

Primary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 18th June 2021

All-through news

Dear Families,

We welcome you back to a very short half term! Whilst the weather over the past 10 days has helped everyone to look forward and feel good, the news earlier this week in delaying the full opening-up has emphasised yet again the need for everyone in our community to understand that we must still keep to the mitigation rules that are in place, in order to keep everyone safe. Indeed this week, Hertfordshire County Council has informed all primary and secondary schools that the traditional Year 6 transition day (when Year 6's visit their new secondary schools for induction) will not happen for the second year running.

Covid cases are on the increase in Hertfordshire, after a very low rate. We hope by now all parents, obviously along with grandparents, will now have taken up the offer of at least their first vaccine. This along with their own vaccinations is a great comfort to our staff.

Therefore we are continuing **with bubbles, hand sanitisation, twice-weekly lateral flow tests for staff and secondary students, separated breaks, along with using outdoor travel routes. Staff still wear masks in public areas.**

We ask you to:

- Keep to the rules of social distancing and indoor numbers
- Keep reminding children at home to practice hand cleanliness
- Wear masks in areas where they are expected

Hopefully, by the end of this term, we will have some more positive news.

Thank you.

Holidays

May we remind all parents that holidays are not permitted in term time: children have already lost many school days. This year, unlike other local schools, we end school on Friday, July 16th; returning the first week of September. This is a long 6-week summer break. We ask you to carefully consider the placing and destination of your holiday. If you are planning to travel abroad, and with sudden changes to "green countries", if students do have to isolate at the start of term, this will cause difficulties for everyone. Isolation, if it is a risk, needs to be factored into the 6 weeks. We thank you in anticipation for your support in order that we can best focus on the wellbeing and educational needs of all students.

Assessment news

The changes to national assessments affects both primary and secondary children this year. Parents of children in Year 11 and Year 13 will be very pleased to hear that we received this week notification from the exam boards that our Centre Policy has been accepted. The next step will be our allocated exam board to ask for sample work, to carry out quality assurance. The amount of work that schools have had to carry out this year has been immense, carrying out most of the work usually carried out by the exam boards. Our views were mirrored in the recent survey reported by the press, that we request a reduction in exam fees and a rebate of 75%. For a school of this size, this would result in a payment back to the school of around £100k!!

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In primary, whilst statutory national testing (KS1 SATs, the Year 4 times tables check, the Early Years foundation stage profile, the Year 1 phonics screening) has been removed, our practice has been to continue as we normally would in order to give every child the best opportunity to show all they have learned. Where we identify gaps or support needed, this will inform our planning and our practice and our careful transition and handover to next year. Thank you to all parents for their continued support with home learning, as phonics, spelling, times tables, reading and more will be particularly important over the next few weeks of term. We look forward to talking with you all during parents' week.

Simon Balle All-through School Mini Farm.

I wanted to write to say thank you to all parents for their wonderful contributions and support with the mini-farm. Animals certainly have their moments, and both Cookie (the white long-haired rabbit) and now two of the tortoises (Flash and Zippy) have learned how to do good disappearing acts! The students - both Larch and particularly the Year 9 farm leaders - have learned really well how to carry out their responsibilities - cleaning out hutches, picking out poo, as well as food and water and handling and more. But we do really understand that these are big jobs that we pass to the community during the holidays and we are incredibly grateful for all that was achieved at half term - we especially appreciate parents providing vegetables for the animals, as they are used to lots of school leftovers (the tortoises particularly rely on a main diet of spring greens, and the chickens are much happier and lay more eggs when they eat lots of fruit and vegetables - whole cabbages and apples are particularly loved!). We are very grateful to you all - thank you. The feedback that we have received from parents shows that children are loving the visits too - all animals are settled and enjoying being stroked and held. We would love to ask for help during the summer holidays: whether in the Larch or the secondary phase, if you are not already signed up to the rota, please email Larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk if you would like to help. Please just specify dates that you can or cannot do during the summer and Mrs Harding will allocate slots. I am happy to do a training session for families new to the rota in July. Thank you again all - we are so pleased with the importance of the farm, within the curriculum, relating to our values, and adding much to students' personal growth.

Vacancies

Busy Lizzies at Simon Balle are looking to recruit a breakfast and afterschool playworker to join our team. The successful candidate should be a good role model to the children, be reliable, punctual, positive and enjoy working with children. No experience necessary as full training will be given, including level 2 food hygiene and safeguarding. Hours are 7.30 am-9 am and 3 pm-6 pm Monday-Friday with various shifts available. For parents of children at Simon Balle, their children can attend free of charge. For an application form and further information, please contact Liz or Tony on 01992 304477 or email BusylizziesSB@gmail.com

Simon Balle is currently advertising for the following positions :

Art technician
School Librarian
Cover supervisor

We are eager to recruit people who both have the skills needed and understand and promote the school's values. Full details are on the school website. In addition, if you feel that you might have the skillset and experience to work with us and want to be part of this exciting journey, even if there are no appropriate jobs at this time, do email in and we can meet you to have a chat.

Sports Days

We are excited about all-through sports day opportunities planned for this half term. Following the announcement shared by the government earlier this week, we are sorry that we won't be able to invite parents, but we can ensure that children from Busy Lizzies Nursery all the way to Year 12 have an exciting sports' day to look forward to. Whilst maintaining bubbles, students will be able to participate in collaborative events and compete in exciting year-group races. We will share as much as we can via photographs and social media!

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Dates:

- Secondary phase: Friday 9th July 2021
- Busy Lizzies Nursery and Reception: Tuesday 13th July 2021
- Years 1 - 5: Wednesday 14th July 2021

Primary news

Teaching and learning

The Larch centre was purposefully busy as I enjoyed visiting classes this morning. Kingfishers were fully engaged in their spelling dictations (this week distinguishing between 'ch' in words like 'chorus' and in 'chandelier'). The children told me all about the importance of spelling every word correctly (not just the focus words), and indeed their attention to detail with punctuation and handwriting. Doves were busy translating times from the 12 hour to the 24 hour clock - something we would love your help with at home! Little and often is best. We are so impressed with the Year 4 children's work on times tables - the check for your child was either this week or will be next week. Please keep up the daily practice if your child is yet to complete this. Their progress across this year is excellent, and we know this will have a great impact on all of their mathematics in Year 5 and 6. When I visited Year 3, I had a wonderful conversation with a number of children about their book choices. They impressed me with their knowledge of different authors, and what they like to read and why. Please do spend time talking to your children about this too. More than anything, we aim to inspire a love of reading, and this comes through trying lots of different genres and styles of reading. I was lost in the creative and imaginative world of *The Faraway Tree* (Enid Blyton) with one child! In Year 5, children showed determination and perseverance with their weekly opportunity to practice arithmetic. I was impressed with the high expectations where they are all engaging with decimals, fractions, and all four operations. Children are learning to show the level of working that they need to ensure both accuracy and efficiency. Well done to all! High expectations were just as evident in Reception this morning, where children have now been taught the correct, cursive letter formation for every letter (completing v, w, x and z today). Children have learned to ensure that every letter is of a consistent and small size and to control their fine motor skills with care. Please keep up their practice of writing at home, and indeed over the summer (there are many opportunities with postcards, letters, birthday cards, diaries and more!) because it is the regular practice that enables children to write with fluency and confidence. Thank you! Year 1 were working on choosing their own level of challenge (bronze, silver and gold) when I visited their mathematics; it was great to see their responsible choices about the support and challenge they needed when working on finding missing numbers in addition calculations (for example, $\underline{\quad} = 6 - 2$ and $33 = 15 + \underline{\quad}$). There are always additional challenges when children are ready for them and I was pleased to complete some star certificates this morning for children really having a great go at challenging themselves! Last but not least, I visited Year 2 who were busy learning all about Fairtrade as part of their PRE curriculum: they were highly reflective and I cannot promise that they will not be checking your shopping this weekend!

Swimming. We have been delighted to be able to offer Year 2 and 3 swimming across this term, and now to introduce Year 1 to the Simon Balle waters too! Children's enjoyment and water confidence is quite clear indeed across all year groups, which is great. We are fully committed to offering all year groups from Year 1 a term's swimming within their PE curriculum, so please do look forward to news of the new Years 5 and 6 swimming in the autumn term. Little Fishes have been brilliant in supporting our swimming for KS1 - please see attached their [crash course for the summer](#), should this be of interest to families: relevant to all Larch year groups. We would highly recommend this. Whatever your child's ability in the water, we would like to remind you all of how important swimming is as a life skill so please do take any opportunity to practise this, across this term and indeed during the summer. Thank you to all.

Other news

- **News from the PSA.**

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- **School Photographs.** We are pleased to inform you that your year group and class photos are ready to be downloaded. These are available in the following link, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DUVHWkIgOOtA6r9uL3jdMdkYvRNrriGZ?usp=sharing> where you can choose to download either the class photo or the year group photo or both. We are kindly asking for a donation of £5 per download. A reminder please that class/year group photos would normally be much more than this, so if you could respect our request, we would be very appreciative.

We have, of course, not been able to raise funds in the ways that we normally would, and so we greatly appreciate your support. All monies raised directly benefit our school community, but we cannot achieve all we do without your help. Last year, we processed 79 orders and raised £785 - thank you to all that supported last year's bubble photography event.

Please visit our website (head to the 'shop' tab) to make your donation: www.simonballepsa.org.uk
Thank you to our fabulous EduTech team for all of your hard work in creating these photographs which we are organising to be professionally printed and displayed in the Larch centre.

- **Pre-loved Uniform Sale, 25th June.** Weather permitting, we will be offering a preloved uniform sale on Friday 25th June between 3-3.30pm, in the Larch playground. Please do maintain social distancing, sanitise hands and wear a face covering. Whilst items can be paid for in cash on the day, you will also be able to log onto the PSA website where you can purchase online via our 'shop' tab. This is our preferred method. www.simonballe.psa.org.uk
- **Doughie's – Pizza Night, 15th July.** Save the date! After receiving wonderful photos and feedback about Doughie's high-quality pizza kits, we have decided to run this event again. We have arranged another Doughie's Pizza Night for Thursday 15 th July. More details to follow including a pizza competition!
- **Suggested reading for parents.** We are more than aware of our growing Larch, and our wonderful children in Years 3, 4, 5 and soon to be 6. Our all-through knowledge tells us how important it is to be prepared for what is next, and I am grateful to Mrs Southall for highlighting this article which we think could be helpful to many of you as parents:
 - Childhood Day: 9 ways to encourage pre-teen children to stop trying to be grown-ups
Kids seem so desperate to grow-up, when they should be enjoying childish things like play, say experts. Lisa Salmon finds out what we can do about it. Read in The Independent: <https://apple.news/AHg2-lcAuRdyTGEHJmDbGaQ>. Shared from Apple News.
- **Walking bus.** Thanks for your responses and interest in the walking bus. This is just to confirm that following the delay to the government's roadmap we will not be able to trial the walking bus this term. We are optimistic we can start the bus in September. It looks like there is enough demand to run each morning - which will be exciting - with a "bus" of around 15 to 18 children each morning.

Ratios: We will not operate the bus unless we have a maximum of six children per adult volunteer. Using the information provided there are enough volunteers for 2 parents each morning. We are using the time to investigate whether the sixth form can provide some assistance to ensure ratios are maintained at under six children per adult. We are looking to get 2 sixth form volunteers each morning which would mean we are operating well within capacity.

Ad hoc days: Once up and running we will look to set up a walking bus whatsapp group which should allow flexibility for parents to be able to request adhoc days and communicate with us at short notice.

Many thanks for your patience and feel free to reply to the email simonballewalkingbus@gmail.com

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with any further comments or questions.

Dates

- **Week beginning 5th July - parents' week.** On Monday 21st June, at 6pm, you will receive an email allowing you book onto school cloud for your virtual meeting with your child's class teacher. We are looking forward to speaking to you all. You will receive your child's report (on Tapestry for Reception, and on Go for Schools Years 1 - 5) on Friday 2nd July, so any questions or thoughts you have related to this can be discussed in the virtual meeting.
- **Sports Days:** Busy Lizzies Nursery and Reception: Tuesday 13th July 2021; Years 1 - 5: Wednesday 14th July 2021
- **Transition day:** Thursday 8th July. All children in Reception - Year 5 will spend 9am - 12pm in their new classes with their new staff for September 2021. I will write to parents to share the staffing overview for next year on Friday 2nd July in advance. Work has already begun to support children where we know they may need a little extra support to successfully manage this transition.
- **Music opportunities:** In the next few weeks, there is lots to look forward to. We will be making sure that all children have the opportunity to perform. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, we will not be able to invite parents, but we will, as ever, be sending recordings, and ensuring that children have a live audience to perform to in school. Demos will also take place for all year groups from Year 1, so that children can hear string, wind and brass instruments and consider their choices for September 2021. We will keep you fully informed.
- **Year 5 only.** As part of our work on transition to Year 6, Year 5 will be having lunch in the secondary dining room on Tuesday 6th and Tuesday 13th July. If your child normally has a school lunch, then there is nothing you need to do: they will be choosing a main meal from the menu [here](#). If your child normally has a packed lunch, and they/you would like to try a school lunch on these days, then this is no problem. Please just email larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk, saying if they would like a school lunch on one or both of these dates. £2.50 will be added to Parent Pay for you to pay for each meal. If your child wishes to have a packed lunch, this is fine too - they will eat this with their friends in the secondary dining room. They will be eating first at 12pm, which we know they will look forward to!

Wishing you all a happy and fulfilling fortnight ahead!

Best wishes,

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