



Secondary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 15th January 2021

All-through news

A Happy New Year to all of our families. Once again the concept of time has lost its sense as we remind ourselves that we are only 7 school days into Lockdown. However, as School Leaders we want to thank you as so many of our families are already demonstrating real strength of purpose and determination, in supporting and encouraging their children's education. Over the past few days, we have once again received many emails from you expressing your thanks. The recent comment from the Education Secretary, asking parents to contact Ofsted, to complain about provision from their school, has misfired, as a number of our own parents instead wrote to Ofsted to praise the provision! In fact, this has been duplicated by many throughout the country! At a time when we all need to feel positive, Rachel Kirk and I thought it be a good idea to share a few of these comments with you:

"I would like to express how grateful and appreciative we are to the above school. The dedication of the whole team is remarkable. There is not enough praise, we, as a family can give them. The school has gone above and beyond in producing high-quality work for both children forced into homeschooling and the ones whose families have no choice but for them to still attend school."

"I have a child in reception and one in year 2, both children have been provided with curriculum-related, age-appropriate learning, which we as parents can use our judgement to assess at what level they should be aiming to achieve. This has been supported by feedback on the work submitted, and videos to keep the children motivated. So impressed."

"I just wanted to let you know how incredibly impressed I have been this week with the home learning setup you have in place for the year 7s."

"My daughter has been excited to get to 'School' every morning and I am so in awe of what you and all the teachers at SB are doing to keep things going. My husband and I are incredibly grateful for this, I know I can just leave her to get on with School which means we can get on with our work too."

"Thank you for everything you are doing. It doesn't go unnoticed the immense pressure you must all be under, so I just wanted to share our appreciation."

"We have been very impressed by how you have implemented all the health and safety and are still managing to provide a full education for all your students."

Whilst we appreciate that we are in those early days, we believe that a positive start is so important.

We frequently speak of how values underpin all that we do, and how these underpin that holistic approach at Simon Balle. We are currently exploring the value of "hope" and some of our virtual assemblies have this as their focus. When reviewing our values, we discussed whether "hope" was important. Now, never more so- it is important for us all to be hopeful for our own and our children's sake- realistic but positive. This Lockdown does feel very different in these cold winter days, but in my garden, I am reminded daily of the coming of the spring, as the bulbs planted now have green shoots. Perhaps all of us need to stop looking so much on social media, or catching up with national news, for this is a sure way to feel low and out of control. We at Simon Balle, always



stress the importance of connecting with nature, daily exercise and a well-balanced diet as recipes for success.

National Christmas Jumper Day

I am delighted to report that we raised over £1500 for Save the Children fund. Well done to everyone.

This Summer's Examinations

Last week, I wrote to the parents of young people in Years 11 and 13 informing them of the cessation of the normal examination timetable. We are aware of some of the discussion that is being held at national level and this is currently focusing upon national assessments being conducted in class and marked inhouse, as part of the "teacher assessment grade". A national consultation will be launched shortly. Once again we can not over emphasise the importance of all of our students continuing to work really hard, and achieving their very best. These learning habits will lead to successful grades being awarded in the summer.

Other news

- We are currently advertising for teaching staff in the Larch, for September 2021; a maternity cover and also to complete the growth of the school. Do check out the website or <https://www.teachinherts.com/> if you or you know anyone who would love to join our very special learning community.
- We do apologise that Year 8 parents' evening had to be postponed at the last minute yesterday evening (Thursday 14th January 2021). This was outside of our control as the system that we use went down completely, nationally. We can now see that unfortunately many schools were affected. Staff were so looking forward to speaking to you all about your child's progress and we will rearrange for another evening in the near future. Thank you for your understanding.
- We, like many other schools in Hertfordshire, have started to use the lateral flow tests for staff to check for asymptomatic carriers of Covid. The Government plans to extend this to firstly secondary key worker students and then more widely to other secondary students once they are able to return to school. We will be looking for adults who can help us to carry out the administration of the tests, and training is given. The tests are self-administered, but there is obviously both an administrative role and then the role to see if tests are positive or negative. The commitment will probably be for 2 mornings a week or more, and a small hourly rate will be paid. If you are interested to learn more, can you please email admin@simonballe.herts.sch.uk and title your email, Covid "tester volunteer".
- **Covid 19.** We know just how challenging this third lockdown period is for every family and every staff member. Our only advice for all, and especially the children still coming into school, must be to follow all guidance precisely. In order to do everything in our control to keep all safe in our community, we are all relying on one another to be responsible. If anybody has one of the main symptoms of Covid-19 (a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste) **then they must organise a test, and the whole household must isolate immediately and until the test result is received.** Please do remain in contact with us through the school email address: Covid19@simonballe.herts.sch.uk

Wishing you all the very best for the next fortnight of learning. Stay safe all, and we hope that you can enjoy family time as much as possible.

Best wishes,

Mrs Alison Saunders (Headteacher) and Mrs Rachel Kirk (Vice Principal)