

Primary phase newsletter

Friday 19th November 2021

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today



All-through news

Last week was a really special one; metaphorically it felt like “spring” as suddenly after what has seemed like a long bleak winter, everything seemed to happen.

Firstly there was the Larch concert, with over 100 either singing or playing an instrument. It was lovely to see so many parents supporting their children and everyone commented on the fun which was had. Thursday was a really special day; two remembrance ceremonies outside, readings and music, including the sensitive playing of the “Last Post” by Jack, followed by the two minutes silence. Then after school, Big Band rehearsals, Karate, and Year 6 football and netball matches. The community was once again alive and buzzing, with everyone working together. This is what it should be and we look forward to exciting times ahead!

Anti-bullying week

This week students have been involved in a series of events to mark the national anti-bullying week. This has also coincided with the launch of the T-Cup app to support student and staff well-being.



Health
Happiness
Success

Remembrance

It was wonderful that our whole school community came together to take part in our Remembrance Service. This was a solemn event and our students behaved impeccably.



The secondary service focussed on the Afghan war and the readings by our Headboy and Headgirl reflected this. The music department played beautifully and the Last Post, played by Jack Emsley was very moving. The Larch students came over to the secondary for their service and learned how remembrance and our school values are intertwined. The geography staff and students on their field trip held their own service at Walton-on-the-Naze.

Primary News

Teaching and Learning

At Simon Balle, we believe that the curriculum must be broad and ambitious for every child, and this includes every subject in the curriculum and our inspiring extra-curricular provision too. It has been an exciting fortnight, which Mrs Saunders has referenced above. As well as the moving all-through remembrance ceremonies (in which Larch children so impeccably demonstrated our value of respect), we must celebrate music, sport, food technology, our literary canon and more. Years 3 and 4 came back buzzing from their respective Wodson Park trips (so great to begin to have trips back!), and the Years 5 and 6 netball and football matches at home were a joy - such discipline, advanced skills shown to play so effectively as teams, as well as the core sporting skills demonstrated so well. In music, Alex shared his 'frog dance' cello piece to the delight of the whole Larch in Celebration assembly - it is simply wonderful that Alex is playing to such a high standard in Year 6, with such musicality too - thank you Alex!

As Mrs Saunders has written above, the Larch musicians performed with such joy last week - across both choirs and strings, wind and brass - great to have concerts back, and to this exceptional standard we are grateful to children, parents and music staff, thank you! Below you will find some details of further exciting events to come - as always, thank you for your support as parents.

Reception Nativity

The Reception classes are thrilled to announce the date for their nativity, 'A Midwife Crisis', on the 14th December at 10 o'clock in the Larch Hall. Due to Covid restrictions, we welcome one parent from each family; however, the performance will be recorded for parents, grandparents and all to watch virtually. We thank you in advance for your understanding of this. The children have been so excited finding out their parts and learning the songs together. All children will have a part, and at least one line which we will be sending home to practise. You should have hopefully had a slip of paper informing you of your child's part and the costume that they will be requiring by 19th November. We look forward to seeing you on the 14th! We promise that the magic of Christmas always starts here!

Year 6 Macbeth trip

We are very excited to announce that each class in Year 6 will be rehearsing and performing their own production of Shakespeare's Macbeth at The Shakespeare Schools Festival in London!

On Tuesday 22nd February (Owls Class) and Wednesday 23rd February (Eagles class) we will be taking Year 6 to perform Macbeth and watch other schools' performances at The Shakespeare Schools Festival at the Artsdepot theatre, North London, N12 OGA. Year 6 will be studying Macbeth as part of their literary canon in English, so this is a fantastic opportunity for our students to apply what they have learnt into an immersive performance on stage in a professional theatre in front of a live audience.

Visit from a former BMX World Champion

We are delighted to be able to welcome Mike Mullen, former UK & World Halfpipe Champion from BMX Academy to our school on Wednesday 2nd February. Mike will be visiting us to deliver a growth mindset assembly for the whole of our primary phase which includes a BMX trick demonstration and run practical BMX workshops afterwards for children in Year 5.



Year 5 children will have the opportunity on the bikes to learn bike control challenges, small jumps and tricks and growth Mindset and Resilience themed messaging. The workshops include low level tricks which are achievable, yet allow children to challenge themselves, taking small risks to build confidence and self belief. We know the children will be really excited for the opportunity and hope it is a really successful day with lots of fun had by all.

Use of social media and whatsapp groups for communication

We value and understand the importance of WhatsApp groups (and/or similar) for communication between parents. We know how helpful these can be for reminders, lost items, and, with Covid particularly, virtual connection between families. I know, first hand, how helpful this has been for all for the WhatsApp farm group, so thank you for the collaboration between all. That said, on behalf of parents and to all parents, we are writing to remind of the importance of care and respect when communicating to these large class groups. If any parent has a question or a concern that is best directed to us at Simon Balle, please do so: through Larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk if you are not sure where to contact, or directly to class teachers, phase leaders or to myself (kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk). We are always happy to be quickly back in touch to talk and to be proactive and positive if an individual child needs our support. In some groups, parents have contacted us in recent weeks as they are feeling uncomfortable with the content shared by some parents (expressed as inappropriate content or language or just simply not the right forum). We would appreciate everybody's work going forwards to ensure that communication is helpful to all in the group, and modelling our Simon Balle values - to which we wish our children to follow our lead - in respect, kindness and responsibility. Thank you.

Explorers parents' questionnaires

Thank you so much to all Explorers parents for your time in completing our survey. The feedback is really valued by us. To provide you with a summary:

- 97% agree that Explorers provides a broad range of activities that children and parents can select from (73.5% strongly agreeing with this statement)
- 97% agree that they feel confident that their child is safe and well looked after at Explorers (94.1% strongly agreeing)
- 97% agree that their child is benefitting from the activities they have chosen, both with skill development and enjoyment (79.4% strongly agreeing)
- 97.1% agree that the administration of Explorers is effective, including communication with parents (76.5% strongly agreeing)
- 100% agree that Explorers provides good value for money (82.4% strongly agreeing)

Thank you for the many, many personalised and positive comments too. Most importantly, a huge

thank you to Miss Norbury and Mr Leonard, and the whole staff team, for providing this clearly very valued extra-curricular provision. One area that we will take away to think about is the food on offer. Whilst this survey question was still relatively positive, there were 44% of parents neither agreeing nor disagreeing that their child is happy with the snack and food options. We will explore this further with the children, and, whilst we are unable to provide a full, hot meal, we may well be able to make adaptations if these are needed. Thank you again to all.

Music News

Last week's Larch celebration of music was an amazing occasion, bringing back live music. The quality of music, team work on display and supportive atmosphere was amazing to see and hear. Some of our Larch music ambassadors have written reviews!

Henry, Year 6:

My favourite piece I played was 'G-force Blues', I think that everyone else also played well like the choir and the junior choir. It was fun when the flute and clarinet played Uptown Funk and We Will Rock You. It is amazing that there are so many people that play an instrument in Simon Balle.

Summer, Year 6,

In the concert, I really enjoyed not only showing everyone my violin and choir pieces, but listening to the other people performing. I was really proud of everyone and I remember thinking that they had all achieved so much. As well as this, lots of the audience was involved. In the wind band, I liked how they got the audience to clap along. When I was playing the violin, my favourite piece was probably one called 'G-force Blues'. While I was with the Larch Senior Choir, I really liked 'Speechless'.

Holly, Year 6

The part that I enjoyed the most was when I played the oboe in the Larch Wind Band, because the audience became a part of one of the pieces, 'Uptown Funk'. The favourite piece I played was 'G-force Blues' on the violin, because of the double stopping at the end! I am certainly proud of what I've achieved, my parents are too. I'm sure everyone else is. Personally, I think the highlight of the concert was the Senior Choir singing 'Speechless', and 'Amazing Place', I'm not sure which one was better. I was in most of the ensembles and choirs, except one: the Junior Choir. I

thought that they were great at the songs they sang, and I think they were really cute! They definitely sent a message across.



Erin, Year 6

I loved the concert last night and it was so fun for people to watch and to play. I really enjoyed playing the flute with the other wind band! My favourite piece that I played would definitely be 'Uptown Funk' and 'We Will Rock the Larch!' As I loved it when the whole audience joined in! I was very proud that I remembered my solo and sang it! I asked a few people and they said the

highlight was when the KS2 choir sang 'Speechless'. I also really enjoyed the KS1 choir as they were so great (and the message that came across). I was so glad that nothing went wrong and it was brilliant! Thank you so much for putting it together.

Music Hall of Fame update.

We have been counting down our Hall of Fame top 20 pieces each week, and students have enjoyed listening to these at the start of their assemblies. So far we have revealed the following:

In 20th place is... Bolero by Maurice Ravel.

In 19th place is... Le Onde by Ludovico Einaudi.

In 18th place is... Nimrod by Elgar.

In 17th place is... Jupiter by Holst

In 16th place is... Raindrop Prelude by Chopin.

In 15th place is... Rhapsody in Blue by Gershwin.

In 14th place is... Hallelujah Chorus by Handel.

In 13th place is... Dance of The Sugar Plum Fairy by Tchaikovsky.

This year we will have our first ever Larch Carol Service, involving the String Orchestra, Larch Wind Band and both choirs. Tuesday 14th December, 6pm at All Saints' Church in Hertford. We look forward to welcoming our primary community to this event.



Dates

Tuesday 23rd Nov	Y4 film night
Wednesday 24th Nov	6th form open evening
Thursday 25th Nov	Y7-Y11 nasal flu immunisation
Friday 26th Nov	Occasional day 1
Monday 29th Nov	Occasional day 2
Wednesday 1st to 3rd Dec	Y12 geography field trip
Saturday 4th Dec	Frost Fair
Monday 13th Dec	Secondary Carol Service (7pm)
Tuesday 14th Dec	Larch Carol Service (6pm)

Wednesday 15th Dec	Larch Christmas lunch
Thursday 16th Dec	Year 1 panto trip
Thursday 16th Dec	Secondary Christmas lunch
Friday 17th Dec	End of term - early finish
Wednesday 5th Jan	Start of Spring term

Wishing you all an exciting and fulfilling fortnight ahead!

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