills, routines, strength and conditioning through Gymnastics



In order to re-introduce these activities we have gone through an in-depth review of current practices, alongside a thorough risk assessment, consultation with Governors' as well as adhering to both Government, Association for PE (Afpe), Youth Sport Trust (YST) and National Governing body guidelines, to ensure that we are in a position to deliver our PE curriculum safely. As PE staff we are adhering to a scrupulous cleaning programme and if you require any additional information in relation to our delivery approach to specific activities then please do not hesitate to contact me on brennand@simonballe.herts.sch.uk

'Simon Balle Girls Can'

With the help of some of our year 10 This Girl Can Champions, the PE department are launching the '**Simon Balle Girls Can**' campaign in school to challenge girls of all ages to be active throughout lockdown.

 [2020-11-11-16-7-47.mp4](#) x

The idea behind the campaign is that girls should feel confident to participate in exercise whichever way they choose. This could be running, cycling, dancing, yoga, circuit training or participating in sports. Whatever it is, it gets you up, gets you moving and makes you feel good. Girls can be in for a chance to win house points by sharing their This.Girl.Can posters with Mrs Scarrott scarrottr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk.

PE exam & vocational course update

In Key Stage 4 & 5 PE examination and vocational courses we are currently focussing on the theoretical concepts with a view to reintroducing the practical element of the course in January, this will allow us to complete a good proportion of the course during the lockdown period. However students on these courses will still be accessing practical PE within their core PE lessons, therefore will not be disadvantaged in any way. We have urged students not to worry at this stage regarding the collation of practical video evidence until January 2021.

Finally, we continue to reflect on the current guidance and advice around the delivery of our secondary extra-curricular after school sports activities and our plan is to reintroduce these from next week. Students will continue to work in their year group bubbles as before alongside our scrupulous cleaning procedures that are in place. Our main focus will always be for students to access a broad and varied PE programme and we will continue to do so taking into account up to date Government guidance.

Online parents evenings

Thank you again to our Y11 parents who were part of our online parents evening using the new software purchased. We know that our families really value the feedback received on their child's learning at parents evenings but at secondary school, this is often accompanied by frustrations as to the length and the logistics of the evening. We are hoping that using this software package, parents within the comfort of their own homes found speaking with staff easy and focused. We will be asking for feedback which will inform our next set of parental consultations.

Covid update- explaining the process of notification to parents

To date (but this could all change) we have been most fortunate in that we have only had a few instances of Covid and subsequent isolations, which is far fewer than other Hertfordshire schools. We are not publicising this information to all families, only those families where Public Health and Track and Trace consider close contact has been made. The length of time to isolate is complex; there are various stages before we reach a decision. Firstly, we look at the last time the infected student was in school and then have to ask a set of questions to the child around the onset of symptoms, date of the positive test, non-lesson time, travel to school etc.



We scrutinise seating plans, check with staff, look at the position of the desk and then our judgment as to who should be contacted to self-isolate. The date of isolation is then calculated. The cases this week meant that students were not to be in school for a total of 4 or 5 school days, as the positive student had not been in school/ contact for some time before. Indeed, we are learning from your comments on how to improve our communication, but no two outbreaks are the same and therefore the isolation times, although common, the days off school can vary. The more all of us remember to follow the Government guidance regarding minimising the spread of Covid, the fewer students we will have to send home to self-isolate, and the less positive cases nationally.

Masks

We have been delighted with the number of children adhering to the new rules involving face coverings. However, from Monday, we can no longer provide free disposable facemasks. If a student forgets their own mask, we are now offering **disposable masks for 40p** or **fabric ones for £2**, these can be purchased using the exact change from the front office.

Free School Meals

If you would like to enquire whether your child could be eligible for Free School Meals, please find the leaflet below explaining the qualifying benefits.

Stevensons

Stevensons is still available online for those who need uniform. Please find their details below.

Citizens Advice

With the new lockdown restrictions, Citizens Advice East Herts would like to remind you that we are to help with free and confidential advice for anyone living in East Herts. We can also provide foodbank vouchers and referrals to other support agencies. Please see details on how to contact us in the attached leaflet.

A reminder of dates:

- Friday 27th and Monday 30th November - Occasional days
- **Friday 11th December - Christmas jumper day. This is national Christmas jumper day and this year we feel that we all need this lift across the all-through school! Children (and staff!) can wear a Christmas jumper, with their school uniform, across the day. We ask for a voluntary contribution of £2; everything raised will go to Save the Children.**
- Wednesday 16th December - Christmas lunch - more information to follow
- Friday 18th December - End of term

Wishing you all a positive fortnight ahead. Though times are tricky, we continue to be hopeful, to provide an exciting and fulfilling curriculum, and to support wellbeing for all.

Alison Saunders and Rachel Kirk



Your child could get a Free School Meal (FSM)

Your child could be eligible for a FSM if you satisfy the qualifying benefit criteria

Why apply for a FSM?

- Your child will receive a healthy nutritional meal
- It will not cost you a penny
- Applying is quick and easy

How do I Apply?

Apply by visiting www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals and selecting the following tab. (You will need your National Insurance Number or Home Office number to hand).

Qualifying Benefits for FSM

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (as long as you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and you don't get more than £16,190 a year)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit (with annual earned income of no more than £7,400 a year after tax and not including any benefits you get). This includes those who had free school meals whilst on Universal Credit before April 1st 2018 even if earnings are above that £7400 figure.

If your child is eligible for free school meals, they'll remain eligible until March 2023, or until they finish their current phase of schooling (primary or secondary), if that's after March 2023.

[Apply for free school meals \(Year 3 and older\) >](#)

Did you know?

Registering for a FSM helps schools identify anyone on low income; the school can then claim additional funding from the government, which can help towards extra computers, books, trips out and staff etc.

Hertfordshire County Council
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

SCHOOL UNIFORM UPDATE

YOUR SCHOOL UNIFORM IS STILL AVAILABLE ONLINE.

Whilst our stores are closed with immediate effect we are still dispatching your orders.

If there is anything you require over this lockdown period, then please order online:

www.stevensons.co.uk

As soon as we have an update on our branches reopening, in line with Government advice, we will be back in touch

Please keep safe

STEVENSONS

SCHOOL UNIFORM OUTFITTERS

Here to help!

Whether it's advice on employment rights, benefit entitlements, money worries, housing concerns, relationship challenges, access to local support etc - we're here for you. Whilst our offices are currently closed you can contact us for free and confidential advice in a number of ways:



Call our local Messageline on **01920 459944** (any time) and one of our advisers will call you back. Or call our Herts Adviceline (10am-4pm Mon to Fri) on **0800 144 8848** (you may have to wait in a queue)



Email us at
www.citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk/webadvice



Webchat with us at
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/web-chat-service/



Contact us via Facebook Messenger at
www.facebook.com/EastHertsCitizensAdvice

You can also access a range of useful **information and links online** at
citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk



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