

Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 30th April 2021

All-through news

Dear Families,

Our values education is currently focusing upon “**compassion**” and students across the all-through are exploring this theme through assemblies and values lessons. Compassion is perhaps a difficult concept for some as it is deeper than kindness and neither is it empathy. With our youngest children, stories such as the Good Samaritan have been most helpful in understanding the importance of showing compassion to our ‘neighbours’ (all people). We have explored too how compassion can be shown in so many different ways, at different times with different people (or indeed animals or within nature). We have chosen to use the lens of social action: being moved by suffering or injustice whereby a positive response is needed. There are numerous examples from history and indeed equal numbers from current times, whereby communities or individuals have raised awareness or carried out fundraising to try and tackle a social or health issue.

I am certain that you too have been upset to see and read about how the **pandemic** is spreading in India and the acute suffering for so many. It is a timely reminder of how we still need to take great care and exercise caution. We are starting to re-think some mitigations we have introduced, whilst keeping to most. These measures along with the successful vaccination programme are helping to fight the virus nationally. The students are well aware of family members who are now vaccinated and we welcome the roll out this week to those aged 40 years and how this also heralds the next age group. This means now that many of our parents either have had their first vaccine or will shortly get one. This has been such a great achievement; however, this is a global pandemic and it is important that the rest of the world has access to vaccines. The diocese of St Albans has suggested the following compassionate action that some may wish to consider:

VACCINES – GET ONE – GIVE ONE. It is a great joy that many of our community are now being vaccinated, and the Diocese has put out this appeal:

- When you are offered a vaccine, take it!
- As ‘none are safe until all are safe’, consider giving a donation in thankfulness for our own vaccinations, so that vaccines can be purchased for countries that need them.

Those who wish to give can do so by:

- The COVAX fund is buying and getting vaccines to countries around the world. COVAX is being generously supported by the UK Government, but individuals can contribute too here:
www.gavi.org/donate

Another example of community action- thank you!

Road safety

A big thank you to those parents (mainly from our Larch Centre) who have been campaigning and making representation to the local council to address the **safety issues** in our surrounding roads and pavements. This week we learnt that the following safety improvements will be made:

- a new pedestrian crossing at the Simon Balle school end of the road
- new road “gateway” features at the other end of the road

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- new speed management provision (probably a smiley)
- maintenance of the footway along the front of the site to include removal of the encroaching vegetation so as to restore the proper width of the pavement.
- improvements to the existing raised crossing across Hagsdell Road which will help with the walk down into the town.

We will keep you updated on this road safety improvement.

A new chapter...

We have very mixed emotions, as we say “goodbye” to our Librarian, Janet Syme, who is leaving Simon Balle All-through School after 18 years of service. Janet has made the decision she would like to spend more time with her family. She joined Simon Balle as a part time librarian in 2003; the school was very different then, as was the library. Janet will be remembered as a “great pioneer” and a passionate advocate for reading. As Librarian of our “Humanities College- 2004,” she worked hard with senior leaders and staff to promote those important skills of inquiry and sense of place and belonging. In 2008/9, she worked with Governors and myself, to begin a groundbreaking vision for our library, as we became a flagship locally for our digital approach and our networking with international companies such as Pearson. The library space was refurbished, many books were redistributed to “good homes” and a completely different and exciting ethos emerged, led daily by Janet. The library was officially opened in 2010 by a senior staff member of the British Library.

Janet, along with others and more recently Kevin Belsey, worked tirelessly on welcoming all students to the library, developing student librarians and putting on whole school events such as visiting authors, literary festivals and writing competitions. Speakers attended the school, various creative workshops were organised and Janet also spearheaded many of our “career-focused” external speakers, from well known national and international companies.

In 2015 with the opening of the All-through School, Janet left enthusiastically into new projects and we are also grateful to all those families who at that time and even now continue to donate good quality books. Our youngest children loved Janet’s enthusiasm and her passion for sharing stories and so she read regularly to reception and spent considerable time with all Larch students, bringing together an army of parental volunteers to help as the in situ library has grown. For every aspect of her work, we are very grateful.

We wish Janet happiness and health in any new ventures. She has left an amazing legacy and she will be greatly missed. The library and indeed libraries are now entering a new age; we are continuing to read about school libraries nationally and internationally to think about our next steps. If anyone has any thoughts, experiences or wishes to get involved, please do contact harmanm@simonballe.herts.sch.uk, our School Manager, with your thoughts.

Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies

(with thanks to Miss Riddle, leader for Sport and PE in our primary phase)

We are passionate at Simon Balle about raising sporting achievement, improving the health and well-being of all our students and we recognise the vital contribution PE can have on the lives of our young people.

We only need to look in the media to see the rising rates of childhood obesity and also adult obesity which have become a pressing issue in public health, threatening both the mental and physical well-being of our young people and adults. This has only become heightened by the pandemic with large amounts of inactivity for our young people missing out on the vast benefits of physical activity such as fitness and the social side to name a few.

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We know from lockdown that exercise was seen as one of the best parts of an adult's day, alleviating some of the more challenging elements of lockdown. These included meditation, yoga videos and home workouts. Large

scale "event" workouts also helped promote a sense of community. We recognise the importance that physical activity has on the lives of our young people and we want to work with you as parents and carers in partnership to ensure that we support our young people and we work together to improve their health and wellbeing. When children are a healthy weight, they feel better about themselves. They find it easier to play and learn and they are more likely to grow up healthy too. Helping them to be a healthier weight when they are a child can set up their health and wellbeing for life.

We know that this subject carries sensitivity around it and we appreciate that for many it is not a subject that is spoken about; we aspire to change this. We feel a responsibility for not only your child's academic learning but also their physical journey, their mental health and we want to play our part to support with this.

Over the coming weeks, months and going forward we will support our young people just in the same way as we would with interventions for English and Maths and other subjects within school. We will support children with their physical development along with their wellbeing. Children will be able to work with us to improve, for example, their fitness, fine and gross motor skills, coordination and will continue to have wellbeing opportunities within the classroom and in an intervention. We may work with some young people for whom team games is challenging for them, finding them an individual sport they may enjoy such as archery that they may continue afterwards. We are all different and we all enjoy different sports and activities and it is important we find an activity to suit every single young person. We want our young people to leave Simon Balle being lifelong learners in physical activity.

Mr Leonard inspired many of the primary phase during lockdown 3 in particular and he shares here his top tips for a healthy lifestyle:

- Have a piece of fruit or vegetables with every meal
- Have 30 minutes of exercise everyday!
- Find a form of exercise you enjoy.
- Try new foods; you never know, you might like it!
- Unhealthy, sugary, fatty foods should be treats, not an everyday snack
- Exercise is a reward, not a punishment (for everybody of any age!)
- Swap an hour of video games for exercise or reading

Please do get in contact with us in any phase of the all-through school if you are worried about your child's physical journey or any aspect of their fitness or weight. We will do our best to support with any concerns you may have so that we can work in partnership to give all of our young people the opportunity to lead healthy active lifestyles not just now but into their adult lives.

Simon Balle All-through School PSA

Throughout lockdowns, we have been continuing to organise events that raise additional funding for the school. The recent balloon race raised over £1000 and the successful quiz night hosted by our very own Mr Finch and Mr Pooley raised over £720. Funding so far this year has gone towards the cost of the school minibuses as well as towards the purchase of a hoist for the school swimming pool which will improve accessibility for pupils with disabilities. To find out more and get involved please email: psa@simonballepsa.org.uk



Pizza Night - Friday 14th May



Simon Balle All-through school

We've teamed up with Doughies for a fun family night in for all ages!

Order your pizza making kits via ParentPay and you'll receive everything you need to create your own 12" artisan Margarita pizza in your home oven.

Kits cost £6 each, a portion of which will go towards Simon Balle PSA. **Orders promptly close on 8th May to enable sufficient order processing time.** We regret we are unable to accept orders after this time.

Kits will be ready for collection at home time on Friday 14th May.

There are lots of other ways you can help to raise money for the school – some of them don't even cost you a penny! Please see the attached flyers/information.

Primary news

Learning in the Larch is alive and buzzing! It is wonderful to see how committed staff are to offering children a full, broad, ambitious, enriching curriculum, as well as focussing on confidence and security in all core knowledge and skills. As I visited lessons this morning, Reception were re-telling the story of 'How to catch a star'; they are beginning to develop their ideas for adapting this story as authors next week so do please chat to them this weekend about their creative ideas! Year 1 have been working on plurals this week and the spelling rules to change a word from singular to plural - they are showing great writing stamina and have been using 'The Hungry caterpillar' and 'Oi frog' to inspire them and to practise the rules. Do please see a letter from the Year 1 team about the common exception words for Year 1 and the importance of children learning how to spell these and apply these accurately each time that they write. Year 2 were fully immersed in a great PRE discussion when I visited, linked to colours and the association that colours have for them in how they feel. They were learning about the colours and symbolism for the Christian church - for example, green representing growth, purple representing reflection and white celebration. Year 3 were focussed on time in mathematics this morning, securing previous learning with the hands and o'clock, practising quarter past and quarter to and moving on to telling the time to five minute intervals as soon as they are ready - please do help us with practising this at home as by far the easiest way to learn is through marking the time throughout the day in school and at home. We are passionate about practical learning in science and Year 4 are enjoying their new unit of learning with sound - having explored how to make and explain a louder and quieter sound (please do ask children about vibrations), today they were moving on to learning how to measure sound and in which units of measure. In English, Year 4 have been writing their own versions of 'The Queen's nose' (a Literary Canon text), and publishing their written outcomes using the chromebooks was supporting both their writing and computing skills. Year 5 have a busy Friday morning, with both PE and music. Children were keen to explain to me, and to demonstrate, how to perform a range of quality stretches. All of this is, of course, just a snapshot - but we hope it helps to provide a sense of the learning your children are engaging in.

Many of the **assessments** that are usually statutory national checks/assessments are optional this year due to the disruption of Covid-19. That said, it is widely recognised to be the best practice to go ahead and to assess children in order to celebrate children's achievements and to prepare them well for their readiness for the next academic year. We will be writing to parents to share our home and school partnership in supporting children: including the Year 4 multiplication tables check, Year 1 national phonics screening, Year 2 SATs (reading, writing, mathematics and grammar) and the Reception Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

Our **Larch transition day** will go ahead on Thursday July 8th. All children will have the opportunity to spend the day in their new year group, classroom, and with their new teacher and teaching assistant. A letter will of course follow with details of our exciting plans for 2021-2022!

Other news

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- **Busy Lizzies Holiday Club.** Busy Lizzies are delighted to announce that we will be running a holiday club in the Summer holidays from Monday 19th July to Friday 6th August. Due to bubbles we have limited space available and are only opening to those that attend Simon Balle school.

For those of you who have not attended before, our holiday clubs are all about children having FUN! We have air hockey, snooker/pool, dance mat fun, loom bands and an array of board games. Activities include an art project to take home each day, mega water fights, EZY roller go carts, cake decorating, remote controlled cars, hairdresser role play, football, swing ball, forest school, gardening club, farm club, walks into Balles park and lots lots more.

An application form with costs is attached; please return by Friday 7th May with your requirements to BusylizziesSB@gmail.com

- **Larch uniform.** A Year 5 parent very helpfully let us know that the straps on the Simon Balle rucksacks are getting a little small for the Year 5, soon to be Year 6, children. After meeting with Kids Connection, we can confirm that for the new academic year (with stock which should be ready by July 2021 at the latest), there will be the following bags available, as part of school uniform, to buy from Kids Connection:
 - School book bag, as continued, for Reception - Year 2. Please note that it is only the school book bag for Reception- Year 2 which can be used. This is to allow easy access for staff to support changing of children's reading books, and for reasons of storage with pegs in the cloakrooms. It also allows for an exciting progression to Year 3!
 - For Years 3 - 6, when children have lockers and are independent and responsible for their reading books, homework books and more, there are two sizes of Simon Balle rucksack now available. Both fit in lockers with ease, but the larger version has longer straps; it is entirely up to you which you purchase for your children in KS2. The smaller bag is £12.99 and the larger bag is £13.99.
- **Snacks at playtime.** Just a reminder please that no child in Reception, Years 1 or 2 needs a snack at break time from home. We provide fruit for all and this is the appropriate and healthy snack at playtime. Thank you for your understanding.
- **Swimming.** It has been so wonderful to see Years 2 and 3 back in the swimming pool! Children are so clearly enjoying their swimming and we are relieved to see such an important life skill back at the centre of the PE curriculum. Year 1 are looking forward to beginning swimming after May half term too. A reminder to all Larch year groups that if parents are able to resume swimming with their children (safely, of course, taking into account continued Covid mitigations), then this is so important. For those children swimming at school, and those not swimming this term, all need additional practise and opportunities at weekends if you can possibly support this. Thank you in anticipation!
- **Car Park.** Can we please remind you not to drive on site when either dropping off or picking up. Parking permits are available for the Old London Road car park so families can 'park and stride' By doing this you will be alleviating traffic in the car park, making it safer for families and staff. We all rely on one another to show responsibility and consideration for all. Thank you.
- **Keeping your children safe online.** Please see the attached leaflets from Herts for Learning which offer excellent tips and advice.
- **Anti-bullying ambassadors.** We are delighted that a new opportunity will be shared with children in Years 3 - 5 next week to apply to attend training for 20 children as anti-bullying ambassadors in the Larch. This is part of an all-through initiative in which we will always be proactive in promoting our school values and educating children about how together we counter bullying, now and in the future as we create 'tomorrow's citizens today.' Following assemblies next week, children will be invited to express their

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interest by emailing Mr Pooley (Assistant Headteacher); more information can be found here:

<https://diana-award.org.uk/anti-bullying/>

- **Dates:**

- Week beginning 3rd May: Miss Emery begins 1:1 Google meets for all families with children joining us in Reception September 2021.
- A reminder that Tuesday 4th May is an INSET day and that students will return on Wednesday 5th May.
- Parents' week is the week beginning 5th July. More to follow soon in relation to virtual meeting days for each year group.
- A high profile and exciting Art week will also take place during the week beginning 5th July.
- Sports' week: week beginning 12th July. We are aiming for a very exciting end to the academic year!

Wishing you all a restful and sunny long weekend, and your children a happy and fulfilling fortnight ahead!

Best wishes,

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



SCHOOL PIZZA EVENT

FRIDAY 14TH MAY

We've teamed up with Doughies for a fun family night in. Order your pizza making kits and you'll receive everything you need to make artisan Margherita pizzas in your home oven.



Orders to be placed via ParentPay by Saturday 8th May

Orders to be collected on Friday 14. Details will be shared with primary and secondary phases.



EACH KIT MAKES 1 X 12" PIZZA, COSTS £6 AND INCLUDES:

- 01** 1 Fresh dough ball perfect for baking that evening, or within 48 hours
- 02** 90 grams of special tomato pizza sauce
- 03** 80 grams of fresh, cubed mozzarella (or vegan mozzarella)
- 04** 10 grams of grated Grana Padano cheese for an added depth of flavour
- 05** Fresh basil
- 06** A pouch of stretching flour to help stretch your dough balls

Each kit includes printed instructions, and the Doughies website contains videos and tips to help you stretch and cook the perfect home oven pizza



Bring the family together for a fun mealtime activity

Take photos of your pizza creations and share them with us on Facebook