



Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 13th November 2020

All-through news

Remembrance

Each year as a community, we have our own remembrance ceremony in our school yard, 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. Even our youngest students, for whom some of the language is tricky to understand, took something away from the ceremony, the traditions and the importance of remembering.

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, Year 5)

The field
Friends played freely
Now brave they fight together
Battlefield fear, injured now home
Poppies
(Miles, Year 5)

Soldiers
Risking their lives
Dangerous battlefield
Friendships will reunite again
Survive.
(Jacob, Year 5)



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 was 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.

Simon Balle All-through school 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 expertise to offer, please be in touch!
- Risk assessments are in the process of being written. Hertfordshire County Council are 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!



Primary news

Teaching and learning

When I visited Reception yesterday, I was delighted to see the celebration of Diwali. We are so grateful to a family who brought in a wonderful hamper of fruit for the children to explore - seeing and tasting! From dragon fruit to papaya, passion fruit to pineapple, coconut to physalis and more. We welcome all opportunities to understand more about the children's unique families and cultural celebrations. Next, I popped into Year 3. One class were preparing to write instructions for a magical spell - they were busy rewinding their learning to recall what was needed for successful instructional writing. Robins were engaged in creating their own bar charts; Miss Blackman was supporting children to consider carefully what their charts showed - using language such as 'most' and 'least' to interpret their data. One Year 5 class were immersed in their French learning - I was pleased to see their writing and spelling as well as their oral dialogue: 'J'ai ___ ans, et toi?'; 'Quelle est ta couleur préférée?' In Swans, there was lots of excitement about the virtual author visit taking place next week. When I visited, the children were looking carefully at inference and how to tell what had been learned about Grandad in Emma Carroll's 'Secrets of a Sun King.' I couldn't possibly not comment on Busy Lizzies nursery as I passed today! Children were in the hall playing parachute games, and I would have challenged anyone not to smile hearing the shrieks of delight as children engaged in activities together. In Year 2, I was pleased to see how well children are remembering the grammar rules as they are taught. Mrs Evans was doing a quick 'rewind' on the use of commas in a list, and the children were keen to share knowledge and move on to today's learning with apostrophes for contraction. Mrs Getley's class were busy exploring materials - a video on how glass is made from sand was a little baffling (!), then children were exploring a range of materials in their special box to compare and contrast. Practical science learning is going really well this term and Year 1 are experts telling us all about mammals and using a key to separate groups of animals. Last but not least, Year 4 are loving their Literary Canon text 'The lion, the witch and the wardrobe' - when I visited, one class had carefully highlighted any unfamiliar vocabulary and were using a dictionary to help (for example, 'inquisitive' and 'sorrowfully'). Kingfishers were busy explaining their mathematical reasoning for dividing by 10 - so important for their understanding as their place value charts extended to very large numbers (millions) and very small numbers (thousandths)!

This fortnight's sport spotlight: Tag rugby, written by Lola (Year 4)

Last term on a Tuesday we learnt how to play tag rugby. We learnt that we couldn't dive in tag rugby to score a try but that we had to place the ball down carefully. We also learnt that there was no contact and we had to pull the other teams tags off them to stop them from scoring a try. My favourite part was playing lots of games and learning to score a try properly. I can't wait to play matches against other schools!

Other news

- **Catering.** With many thanks to all parents for their responses to our catering survey. We had 106 responses which is a great number to evaluate strengths and areas to improve with our new provider. It is overwhelmingly clear that our community all support the same values: 100% of parents support the school's drive to ensure that meals are cooked from fresh ingredients; 98.1% of parents support the school's vision for children to eat a balanced and nutritious hot meal at lunchtime. We have received good feedback about children being able to choose their meal at the counter - for example, '*xxx loves the puddings and loves being able to choose at the counter. We have stopped talking about the menu the night before as xxx feels confident choosing herself.*' I can't share all feedback here, but this is another example shared by many: '*The biggest positives are that the meals are cooked fresh every day and that every meal has vegetables served with it. The menu seems varied and interesting & we really like the idea of having the themed days. It's also good to see foods from around the world on the menu as we're keen to introduce xxx to new tastes and flavours.*' It is clear from responses too that parents are pleased to have had this opportunity to provide



feedback. We know that some flavours have been more challenging for some children, but we are pleased that 87.5% of you replied that you were satisfied or very satisfied that if your child was finding new food tricky, the partnership between home and school was supporting them well (47.1% of parents saying that this question wasn't relevant as their children were enjoying meals). There have, of course, been comments too that help us to work towards next steps, and we will be discussing these with Accent over the coming weeks:

- We are already aware of a thirst from all to introduce our salad bar and homemade baked bread daily- Covid restrictions have been tricky but we plan to do this, safely, as soon as we possibly can.
- We will feedback to the caterers that not all of the condiments have been available for all of the meals for all of the children - for example, the homemade tomato ketchup or mango chutney.
- We know that there have been initial problems with Year 5, as they eat last, in making sure that the range of main meals and desserts remain available for them and that the portion sizes are sufficiently large. The children tell us that this is now significantly improved but we will continue to monitor closely.
- Finally, we are responsive to your feedback and we will continue to be so. We have reintroduced roast gammon (replacing turkey a la king), and we have increased the range of fruit available as well as homemade cakes and yoghurts.

Please keep talking to us and we hope, with Covid restrictions, to be able to share samples of food with parents soon!

- **Covid-19.** With so many thanks for your continued support with all measures in place to protect all. A reminder please to wear masks as you enter the school site - this is an extra layer of protection that many parents and staff appreciate, particularly at a pinch point where distancing may be trickier. Please also remember the importance of distancing at drop off/pick up where you do so directly at classroom doors (particularly Year 2 and Reception). Thank you.
- **Extra-curricular provision.** We have written in previous newsletters to celebrate the wide range of extra-curricular activities taking place. This week has been wonderful, as KS1 activities begin for this half term. From dance, to Christmas arts and crafts, to watercolour club, to choir, the Larch has been full of activity each evening. Baking and drama have been really popular in KS2, karate sees a packed hall each week, and the astro is full of footballers on a Friday (all safely training in their bubbles with coaches). We continue to innovate in KS2 with table tennis beginning and hockey providing lots of excitement. We are delighted that 90% of every class are enjoying engagement in some form of club provision! Indoor lunch club, run by Miss Norbury in the Sycamore room, has been exceedingly popular, run every day, and this too has enhanced the curriculum, with every child in KS2 attending if they wish. Lunchtime sports coordinated by Mr Leonard continue on the astroturf - cricket introduced this week. Thanks to all!
- **Physical exercise during lockdown.** We have written before about our passion for the importance of physical well being for our children. Miss Riddle would like to share this fantastic opportunity from the Youth Sports Trust:

The Youth Sport Trust will deliver a free virtual after school club as part of a national response to the second lockdown. The 30-minute club will take place at 5pm each weekday on YouTube Live and be led by a different member of the YST's Athlete Mentor network. Starting on Thursday 12 November with world



number one female inline skater and 10-time British Champion Jenna Downing. Aimed mainly at primary-aged children, a different theme has been assigned for each day of the club - Adventure Monday, Tuesday Play, Wild Wednesday, Thinking Thursday and Fun Friday. Follow us using #YSTAfterSchool and join us [here](#).

- **Film clips, parental guidance (PG).** From time to time, we do use video clips in lessons to inspire children, across many of the subjects in the curriculum (reading, history, writing and more). Occasionally these can be a PG rating rather than a U - for example, discussed this week with staff, Roald Dahl's revolting rhymes and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (C.S. Lewis), part of the Literary Canon for Year 4. We will always let you know if we are using a PG clip, when we communicate through Go for schools about home learning on a Friday. We ask you please to let us know if you have any questions or concerns about your child watching the material as advised. Thank you!
- **Staffing.** We are delighted to welcome Emma Bloss to our staff team in the Larch. Mrs Bloss will be supporting children with reading in particular, but also will be supporting children in their learning in small groups. She will already be known to many as Sophia and Lucas's Mum!
- **PSA.**
 - **Winter Raffle.** We are delighted to be offering a Winter Raffle this year and are incredibly thankful to Kings Group for offering to sponsor the draw which will take place on 14th December. Tickets and more information, including the prize list, will be available towards the end of the month. We are busy gathering Winter Raffle prizes and making up beautiful rainbow hampers from your incredibly generous Bright and Beautiful Day donations (we are still happy to receive more!). If you are aware of any contacts that may be able to make a raffle contribution, please do get in touch. We appreciate how difficult this year has been and would warmly receive any donation. We have had some lovely offers so far, including a voucher from Little Linguists for half a term of Spanish or French lessons (currently via zoom) and a Child's Annual Pass to Cedar's Nature Centre.
 - **Kings Group Sponsorship.** Kings Group have offered to pay Simon Balle PSA £10 for every address that agrees to display one of their boards. We will donate £50 to the class with the most sign ups. The class teacher can then choose how best to spend the money on their class. Please do support if you can by heading over to our website where you can register your interest for a board. All we need is your name, address, and which class you're supporting to agree to a board being placed outside your address for the month of December. This is at zero cost to you. Multiple address sign ups welcome!!
www.simonballepsa.org.uk
 - **Lapland Mailroom** - Personalised Santa letters. There's nothing like the magic of a letter from Santa to light up every child's face at Christmas. A personal greeting from Santa as they open their presents will add even more joy and laughter to the special day. We are very excited to share that personalised letters, direct from Lapland Mailroom, are available with a £2 discount code when entering SIMONBALLE at the Checkout. For more information, please see www.laplandmailroom.com

Dates coming up

- 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 the 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

Simon Balle All-through school

- 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.

Best wishes,

Alison Saunders (headteacher) and Rachel Kirk (Vice Principal)



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