

# Primary phase newsletter

Friday 14th January 2022

*Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today*



## All-through news

A Happy New Year to every member of the Simon Balle Community... Bonne Année, Feliz Año Nuevo, Blwyddyn Newydd Dda, Buon anno, Mutlu yıllar, Szczesliwego Nowego Roku,

We do trust that 2022, will be for everyone, in most aspect of their lives, a more “normal” year. Indeed, we are already getting back into the usual annual “groove” with planning both day trips and residentials, concerts and events, exams and parental evenings. These parental information evenings start very soon for Y6 parents, and our Year 7 students are planning for their very special residential trip to a great activity centre in Suffolk.

Parents may be interested to learn that in the secondary phase around 1000 students were tested with LFTs before they started school, with only 8 positive results. This is always a monumental challenge but a big thank you and well done to the team. Thank you too for your past support and any future support, should we face the issue of staff sickness or shortages.

Everyone is aware of the need from time to time to reflect upon how safe and secure their internet/online presence is. Safer Internet Day 2022 is on 8th February and will be celebrated with the theme ‘**All fun and games? Exploring respect and relationships online**’ and we will be using this as the focus of our work over the next few weeks. We will be sharing our plans and actions with you in the newsletters and will be sending out further information which parents may find both useful and interesting, as keeping your child safe online is so important for every parent. In addition, as adults we model behaviours to our young people and children. It is an important time for us all to reflect upon our practice.

## Attendance

As you know, excellent attendance is vital in order for children to do well at school. This is why at Simon Balle All through school we have a minimum target of 97% attendance.

Thank you once again for your support in the Autumn term in ensuring your child attends school regularly and develops good habits. Despite the obvious disruption due to covid, attendance data has been good across the whole school.

Moving forward this year we will be once again raising the profile of attendance and its link to attainment whilst also offering support to families and children that are in need.

Please can I remind parents that term time absence, unless for exceptional circumstances, will not be authorised. If you could please try to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

Thank you again for supporting your children, by making sure they come to school every day.

## Parking

Please do not park or use Mangrove Drive for dropping off or picking up. The road is private and single track. The residents are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance and have had to pay a large bill for landscaping where cars have torn up the grass. Parking on a private road without permission is considered trespassing. Please use the car park next to the fire station – it’s not far and it’s free.

## Primary News

Firstly, just to reiterate Mrs Saunders' New Year wishes - a very happy new year to you all! It has been wonderful to see the children in the Larch return with such eagerness, enthusiasm and readiness for learning. There has been lots to celebrate in celebration assemblies, from the many ways in which children are showing the new value we are learning about 'resilience' to aspiration shown in learning across the curriculum.

As we begin the year, I wanted to give you some insight into teaching and learning in the Larch. I apologise for this being a little lengthy, but I know that parents appreciate having a window into their children's learning from time to time in this newsletter.

As I have popped in and out of Reception classes this week, I have been enthralled, as have the children, in 'We're going on a bear hunt' (a text in the Literary Canon). From creating story maps to writing their own wonderful versions, it has been an exciting journey. Look out for photos on Tapestry and social media! The Reception children have also learned about the number '6' in so many different ways - do ask them about what they know! (and what they recall of numbers 1 - 5).

I visited Year 2 this afternoon when Deer class were thoroughly engaged in their practical science learning: they were using torches to investigate which materials were transparent, translucent and opaque. Perhaps they can take you on a tour of your own house and impress you with their knowledge? I know that both Foxes and Deer class are excited about their new unit of history learning and I am thrilled to be able to share that they will be visiting Windsor Castle on 25th April 2022 (more information to Year 2 in a letter next week!). At the time of my visit I was pleased to pop in to see a Year 2 cello group too - they were concentrating very hard on perfecting their bow holds - do ask them to show you exactly how to do this.

Science was also a focus in Year 1 this afternoon where the children's Christmas holiday home learning was ready to be tested - which house was the strongest? Children were making predictions and planning a fair test - Miss Ponder was ready with her hairdryer and children were teaching her how to be scientifically fair! Thank you to parents for your support of our home learning - houses were made from cardboard, lego, sticks and natural materials, and even gingerbread!

What a week it has been in Year 6! The Macbeth Shakespeare school's festival workshops supported new learning around the use of ensemble in drama and the children's understanding of language in this wonderful play is growing all of the time. Rehearsals are well underway! I also visited a Year 6 geography lesson where the focus was on knowing the features of different settlements: for example, from capital cities at one extreme to hamlets at the other. You might want to ask your child of their preferences and why!

In Year 5, their new literary canon text is Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Michael Morpurgo). The teachers and I have been blown away by the quality of children's writing, where they have been describing the character of the green knight. Wonderful techniques (for example, similes and metaphors) and advanced vocabulary has brought the character to life in vivid ways. The children were clearly fascinated in their computing unit when I visited too: they were exploring how Google works, and considering which items appear at the top of searches and why, unpicking the algorithms that are used in the background.

We work very hard in the Larch to ensure the integrity of each subject studied and to ensure that all children learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. However, it is wonderful when units of learning come together to provide children with a depth of learning in context. In Year 4, children's learning with Journey to Jo'berg is rooted in an understanding of South Africa at the time. They have been linking this to the Ndebele tribal art and also to symmetrical learning in mathematics. As I talked to the children, a real maturity was shown in their understanding of this learning linking together.

Year 3 are beginning their study of a new artist in the artistic canon: Georgia O'Keefe. At the time of my visit, the children were using magnifying glasses to look really closely at the detail of real flowers to help them with their own drawings, having been inspired by O'Keefe.

Wow! Well done all in the Larch!

## **Year 5 chromebooks: advance information**

As mentioned during September's Welcome to Year 5/6 virtual meeting, following the success of our one device scheme with our current Year 6 cohort and within our secondary phase, more information will be given in coming months regarding our current Year 5 students purchasing a cost-effective school Chromebook to use within lessons ready for Year 6. All of our Year 6 students have enjoyed using them every day within lessons to enhance the curriculum and support transition into KS3.

## **Parent volunteers**

We do miss having you as parent volunteers in the Larch. Hopefully it won't be too long before we can re-open this opportunity for many. But, in the short term, we are wondering if there are one or two parents who may be able to begin to support with listening to children read in Reception. Many children benefit from very regular, even daily, reading in school and this is tricky to staff without additional support. We would ask any parents volunteering to do a LFT on the morning (we can supply these). If you think you may be able to help - we can be flexible as to days/times - please email [kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:kirkr@simonballe.herts.sch.uk). It would be helpful,

though not essential, if you already had a DBS check with us from volunteering in the past.

## **Uniform**

A reminder please that it is important that we hold and maintain very high expectations for uniform in the Larch. Small earring studs only please if children have pierced ears, and no other jewellery to be worn. No large hair accessories please - and only hairbands and clips that are green. We know that one or two children received Smart watches for Christmas - these are not suitable for school in the Larch, as they can be a distraction as well as it not being possible for either the children or us to take responsibility for such an expensive item. Finally, please ensure that children are wearing school shoes when they arrive for school and that they know these are to be worn throughout the school day in the building; children are reminded to change into trainers when these are needed for PE, lunchtimes etc. Thank you, as always, for your support.

## **Dates**

Monday 17th January	Year 3/4 times tables parent virtual workshop, 5pm. Please use this google meet code: <a href="https://meet.google.com/xjv-xvpc-ihw">meet.google.com/xjv-xvpc-ihw</a>
Wednesday 2nd February	BMX Academy day KS1 & KS2 (more information to follow!)
Thursday 3rd February	Year 2 learning across the curriculum live workshop, 9am - 10am
Tuesday 8th February	Safer internet day
Mon 14th to Fri 18th Feb	HALF TERM
Mon 21st Feb	Inset day school closed for students
Tues 22nd and Wed 23rd March	Year 6 Macbeth performances in London
Friday 11th March	Year 5 tag rugby tournament ( <i>Please note Mrs Riddle is writing separately with all of the netball, football, and cross country extra curricular events and matches</i> )
Monday 25th April	Advance notice: Year 2 trip to Windsor Castle

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

*Best wishes,*

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