

# Primary phase newsletter

*Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today*

Friday 10th September 2021

## All-through news

A very warm welcome to all of our Simon Balle families, especially to those joining us this term; in Reception, Year 7 and Year 12 classes, those starters in other years, along with staff. We wish everyone a happy, safe and successful year ahead. We are focusing on our school value of "respect" over the next few weeks and assembly themes reflect this. It is an exciting time to refocus and reconnect our community for this is the first time we can truly call ourselves an "All- Through School". For those who do not know our history, we were approached by Hertfordshire County Council to expand in order to create primary places for local children, as other primary schools were full. Now our very first cohort (2015) are now in Year 6 and it has been a tremendous joy and privilege to both get to know them and work with their parents who also share our vision of the benefits of all-through education, despite the fact that there are still only 2 all through schools in Hertfordshire and under 250 nationally.

The new term has started very well with students returning, ready to learn. This has included smart uniform and correct PE kit; please let this continue along with a note from home if the incorrect shoes need to be worn. A reminder at secondary level to ensure that the rules are followed regarding both jewelry and make up. The Government's instruction to lateral flow test secondary students twice as term starts was carried out both effectively and efficiently; thanks to our own testing team as well as the students arriving promptly. We now can restore our library space and begin to use it as intended as a stimulating learning space.

## Staffing

We warmly welcome the following staff to our school -

Adam Quirke	Assistant Head
Guy Peters	Teacher Y6
Hayley Cannon	Head of PRE
Laura Morgan	Head of Chemistry
Alison Arnold	Primary teacher
Judith Picken	Science
Rosie Dean	TA English
Sarah Gibbins	TA primary
Laura Peters	TA primary
Malcolm Peach	TA / brass teacher
Faye Carter	TA maths
Catherine Ward	TA maths
Freddie Welch	Gap year student
Trixie Wraith	Gap year student
Aiden Read	TA PE

Emma Ponder, Laura Devine, Stephanie Modi and Elizabeth Warburton are joining us as Early Career teachers and Suzy Matuszak has returned from her maternity leave. We also have two trainee teachers, Amy Tridgell and Georgina Wighton.

We hope everyone settles in quickly and enjoys becoming part of our thriving community.

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### **Enrichment Wednesdays**

This year 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.

This venture started this week and staff from a range of subjects have come together to provide a wonderful array of experiences ranging from Humanities club, where students' curiosity and interest will be cultivated through geography, history, PRE, politics, psychology and sociology, to 'Whiffs and Whams' in STEM club, plus much more besides. To see our Year 6s, 7s and 8s working so closely together and witness the capturing of so many imaginations was really special.

### **School Parliament 2021-2022**

Our Head Boy and Girl (Ewan and Amelie) have been in assemblies this week launching the all-through School Parliament for 2021-2022. This exciting body aims to give a real voice to the individual student, year group and student body as a whole. It also aims to educate our students on the power of democracy, the democratic process and active citizenship. In addition there will be focus groups on the following: literacy, the environment and sustainability, diversity, culture and race. I am sure you would agree that the students have chosen worthwhile, topical issues to discuss, debate and initiate change across the school.

The School Parliament will be chaired by Ewan and Amelie and will involve representation from Year 5 to Year 13 and will be closely aligned to the primary phase Parliament. There will be some fantastic opportunities to develop leadership skills and work with students across the school. The School Parliament will involve many of our stakeholders including SLT and the governing body.

As Jesse Jackson said 'Deliberation and debate is the way you stir the soul of our democracy'.

### **Music Hall of Fame**

We are delighted this year to launch our 'Simon Balle Music Hall of Fame'. This is a list of 100 pieces of some of the best known and most loved pieces of classical music, and we are asking all members of our school community to vote for their top three from this list. We will count down our top 20 as voted for by you, and reveal one place each week. Please cast your votes by clicking on the link here to a google form:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSevqnJt7U47Wp62bFluwbjBhWdHp9CXmi93Cn\\_3CeLJxRuSjQ/view\\_form?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSevqnJt7U47Wp62bFluwbjBhWdHp9CXmi93Cn_3CeLJxRuSjQ/view_form?usp=sf_link)

We have made a spotify playlist for you of our Hall of Fame pieces so do have a listen and discover/ rediscover some great pieces of music: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/39aeNJ0J2bkGeVJYuF4Wrp?si=e5e04aee022240af>  
Get your votes in asap as the deadline is midnight on Sunday 12th September!

### **Fun Run**

We are pleased to announce that our annual all-through Fun Run will take place on Tuesday 28th September. Mr Pooley will send out a letter nearer the time outlining all the details.

### **Remote Learning**

Please note that if a student (of any age, Reception - Year 13) is absent but still available to access material to learn, work will be provided by the class teacher. For students Year 3 - Year 13 this will be via Google Classroom. For younger students, learning will be communicated to parents through Go for schools and soon-to-come Tapestry (Reception). For Years 3 - 13, the use of Google Classroom may take the form of an invitation to a live lesson, work that can be completed independently or a combination of both. Work will have clear instructions and all secondary students must ensure that they have joined the appropriate subject Google Classroom.

We are in a position of great strength when called upon to deliver remote learning, or when a blended learning approach is required. We recognise that some students, for example, students with special educational needs

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and disabilities (SEND), and/or our youngest students, may not be able to access remote education without support from adults at home. We acknowledge the difficulties this may place on families, and we will work with parents and carers to support those students. To ensure that work is accessible to all, this may mean providing a different activity.

Our way of working is always changing and it is great to see so many students using the Google Classroom facility for home learning (homework), as well as remote class learning. We will, of course, continue to update you if any of these circumstances change.

### **Car park**

Please remember that you cannot drop off or pick up on the school site - use the car park next to the fire station in Old London Road. You can obtain a permit from the Larch reception which allows you to park free for 1 hour twice daily.

**Parents must not access and use Harrison Lane in the private Estate of Balls Park to drop off and pick up.** We have received a lot of complaints from the Balls Park residents about this so in future do not use Balls Park to either drop off or pick up.

### **Libraries**

Over the past few months we have received many generous donations of books for both our Larch and secondary libraries. It is going to take us some time to sort them so currently we are not able to accept any more donations. We will let you know when we are able to accept donations again. Thank you for your generosity.

### **Dogs on the school site**

We recognise that dogs are an important part of family life for many in the school community, and as such are often included in day-to-day activities such as walking children to and from school. However, others may find the presence of dogs in the playground and school grounds stressful, even frightening particularly with younger children, and even well-behaved dogs can behave unpredictably when placed in a busy, noisy and crowded environment. Therefore school policy is that no dogs are allowed on school premises (either on a lead or carried). We would appreciate your co-operation by not bringing your pet to school.

### **Vacancies**

We are currently recruiting for a TA to join our English department and a Student Pathways Coordinator. Full details can be found on our vacancies tab along with full application instructions.

Occasionally we do have openings for people with specific skills so if you, or someone you know, feel that you have something specific to offer our school community please do contact us. We may not have something immediately available but could well have in the future,

Our new cleaning company, Birkin, are also recruiting for cleaners to join the school team. Please contact them direct for full details - <https://www.birkingroup.co.uk/team-birkin/vacancies>

### **Primary news**

With so much important all-through news to share, I promise to write with more detailed information about primary teaching and learning in our next issue, a fortnight from now. What I can reassure you of is that primary children, in our full and thriving Larch centre, have settled back so wonderfully well - including especially our new Reception cohort. Though we look forward to being able to invite parents to join us in the Larch, we are pleased to share that it is full of positivity and hope, calm and purposeful learning, enthusiasm and fun, and a great sense of community. We have particularly enjoyed the re-launch of key stage assemblies (one key stage now fills our hall!) - where teachers introduce and share important stories to illustrate our values on a Wednesday; and where both our Simon Balle values and academic aspirations are celebrated on a Friday; Tuesday singing assemblies

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for KS1 will commence next week (as a result of the enjoyment of these, over 70 children have joined our KS2 choir!) and Tuesday assemblies for KS2 are fully aligned across the all-through school, focussing on local, national and international news; global events; matters of great cultural importance and religious (across the major religions) significance. I have been delighted to share in the achievements of individual children at such an early point in term - we are very proud of the unique contribution that every child makes to Simon Balle.

### Google classroom

Google classroom is an excellent platform for learning - whether in school (Year 6 are using the classroom for many lessons now they are becoming so familiar with using their chrome books daily) or for home learning (Years 3 - 6). We understand that parents and children in KS2 may need some further support with using Google classroom and so, as well as the support children are receiving in school, we will be advertising a parent workshop for google classroom use very soon. In the meantime, we have attached here four instruction sheets that may well help you to get started. For Year 3, who are new to google classroom, we will continue to share home learning through Go for schools for now, but this will move across when all have had the time and opportunity to adjust. Please do ask for our help - no question is too silly!

### KS1 and KS2 extra-curricular activities

We are so appreciative of so much positive parental feedback in relation to the activities that we are able to provide for your children after school. Explorers (KS2) is off to a flying start with activities this half term including brush lettering and calligraphy, tag rugby, dance, maths reasoning and logic puzzles, table tennis, football, get creative in the Sycamore room and more. Choir, orchestra and karate to begin very soon! We will be writing very soon to parents with children in Years 1 and 2 with a similarly diverse KS1 offer, beginning from the second half of the autumn term. We remain indebted to our partnership with Busy Lizzies, who are providing breakfast club across the Larch (from a healthy and filling breakfast, to a great range of indoor and outdoor activities), and a stimulating and nurturing after-school daily club for EY and KS1 children. In our next issue, I will be including some quotes from the children about their experiences of clubs before and after school!

### Reception/Early Years

We are so grateful that our Reception parents are already engaging with us so well - 54 families joining our virtual parent workshop earlier this week. In every year group of the Larch (and beyond), the partnership between home and school to support children's wellbeing and learning is so significant and valued. We will now be completing a baseline assessment for our Reception children - this is nothing new or nothing to worry about (nor anything the children will know about!) but incredibly important for us in supporting them in the first steps of their learning journey at Simon Balle. There are some national changes to the process of these baseline assessments taking place this year. Parents can find out more here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1004560/2021\\_Information\\_for\\_parents\\_reception\\_baseline\\_assessment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004560/2021_Information_for_parents_reception_baseline_assessment.pdf)

### A few practical reminders please:

- **Simon Balle book bags need to be brought to school every day for children in Reception to Year 2.** We are supporting children to develop excellent reading habits in which they read every day at home (please record this reading in their reading records every day), and from which we can establish a great routine of reading in school - all children will be read with at least once a week, and books will be changed when needed (when children have secured both decoding and comprehension of a book). **Only children in Year 3 + can have a Simon Balle rucksack**, where their reading habits become, gradually, more independent. Please ask any specific questions to your child's class teacher.
- We provide **all resources** needed for children's learning Reception - Year 4. They do not need to bring anything to school except for a small keyring on their bookbag for younger children, and a water bottle. In Year 5, we ask children to bring their own pencil case so that they can become increasingly responsible for their own equipment. They still do not need to bring anything other than a pencil case please!
- Children in Reception - Year 2 are provided with a range of **fruit for a snack** at break time daily. They do not need to bring any food at all to school. From Years 3 - 6, children may bring a break time snack. In

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Year 3 and 6, this should be a piece of fruit. In Years 4 - 5, where children have a later lunch, a more substantial, yet healthy, break time snack may be needed: for example, breadsticks, dried fruit bags, oat or yoghurt bars, rice cakes etc. Please remember that we are a completely nut free school.

- For reasons of safety for all, please ensure that your children (of any age) **do not use the trim trail equipment or playground equipment in the Larch playground before or after school**; these resources are used in wonderful ways throughout our school days!
- And, finally, a reminder please that **punctuality** is essential for the smooth running of a busy and fulfilling day. Children can enter school from 8.40am and should be going into school no later than 8.50am when learning begins. At the end of the day, all children should be collected at 3.15pm (no later than 3.20pm where parents are collecting their children from different external doors). Thank you in anticipation for your support.

#### **Dates for the first half of Autumn term:**

- **Monday 13th September: Roald Dahl day.** Each year group from Reception - Year 4 are immersing themselves in a wonderful Roald Dahl text. Please see more details for our Literary Cannon here: <https://www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk/curriculum-overview/english/learning-to-read/>
- **Tuesday 14th September: Welcome to the Larch!** Live open classrooms for Reception and Year 1; virtual yet very important welcomes for Years 2 - 6. Please try to ensure that at least one parent joins for every child (year groups are staggered across times to ensure that nobody misses out) - important and practical information will be shared, with plenty of opportunities for questions. All links shared via email to parents addresses.
- **Monday 27th September. 9am.** Reception parents live workshop in relation to phonics, reading and Tapestry. Please arrange for one parent per family to attend for vital information for your child's learning during the year ahead. **Please note that further parent workshops will be added for other Larch year groups - please watch this space!**
- **Tuesday 28th September.** All-through fun-run. More information to follow!
- **Monday 4th October. Harvest celebration at All Saints church.** Years 1 - 6 children only.
- **Week beginning Monday 18th October:** Parents' evening meetings for Reception - Year 6 (to be held virtually via school cloud).
- **Half term-** Monday 25th - Friday 29th October 2021.

*Wishing you all an exciting and fulfilling fortnight ahead!*

*Best wishes,*

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