



Secondary phase newsletter

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today

Friday 16th July 2021

All-through news

Welcome to our end of this academic year's all-through newsletter. This has been a school year like no other and hopefully none to come!

Schools are complex places at the best of times; ensuring that the children receive the highest standards of education, coupled with the mitigations of the pandemic, has proved to be very challenging. We now know that things will start differently in September. There will be no "bubbles" in schools and that children will be able to sensibly mix. This means that the rich menu of clubs, activities, events and opportunities can once again be offered.

Having said that, both Mrs Kirk and I have been so impressed and at times quite emotional as to what has been happening. To see our students, in both phases, so engaged with and obviously enjoying their respective sports days, watching so many of our young people performing at musical events, visiting classrooms and seeing children loving their learning and reading hundreds of the annual report to parents, which celebrate the achievements of our learners throughout the year and the progress that has been made. Thank you to everyone on the way in which the Simon Balle All-through Community spirit has not only survived but that the young people are flourishing.

Goodbyes

This is the time of year when we have to, unfortunately, say goodbye to some of our staff. Mrs Kelleway, who was our Head of Science, is leaving having been with the school for 15 years. Miss Whitby is also leaving to pursue a career outside of teaching and Mr Hay is moving to another school to take up a promoted post. Miss Corbett, again from science, has decided not to return following her maternity leave. Georgina Braggins, in the Larch centre, is leaving to resume her career in music.

Mr Carter who had been with the school for many years has decided to relocate north and finally, Mrs Lawrence, who joined the school in 1996 has decided to spend more time with her family as well as supporting students in maths.

Goodbye too to Mrs Eldred, our strings music teacher who has not only been teaching instrumental lessons and leading concerts for the past 18 years, but her commitment goes deeper in the fact that her own children were students here. Chris, her son is now a professional jazz musician who plays regularly at such prestigious venues such as Ronnie Scotts in London. We wish Liz happiness as she retires and yet spends more time playing her violin, as well as being with her daughter's children.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our "Gap Year" students who have carried out a variety of roles doing this past year both with our primary children and also those in the secondary. Those returning to university and those starting at university, we wish them success; those starting new roles, once again, thank you.

On behalf of colleagues and students, we would like to thank all the staff for their hard work and dedication throughout their time at the school and wish them every success, health and happiness for the future.

We will welcome our new staff in September.



Staffing news continued

We are delighted to announce that our three Alban Federation trainees have been awarded Qualified Teacher Status and have secured their first teaching posts. Ms Devine, Mr Dear and Ms Ponder have been excellent trainees and will be a real asset to the teaching profession going forward. It was a real privilege to attend their award ceremony last week. I would also like to thank their mentors who have been superb in supporting their development, Miss Williams, Ms Iles and Mr Davison.



All-through Sports news

Primary sports days

On Wednesday, children in Years 2-5 took part in their annual Sports Day.

The children began the morning by taking part in individual races including sprints, hurdles, obstacles and a final relay in their houses. We were so impressed to see all of our school values being displayed so that the children got to the finish line with one another, as well as showing determination too! In the afternoon the children took part in a range of different activities including an egg and spoon race, sack race, javelin throw, fill the cup (a little wet!) and tri golf. There could only be one winner of the Sports Day trophy and in our Year 2 and 3 competition this went to Rib and in our Year 4 and 5 competition this also went to Rib. With Rib being overall winners from Wednesday it was a nervous wait to see the result of the Reception and Year 1 competition to see who would be crowned the overall winners of this year! Thank you to everyone who helped to make this a real community event and a really positive way to end the Year. We know from the children's smiles and faces they had a lovely day!

On Thursday, it was the turn of Reception and Year 1. They too loved the carousel of activities, from javelin to fill the cup (even wetter than yesterday!), from tri golf to skipping. It was wonderful to see every child participating, being physically active and having fun. In the second part of the afternoon, it was time for the sprint races - we saw great support for others, lots of determination, enjoyment from all, and some talented runners for the future. Everybody loved the staff race too!

A video will be published very soon sharing photographs from across the Larch sports days - we are sorry parents couldn't be with us, but we hope you enjoy what we have created!

Primary swimming

We have been so impressed with the water confidence that Years 1 - 3 children have shown swimming this term. We are delighted to have put the swimming curriculum back on track following Covid restrictions. All children have received certificates this week, and parents will notice that we have celebrated specific achievements in Years 2 and 3 so that you can see what children are now independently demonstrating in the water. The national aim is for all children to be able to swim 25m independently by the end of Year 6, so this is what we are building towards for all. We have lots of exciting plans for swimming next year, where every year group from Years 1 - 6 will continue to swim for one term of the year, and where we hope to introduce triathlon too - watch this space!

Secondary sports day

On Friday 9th July we hosted a very enjoyable and successful secondary Sports day in glorious conditions. Students wore PE kit to school and were prepared for a day of sport. The day was split up into two parts; the morning activities and the whole school sports afternoon.

In the morning each year group were allocated a designated hour for sport and all students participated in one or more of the following activities:

- Long Jump
- Standing triple jump
- Windball throw

Simon Balle All-through school



- Tug-o-war
- Volleyball
- 300m and 800m

There were many highlights throughout the morning's events, but one which encapsulated the participation and resilience of our students was in the Year 9 boys 800m where close to 40 boys dipped under 3mins 30secs, a phenomenal achievement by all. The Year 10 girls 300m provided great excitement with all 3 athletes having competed at County level, with A. Pereira winning in the end.

In the afternoon, the whole school descended onto the Astro for the sprint events. This provided a great opportunity to bring the Simon Balle community together for the first time in a very long time. Logistically we ensured that students remained in their bubbles throughout and in doing so remained safe and able to enjoy the festival of sport. The events that took place were the 60m, 120m and 4 x 60m relay races. Probably the race of the day came in the Year 8 Girls 60m where all 6 athletes crossed the line together and gave our place judges a tough job to do. In the House competition, New became House Sports Champions for 2021 and the rest of the results were as follows;

1. New	291pts
2. Rib	265
3. Beane	255
4. Lea	243
5. Mimram	230
6. Ashbourne	208

A big thank you to all of those who supported the day and made the event possible.

PE pages of the Simon Balle website

Over the past few months, the PE department have been working diligently on developing the All through pages of the Sports website with the aim of improving communication between staff, students, parents and the community. We hope that you find this site useful and over time we will be developing this further and adding more information. Please visit our new Simon Balle Sports website on <https://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/sport/> and we would welcome any feedback. If you have any questions or queries, please contact us at our new email address Sport@simonballe.herts.sch.uk

Daire Brennan
Director of Sport

Music

Congratulations to all musicians for their achievements this year. We have held over 240 individual music exams. This is an amazing achievement, showing perseverance and hard work through all the challenges. As part of this, seven Year 13 musicians have achieved a diploma at a standard of first or second-year music college. To have this number of students taking these very challenging exams is unique in any school and we cannot underestimate the enormity of what has been achieved. Our senior musicians have also achieved 29 Grade 8s between them, most with a merit or distinction. In the Larch, 53 musicians took a music medal this year and several have achieved Grade 1 or 2. This again is a phenomenal achievement. Every exam result at every level is something to be so proud of and the numbers involved make us unique as a school.

Last weekend we were fortunate to have two outdoor concerts to celebrate what some of our musicians have achieved. Enabling the Concert Band and Big Band to perform allowed our brilliant Year 13 musicians to celebrate their achievements and say goodbye. Having this 'final moment' for them was so important and it was wonderful to see everyone there enjoying the amazing music. The recordings and pictures will be on the school website early next week for all to enjoy. The evenings were very emotional for so many, both musicians and families. All our musicians throughout the school are amazing, and it was wonderful to hear about how music is such an important part of their lives.



Team Music has triumphed this year and it has been wonderful to see and hear how families, musicians and the team in school have worked together, in-person and online. The musical achievements that we have had have been wonderful to see and hear. Across all phases, music has kept going and we are so grateful for all the support. It is by working together that we have achieved what we have.

Looking forward, we continue to adapt and ensure that our musical opportunities continue to grow. I am delighted that so many young people are learning an instrument in the Larch, and that we have so many musicians across the school who want to be part of Team Music. Thank you to everyone in Team Music for coming together to create incredible music and wonderful memories. To those with us next year - concerts, performances and experiences will be back. Keep practising and see you then. To those leaving - thank you. Thank you for your support, thank you for your musicianship and thank you for the memories.

<https://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/music/>

<https://twitter.com/simonballemusic>

Mark Taylor
Director of Music

All-through Home learning policy

Mr Finch (Assistant headteacher) and I have been pleased to have had the opportunity to work on this policy throughout this academic year. We were delighted to receive 650 parent responses to the google survey we conducted across the all-through. As well as this, we have received such useful feedback from staff and students. Rather than try to summarise any more here, we recommend you visit our new webpage here:

<https://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/home-learning/> You will find our clear principles, rooted in academic research and active research from what you have all shared with us, here. You will also see our clear table, showing the progression of home learning across our all-through school and what your child can expect in September, from Reception all the way to Year 13. The full policy can be read too. We thank you in anticipation of your support.

All-through enrichment

Years, 6, 7 and 8

Beginning in September 2021, we are very excited to launch our Wednesday Enrichment Programme for Years 6, 7 and 8. This programme is designed to ignite a passion for learning in students as well as to assist them to develop wider skills, flexibility and resourcefulness. We know that enrichment gives children opportunities to try new and varied activities that develop character, resilience and motivation, and encourage them to pursue wider goals which is why we feel this wider-ranging programme will be an intrinsic part of the school experience. We have been so thrilled to see the take-up of this fantastic opportunity where students will have the opportunity to enjoy, amongst other things, clubs such as STEM, Art and The World Around Us. The clubs run each Wednesday from 3.20 - 4.20 pm.

Today, email confirmation has been sent to all students who have a place at a club for Autumn 1. If you have not received confirmation, please do not worry; we will be subsequently sending invitations for Autumn 2 and beyond; all students who have requested a place will receive one for at least one-half term of the academic year.

Sixth form enrichment

As we look forward to returning to some form of normality from September, we are excited to re-launch the many enrichment opportunities available in order to participate in the co-curricular life of the school. Not only does engagement in these opportunities provide our Sixth Form with the foundations for a strong Post-18 application, but also develops the character and personality traits that will enable them to be successful in the wider



community. Whether it be leadership roles, volunteering activities, extra-curricular sports or music or just learning interesting new skills and hobbies, these opportunities have been designed to improve students' communication skills, confidence, teamwork, resilience, responsibility, innovation and enable them to become role models in the Simon Balle community. Please look forward to more details shared in September 2021.

Explorers (Years 3 - 5) and KS1 clubs

All parents will have now received their confirmation for Explorers clubs in Autumn 1. From Tag rugby to calligraphy, from orchestra to choir, from dance/aerobics to badminton, and more - we are excited to welcome students to a new year. KS1 club invitations will also go out in September, as we begin clubs for children in Years 1 and 2 in Autumn 2 when they are settled into their new year groups. Thanks to all staff - an exciting year ahead!

Timings of the school day: secondary

This past year has meant that we have had to change various timings to allow the “bubbles” to move. With the removal of bubbles, we can now return to some more normal routines. From September the school day will be tweaked to:

8.30 All students on site
8.35 All students to walk to the room for lesson 1
8.40 Lesson 1
9.40 Lesson 2

Break (10.40- 11.00)

11.00 Lesson 3
12.00 Lesson 4

Lunch (1.00- 1.45)

1.40 Warning bell; students move to form rooms
1.45 Tutor time
2.10 Lesson 6

3.10- Formal end of the school day- enrichment activities to take place

Timings of the school day: primary

In the primary phase, all year groups will continue with a soft start 8.40 am - 8.50 am each morning. **All children must be in school by 8.50 am please when the first lesson will begin.** 8.40 am - 8.50 am will be used for valuable activities such as early morning work, children returning to feedback from marking during the previous day and early reading. The day will end at 3.15 pm, and classroom doors will be kept open until 3.20 pm, as we, of course, understand that parents may be picking up at two or more pick-up points.

As many of our families now have children in both primary and secondary phases of the school, it is important that we clarify pick up expectations:

- Children in Reception - Year 2 must be picked up by a parent please (or please let us know in the communication book in the Larch if they are being picked up by a grandparent or other known adult)
- Years 3+ may be picked up by a sibling in the secondary phase, if parental permission is granted. This can be given through emailing larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk



- As we strive to support children's developing independence, Year 5 may walk home independently from January of the relevant year, with parental permission (as above). This will vary from family to family, dependent on the address and other factors, but it is there as an option if families think this is right for them.
- We will continue to ensure that we work hard as a school to support children with all aspects of their developing independence and responsibility, through our learning for life curriculum (for example, road safety, e-safety and more).

A change to 'Test and Trace'

As a result of feedback from parents, NHS Test and Trace have introduced household accounts. This allows parents to save their children's details to their own user accounts so parents can report results for multiple members in the household more quickly and easily.

When reporting self-test results parents will now be offered the opportunity to create a household account, which should take no more than 2 minutes. Parents can then add all household members to their account, enabling them to save time when reporting all future self-test results.

Uniform

Please can we remind all parents of the need for a full correct uniform from the very first day in September. Not only does this mean correct clothing (new Y10, please purchase the burgundy jumper) but also no jewellery, no nail polish or false nails; if earrings, small studs and not hoops or rings, and correct hair colour and cut (not shaven or extreme short cuts). Correct shoes should be worn. These expectations are incredibly important across our all-through school so please check <https://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/daily-life/uniform/> with any queries. It is important that every phase of the school is in line with expectations; so, for example, the Simon Balle rucksack in the primary phase is only for children in Years 3+.

An exciting new opportunity for groups of our students as well as a job vacancy!

Simon Balle All-through School will be one of only five schools in Hertfordshire who will be working with the national organisation "MCR Coaching" (motivation, commitment and resilience focus). This is a school-based mentoring programme, which has been adopted throughout Scotland, over many years, and shown great impact. MCR coaching are now working with several local authorities in England, one of which is Hertfordshire. Whilst mainly focused upon secondary aged students, the programme also works with Year 6 prior to transition. We are so excited to be asked to be part of this programme. It supports young people, including some of our most vulnerable students, to realise their potential through education - echoing our own ethos here at Simon Balle.

In the late summer, we will be looking to appoint our school-based "pathways coordinator", advertised on our school website, as well as "Teach in Herts" - <https://www.teachinherts.com/>. This will be a full-time job, with a salary of around £25k.

If you are passionate about supporting young people to realise their potential, this may be the role for you or someone you know.

In addition, the programme is dependent upon local community members (and employees) to become trained mentors for those students in KS4.

If this has interested you, you might like in the meantime to do a little research. <https://mcrpathways.org/>



Secondary news

"Natasha's Law" update from our caterers

From 1st October, there is a substantial change to the law in terms of the food labelling requirements for pre-packaged goods for direct sale. This change requires all pre-packaged goods to be fully labelled with both allergen information and the individual ingredients of each item offered for sale. The law is also known as Natasha's Law.

Our catering partner, Accent Catering, makes all their pre-packaged goods fresh everyday on site. During the last few weeks of this term, they have been busy training their teams, introducing new recipes, packaging and labelling systems to ensure they are fully prepared to comply with these new regulations. This affects all sandwiches, bread products, pre-wrapped bakery goods, salad boxes and in fact, any food item that is offered for sale in a sealed package or container.

When our students return in September, they will see new products in new packaging and new labelling. The recipes have been developed to meet the needs of most of our students but if your child cannot find what they are looking for, they only need to ask one of the catering team who will be delighted to assist them. The extensive allergen controls remain in place but the team remains committed to providing special diets and requirements on request if they are not covered by the core menu.

We look forward to welcoming all our students to the dining room when the term starts in September.

HCC need your help to gather views on vaccinations for young people aged 12-17

We are waiting for a decision from the Government on offering a vaccination programme for young people aged 12-17. In the meantime, HCC is running a survey to gather feedback from young people and parents and carers which they hope will provide a better understanding of their views and plan effectively should the government decide to go ahead.

The survey link is now live: <https://surveys.hertfordshire.gov.uk/s/PEC871/> Please note that the survey closes on 22 July.

And finally, may we thank you for your continuing support and so much encouragement over the past months. Our young people have been a great credit to the local community and a source of real energy and hope across the all-through school. Secondary parents should expect a message towards the end of the summer holidays confirming the start of term arrangements once we know what the situation is. May we wish you and your families a restful and enjoyable break.

Mrs Saunders (headteacher) and Mrs Kirk (Vice-Principal)