

# Primary phase newsletter

Friday 17th December 2021

*Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today*



## All-through news

The past week has been a special one for so many members of the Simon Balle Community and whilst we all understand that care still needs to be taken, there has been a real feeling of festive normality.

Christmas activities take a special meaning for our youngest children; from the reception nativity play, to Christmas lunch and the Carol Services. In secondary we share some of these traditions; this year, our Year 7 and 8 cohorts attended the Carol Service at All Saints Church and were inspired by the music and the readings. The previous evening families joined us at All Saints Church, and although not as packed as in previous years (and with everyone wearing a mask) the music, carols and festive spirit was really appreciated by everyone.

Primary school lunch was served on Wednesday, whilst the secondary Christmas lunch (almost Hogwarts style) on Thursday, served over 740 meals. Turkey, or the vegetarian option, with all the trimmings was thoroughly enjoyed by all. A special thanks must go to our catering staff who have provided more than 1000 Christmas dinners this week!



Our school vision of "Creating tomorrow's citizens today" is never far from anything that is planned. Music for the last 20+ years has played such a vital role in our community, enabling young people to enjoy and learn an instrument, opportunities to join with others in a choir, the joy of performing and for some, the dream of taking music one step higher into a career or vocation. For all, this musical experience stays with them for so many years, as it forms friendships and for parents brings so much joy. Seven years ago, our vision was for this to be integral to our primary planning. And so the vision is now becoming a reality and the Carol Concert on Tuesday night was an emotional testament to this. With a large strings section, a concert band and vast choirs (in all, there must have been 70 children performing) plus wonderfully confident readers, we along with so many proud parents celebrated the Christmas spirit at All Saints Church.



Music does not automatically happen; hours of planning, practice and rehearsals together add up to the very highest standards we witnessed both at the primary and the secondary concert (equally impressive numbers).

Years 7 and 8, then were invited the following day to the concert, with the whole of "the Larch" attending on Wednesday morning.

A huge thank you to all performers alike and also to “team music” for their wonderful dedication, commitment and hard work in inspiring our children and young people to be such great musicians.

### **Frost Fair news**

A huge thank you to all those who worked so hard to make this happen, as it was a great success. Thank you also to those families and students who both came and enjoyed the stalls and games, and also those who contributed. We raised over £5000, towards school funds.

We would like to thank Yvonne Adshead for all her work and commitment to the school over the years. She started at the school September 2007 and joined SLT in 2012. Yvonne has line managed a number of departments and taken a very active role in the training of new teachers, working with the Alban Federation. Her contribution to the Senior Leadership Team has been invaluable and we will miss her wisdom and practical problem solving. However, we will still be able to ask the occasional question as she will continue to teach sociology two days a week, freeing up more time for her to spend with her family. We wish Yvonne every success and happiness in this new chapter of her life.

### **Fundraising**

We are pleased to report that we raised £1,493.32 for Save the Children Christmas Jumper Day. We were treated to a huge variety of festive themed jumpers and students enjoyed wearing something fun to school. In addition, the Children in Need Appeal raised a further £1,132. We have also just received notification that we raised £476.28 for the Poppy Appeal. Thank you also to the sixth formers and staff that took part in Wednesday’s Santa Dash.



### **Keeping fit, well and safe**

Our local orienteering club (Hertfordshire, <https://www.herts-orienteering.club>) are organising a Saturday morning event at Panshanger on January 8th. Orienteering is a fun sport (many of you will know that our Headteacher is a keen and very active orienteer) and can appeal to both serious runners and families who may wish to walk and take exercise.

### **Mentoring**

We would like to welcome Natasha Mowatt to the school who has taken on an exciting role as a pathway co-ordinator for Young Herts Talent. She will be working with students from Y6 - Y13.

We now have a new programme running in our school - **Young Herts Talent**. It's a school-based mentoring programme that connects caring, adult mentors with young people who need additional encouragement and support. Mentors meet their young person for an hour a week to listen and encourage their young person to engage with their education and build the self-belief they need to go on to a positive destination such as further education, employment or training.

***If you would be interested in becoming a mentor, visit our website to register for more information at <https://mcrpathways.org/Herts/>***

Finally both Rachel Kirk and myself would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and commitment to our Simon Balle Community. As a community we frequently educate and speak of our “values”- those which we believe make humankind great citizens. One of these is “hope”- particularly at this challenging time we need hopeful people who are kind and live well together. Unfortunately we often see otherwise, even within our wider community. Our final words of 2021 are some written by Year 5, read at our Carol Service.

*I hope that your homes are filled with love and Christmas spirit*

*I hope that you share smiles with everyone in your path. But the most magical thing about Christmas is those that we share it with.*

*I hope that this Christmas homes will be filled with laughter, fun and the smell of the best roast dinner.*

*I hope that this Christmas we can share love, shelter and food with those who need it most.*

*I hope that families can reunite, sharing hugs and kisses.*

*I hope that this Christmas all wishes will come true.*

*I hope that this Christmas traditions begin, continue or grow*

*I hope that this Christmas will be cosy and calm*

*And so a very Happy Christmas and a safe, healthy New Year.*

## Primary News

It has indeed been a magical fortnight in the Larch. The wonderful events, some of which Mrs Saunders has written about above, include our Christmas lunch, Larch Christmas Carol Service, Reception nativity, Year 1 trip to the pantomime 'Under the Frozen Moon', wonderful Christmas sewing in design and technology (from stockings to patchwork cushions) and the Frost Fair.

A note please that one of our members of staff lost a watch at the Frost Fair - it was a small silver bangle-style watch most likely to have been lost either in the main hall or on the route out of the dining room. If anyone has any clues or ideas or saw anything, please let us know.

In all of these events, your children have simply been amazing - such confidence, responsibility, collaboration, knowledge, skills and more. Although we continue to do everything we can to keep all safe, it has been wonderful to come together as a community with parents on a number of these occasions. We thank you, as ever, for your partnership and support.

You may also be aware from either your children or perhaps social media that in the Larch we have had some mysterious presents delivered to the library. We started with an enormous and very well wrapped box, and each day over the last 12 days, a new and slightly smaller box was found with a cryptic message.



Along the way, children of all ages have produced some wonderful writing, considering, for example, what would be the best Christmas present in the world. Yesterday's message said, 'Goodness gracious, what could it be? Everyone has had such a great opportunity. Ribbons and bows hide what's inside. Below your wrapping is your special surprise. In the moment make sure you don't pause... Love from Secret Santa Claus.'

And so, to the great delight of all of the Larch today, our Christmas gift has been revealed: 'Santa' and 'Claus' are a pair of eight week old gerbils who are joining our Simon Balle Larch community. Welcome!



## **Year 6 parent workshop**

Wednesday 12th January, 6pm: Year 6  
Expectations and SATs information parent  
workshop

This informative workshop will support parents and carers with knowledge of how they can support at home, of the logistics of end of KS2 SATs, information about each paper and how they are assessed. We will also explain general expectations, including of students' writing and how it is assessed without a 'test'.

At the very beginning of the term, we will confirm whether this will be a 'live' or virtual workshop - we thank you for joining us.

## **Staff news**

An enormous thank you and our very best wishes to Mrs Getley, as she commences her maternity leave. We are all thinking of you and look forward to hearing exciting news! We welcome Mrs Gardner (Year 4 teacher) and Mrs Swords (Year 5 teaching assistant) in their new roles within the Larch.

## **Primary Sport**

It has been such an exciting term for sport in the Larch this term! With taking part in our first ever netball and football matches against other schools, to Year 3 and 4 taking part in sports development days, muddy cross country competitions, boccia and a Year 6 tag rugby tournament. We know how much the children have enjoyed taking part in these competitions as well as all the extra curricular provision and it is a delight to see their smiles and enjoyment when competing and taking part in these clubs. A big thank you to Mr Leonard for all he does to make sure we can provide as many sporting activities as possible.

We have many exciting sporting events and fixtures planned for the Spring term and we wanted to give you a flavour of things to look forward to. Next term children will have the opportunity to compete in a

sportshall competition, as well as district netball and football tournaments; a tag rugby tournament for Year 5, basketball, quicksticks hockey and cross country. Alongside these events there will also be the Hope and Evans cups for football and netball. This is a knock out competition where you keep playing until you get knocked out of the tournament. We have an exciting extra-curricular provision with dance, dodgeball, handball and basketball all being offered. Not forgetting an exciting visit from Mike Mullen a former BMX UK & World Halfpipe Champion in February.

I am sure you will agree there is a lot to look forward to next term and we thank you for supporting us with all that has taken place so far to ensure the children can remain as active as possible and enjoy competing and attending events.

## Dates

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Friday 17th Dec             | End of term - early finish  |
| Wednesday 5th Jan           | Start of Spring term  |
| Wednesday 12th January, 6pm | Year 6 parent meeting (information to be found above)             |
| Thursday 13th January, 9am  | Year 1 parent meeting (with a focus on phonics)                   |
| Monday 17th January, 5pm    | Years 3 and 4 virtual maths workshop (more information to follow) |
| Tuesday 8th Feb             | Safer Internet Day  |
| Mon 14th to Fri 18th Feb    | HALF TERM   |
| Friday 21st Feb             | Inset day - school closed for students                            |

*Wishing you all the best for the Christmas holidays*

*Best wishes,*

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