



# Primary 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 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.

### **Primary news: teaching and learning**

We have been delighted by the response made by families and children across the Larch with such a wonderful start to home learning. As Mrs Saunders has said above, we have been overwhelmed by so many emails of thanks from parents, including many sent to Ofsted! At a time that is, of course, very difficult for staff too, we have been so grateful to receive these - thank you all! Below is a summary from each of the phase leaders as to the exciting learning taking place at home, and in school for those children still attending.

#### **Phase 1 (Reception and Year 1) - Miss Emery**

In Phase One we have been blown away by the incredible start to term and all the wonderful learning that has been taking place both at home and in school. In Reception the children have been using the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' to go on Welly Walk adventures and have now been changing the story to become authors themselves. We now have 'We're Going on a Ladybird Hunt' and 'We're Going on a Wolf Hunt' to look forward to being written next week. The children have started Phase 3 in their phonics and are learning lots of new phonemes. They have been experimenting with objects that float and sink and have been adding using dominoes to help create their number sentences. In Year One the children started off by setting up some fantastic home learning stations to provide them with a personal space at home to complete their tasks. This included making number lines, high frequency word flashcards and posters to support super sentence writing, to name a few! The children have been consolidating their phonic knowledge from last term and enjoying a daily reading session. They have been focusing on calendars, looking at the days of the week, months of the year and the seasons in more detail.

#### **Phase 2 (Years 2, 3 and 4) - Miss Ridley**

Firstly, I wanted to start by saying thank you to all of the children in Phase 2 who have worked extremely hard under such difficult circumstances. Secondly, I want to thank all of our families for supporting home learning and us as a school during this time. In Year 2, the children have been busy in PRE, focusing on the religion of Judaism and the celebration of Hanukkah. In Maths, they have been collecting data such as how many birds they see in their garden using a tally chart. I have seen Year 3 have started reading Iron Man and I have seen some great comic strips to summarise parts and also looking up some definitions of the vocabulary from the story. In their Maths learning, they have been looking at the use of arrays for multiplication and division. They have started their Geography learning and are looking at the layers of the Earth. Year 4 have started reading their next Literary Canon text called Journey to Jo'burg and have been focusing on properties of shapes in Maths. In Computing, they have begun their unit on digital music and have started to plan their own piece of music.

#### **Phase 3 (Year 5) - Miss Boyce**

In phase 3 we have been reading a new novel from our literary canon- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The children have created brilliant predictions for the story and written fantastic character descriptions of the 'Green Knight'. The children have been including fronted adverbials, expanded noun phrases, relative clauses and parenthesis in their writing and have also spent time editing and improving. In maths we have been learning about fractions, including mixed numbers, improper fractions, converting and adding and subtracting. We have



been impressed by the level of reasoning shown from the children with explanations of their thinking and working out shown clearly. In French, Miss Lunn has been teaching the children (and us adults!) how to say the days of the week through songs, repetition and activities via her virtual lessons. We have also been learning about the Alpine region in our new geography topic. The children have been using maps and atlases to identify the countries and designing homes appropriate for the climate in the region- some very creative ideas shown! In computing, the children have been engaged with creating their own webpages using Google Sites! They have already started exploring some of the tools, such as inserting images, videos and links. It has been a busy start to the term and we are so impressed with the effort and quality of work being produced by the children!

### Home learning continued

If your child is **learning from home**:

- Reception and Years 2 - 5: Please try to upload learning on a daily basis if you possibly can. Staff are working incredibly hard to ensure that we are reviewing learning daily, adding praise and comments to children's learning. We know that it is incredibly important for the children's motivation to know that we are valuing all that they do, and still adding house points too! Equally, where we can give some precise feedback (not on every piece), just as children would receive when they are in school, it will help them to return to their learning and develop even further. It is trickier for staff to manage this if all learning comes at once (for example, at the end of the week) and we are also not aware if we could have helped you with any support sooner. As Year 1 parents will be aware, there is a special email address to use for sharing Year 1 learning: [Year1homelearning@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:Year1homelearning@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)

If your child is **learning in school**:

Please be aware that it is still incredibly important that you are supporting your children's learning at home. You can do this in the following ways:

- Continuing to read with your child daily and writing in their reading records. We will change books in school as always.
- Each year group is sharing a home research project, all connected to preparation for the launch of Simon Balle All-through school farm. This research project will be home learning for the children in school at present. It can be completed across weekends this half term and handed in please by Monday 8th February 2021. Please be as creative as you can - all details to be shared by class teachers.
- Teachers in school may send additional learning on a Friday, in homework books in book bags: for example, spellings. If they do not, please do use the daily expectations for your Year group to provide additional consolidation of skills at home.

### Other news

- **Staffing:** We are delighted to be able to let you know that Miss Emery (Hedgehogs class teacher and phase 1 leader) is expecting a baby, due later in the summer term. On behalf of the whole community, we would like to congratulate Miss Emery and wish her all the best for a very exciting 2021!
- 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, 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](mailto:admin@simonballe.herts.sch.uk) and title your email, Covid “tester volunteer”.

- **Connection meetings.** We are doing all that we can to stay in touch with each and every child and family within the Larch. We know how important this connection is, and we are doing our best to make use of all opportunities for doing so. We are therefore going to change our plans for parents’ evenings during the spring term, and **we would like to ‘meet’ (virtually) with every parent (and child if they are learning from home) during the weeks beginning either 25th January or 1st February 2021.** We will use school cloud to hold 10 minute remote meetings (as we did in the autumn term) and the purpose will be to ensure that we remain in touch with you. We can discuss your child’s learning (whether they are learning at home or at school), and find out if there is any more we can do to support their next steps. The meetings are across two weeks as our staff are working one week from home to support remote learning and teaching one week in school. We will be in touch very soon asking you to sign up to a convenient slot. We do hope you will value these meetings - as I know that staff will too.
- **News from Mr Goodson and Mr Leonard:**  
During a National Lockdown there are very few things to look forward to each week. Both Mr Leonard and Mr Goodson have teamed up to help fight this frustrating groundhog day experience by creating the “Weekly PE Challenge”. Each week that the children are in Lockdown or stuck at home Mr Leonard and Goodson have created a fitness video around an aspect of PE. Every week will be a different activity. We cannot stress enough that if the children are struggling to complete the work set by their class teachers then they do not have to do this. The idea of the “Weekly PE Challenge” is to get children motivated to keeping fit and healthy during these difficult times as well as giving the children the opportunity to see their teachers complete physical activity where they might not usually. It’s fun, it’s different and it’s active.
- **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/families 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](mailto:Covid19@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)
- **Coronavirus: How to keep children healthy, happy, learning and entertained at home.**  
Please click on the link below for a free e-copy of Family First magazine, packed full of information to help keep children happy, learning & entertained at home during lockdown. We hope it helps in some way.

[https://issuu.com/sevenstarmedia/docs/ff\\_issue\\_7\\_digital211220](https://issuu.com/sevenstarmedia/docs/ff_issue_7_digital211220)

*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)*

Simon Balle All-through school

