

Simon Balle All-through School

Creating Tomorrow's Citizens Today



Friday 16th September 2023



Co-headteachers' Welcome

It has been a wonderful start to this academic year at Simon Balle All-through School. We have been so proud to walk the all-through site and see such a calm and positive climate for learning across all 1600 students from age 4 - 18.

Equally, it has been wonderful to begin to welcome parents/carers into school: informative evenings took place earlier this week for both Reception and Year 13 and primary phases 1 - 3 last week, and your engagement was so evident with great attendance at all. As you know, we talk of our passionate belief that there is no tension between the highest academic standards and wonderful enrichment to nurture tomorrow's citizens. Exemplification of this has been found a-plenty at the start of this term: from the breadth and ambition of the curriculum in every year group, to a particularly positive focus on mathematics across our all-through school; from the Year 5 residential trip this week, to Big Band's first concert of the year; from Year 6 - 8 enrichment clubs beginning in STEM, art, business, drama and humanities, to Explorers' sports ranging from tag rugby to hockey to table tennis and more.

All-through newsletters will be published every fortnight this year and, through this communication, we aim to make it easy for you to stay up to speed with all that there is to know about the quality of education here, and all that there is to celebrate in the widest sense. Information and reminders to signpost events on our calendar will be provided too.



Music News

Our 2023-24 Hall of Fame is now launched and you can listen to the pieces in our [Hall of Fame playlist on Spotify](#). There are some new entries to the Hall of Fame following requests from students last year, including Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven, Impromptu op.90 by Schubert, Listen To The Grass Grow by Catrin Finch and Seckou Keita, and Pines of Rome by Respighi.

[Click here to vote for your top 3 pieces of Classical Music](#) from our Simon Balle Hall of Fame. This will be the music we listen to in assemblies each week as we count down the Top 15 as voted for by you. Last year's winner was Clair De Lune by Debussy, but will it retain its place at the top? The decision is up to you! Voting closes at 9am on Monday 18th September.

For a look back at last summer's Ghent trip, as well as updates on student successes in music exams, please make sure that you have a look at our latest [Musical News post on the school website](#).



PE News

This week we begin the Cross Country season at Presdales, with the Annual Year 7 District Mob Race. More information and results can be accessed by visiting the [Sports pages on the school website](#). The Sports pages are also home to information about our [secondary extra-curricular programme](#) and our [upcoming fixtures](#).



Welcome to Year 7

Every member of staff relishes this time of year as we welcome our new Year 7s into our secondary community. With impeccable uniform and enthusiasm aplenty, they had a real sense of joy and energy into our school.

We will shortly be starting our Gradu8 programme every Tuesday and Thursday morning, 0750-0830, where every student attends and engages in their own personalised academic enrichment pathway. This offer is something we are very proud of and it not only helps to lead to great progress but also establishes a wonderful academic culture. Indeed, they are role models in our community!

Mr Peters will be in touch shortly with regards to the above and also an invite to the Year 7 Parental Connection meeting on Thursday 21st September.



Reception - Year 6 parent information evenings

Thank you for your fantastic attendance and engagement with the parent information evenings that have been held over the last 2 weeks for all year groups in the Larch, and the slides sent following the evenings. We look forward to a fantastic new academic year, and as always please don't hesitate to contact us with your questions. A reminder of key email addresses:

larch@simonballe.herts.sch.uk: attendance, general messages and questions, medical

explorers@simonballe.herts.sch.uk: KS2 explorers questions and messages

music@simonballe.herts.sch.uk: music questions, enquiries, messages and lessons



Open Morning Saturday 23rd September

We would like to remind all members of our community that we will be holding our annual open morning on Saturday 23rd September. Information for prospective parents (both reception and Year 7) can be [found on our website](#), whilst the letter to secondary parents regarding students helping out on the day can be [read again here](#).

The PSA will be serving refreshments on the day and are looking for volunteers to help with this. If you are able to spare an hour or so, please let them know via: psa@simonballepsa.org.uk. Set up from 8am with expected finish around 12.30pm.



Year 5 residential trip to Phasels Wood

The students have been having a lovely time on their camping trip to Phasels Wood. During the day they have been challenging themselves on the high ropes, wild exploring and honing their plan and mini-beast identification skills. The evening was a little more relaxed, with time for games and home-made lasagne, garlic bread and apple crumble.



Information evening for next year's Year 5 trip

Next week we will share the Google Meet link to the virtual parent information evening regarding the Year 5 (current Year 4) September 2024 residential! We look forward to sharing lots of important information and answering your questions. If you cannot attend the virtual information evening, the slides will be shared later that week.



Teaching and Learning: The Pedagogy Portal

Welcome to the Simon Balle All-Through teaching and learning blog, your window into the heart of our educational community. As we embark on this journey together, we want to share with you in upcoming newsletters the principles and practices that make Simon Balle All-Through School a beacon of excellence in education.

We are constantly exploring new and innovative ways to enhance teaching and learning. We want to ensure that our students receive the best possible education. Our teachers are committed to staying updated with scientific studies and the latest educational research and they use this knowledge to enhance their teaching methods.

This section in the newsletter will share these insights with you by porting you into the world of our teaching community. Our aim is to share and celebrate key practices, our professional development agenda and how all of this has an impact on every child and student that attends our school.

Recently, our senior leadership team looked at how we can maintain and sustain the highest quality of education at Simon Balle. Therefore it is important to share with you that one of our whole school priorities this year is our relentless drive to continue to '*achieve the highest quality of teaching and learning for all, through research-informed practice*'.

I am looking forward to communicating this journey with you and celebrating the success of our staff and students through our upcoming all-through newsletters.

Mr I Finch
Assistant Head



SEND team

If you would like to book an online appointment with the SEND team please use this [booking link](#). These appointments of up to 15 minutes are held on Tuesday mornings 1000-1130.



Access Arrangements

To help parents understand how access arrangements for exams are determined in the secondary phase at Simon Balle, we have put together this information about the process.

[Access Arrangements Process](#)

[Access Arrangements Flowchart for Parents](#)



High Attendance, Excellent Achievement, Positive Wellbeing

Nationally, attendance rates are recovering in schools across the country since the pandemic though still remain of huge concern. The latest figures show that more than 125 000 children were missing more school days than they attended during the last academic year. This is double the number before the pandemic (RCGP UK Council, personal communication, 2023). The national average for schools in the previous academic year (22/23) was 92.5%. At SBAS our statistics are better than this with a figure of 93.4% but this is still far below our pre-pandemic data of 96.5%. We are setting ourselves a target of 97% for this academic year across the All-through school.

The link between school attendance and positive exam results has long been established but more and more the research is telling us that not only does high attendance lead to excellent achievement

but that it is also a precursor for positive wellbeing. Missing school negatively impacts on children's wellbeing ([The Education Hub, 2023](#)).

Recent guidance from medical professionals led by Professor Chris Witty, the chief medical officer, has strongly encouraged parents to ensure that children attend school even if they have mild illnesses such as a cough or a cold. Parents may wish to refer to the '[Is my child too ill for school](#)' NHS guidance if unsure whether their child should stay off school.

As a school we recognise the importance of high attendance for all of our students for a variety of reasons and are confident that working alongside parents this year our 97% attendance target is achievable.



PSA Pizza Night, Friday 29th September

Calling all pizza lovers! Orders are now being taken for Doughies pizza and cookie kits. Pizza kits cost £6.50 while cookie kits cost £4.50. This will be the only delivery of 2023 - order by 23rd September, beat the price increase and don't miss out!

Primary orders will be distributed in Larch, secondary orders will need to be collected from reception at the end of the school day (set a reminder) on Friday 29th September. If refrigerated, these kits keep for three days. They are absolutely delicious and are [nut and seed free](#). Vegan kits are also available.

<https://doughies.co.uk/products/simon-balle>



PIZZA & COOKIE EVENT

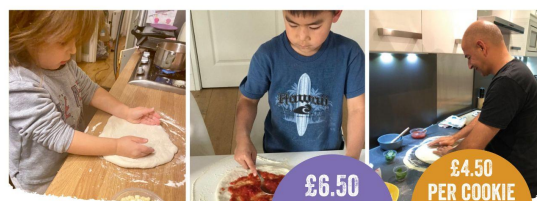
FRIDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

We've teamed up with Doughies for a fun family night in. Order your pizza & cookie making kits and you'll receive everything you need to make artisan margherita pizzas (**regular or vegan**), and warm gooey cookies in your home oven.



Orders to be placed via the Doughies website by Saturday 23rd Sept
<https://doughies.co.uk/products/simon-balle>

Orders to be collected on Fri 29th Sept. Details will be shared with primary & secondary phases



EACH KIT MAKES 1 X 12" PIZZA AND INCLUDES:

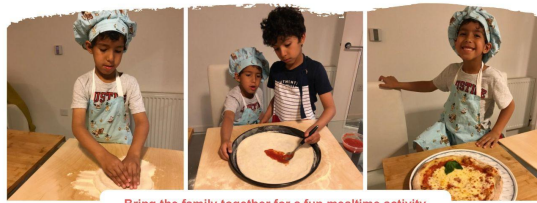
- 01 1 Fresh dough ball perfect for baking that evening, or within 48 hours
- 02 80 grams of special tomato pizza sauce
- 03 80 grams of fresh, cubed mozzarella (or vegan mozzarella)
- 04 10 grams of grated Parmesan cheese for an added depth of flavour
- 05 A pouch of stretching flour to help stretch your dough balls

**£6.50
PER PIZZA
KIT**

**£4.50
PER COOKIE
KIT
(MAKES
5 COOKIES)**

COOKIE OPTIONS:

- 01 Chocolate brownie
- 02 Chocolate Chip
- 03 Oat and Raisin



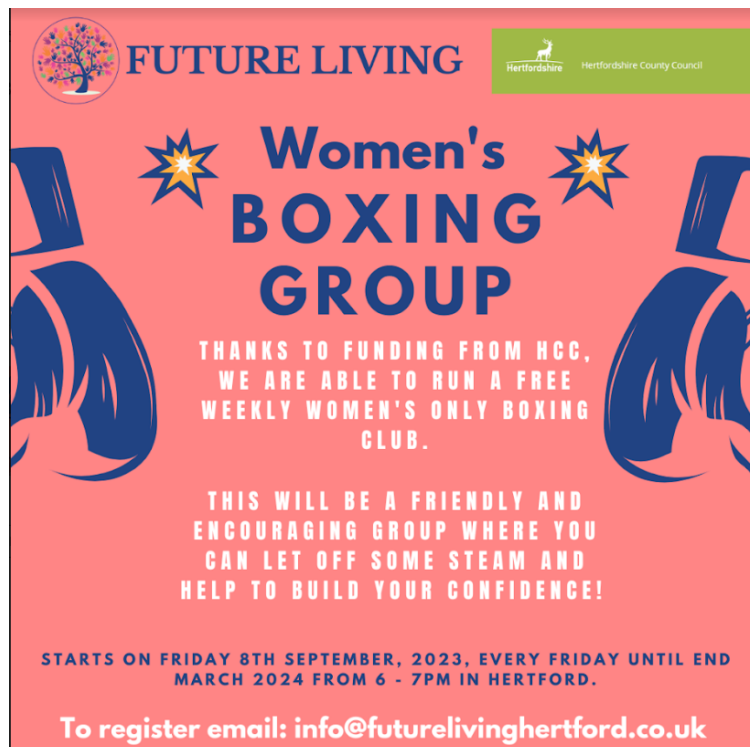
Bring the family together for a fun mealtime activity

Each kit includes printed instructions, and the Doughies website contains videos and tips to help you stretch and cook the perfect home oven pizza



PSA AGM & meeting, Monday 16th October

Join us in the Sycamore room (to the left of the Larch Centre) from 7.30pm for our AGM and second meeting of the academic year. You'll learn about some of the upcoming events, meet the team and will have the opportunity to share your fundraising ideas. We urge as many supporters to attend as possible. You will not be committing to anything but good attendance will allow us to elect a larger number of committee members. We will be looking to fill a number of key committee positions, new joiners are welcome! If you are unable to attend but are interested in supporting us, please take a moment to register your interest [here](#).



Wishing everyone in our community a positive and fulfilling fortnight ahead.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Rachel Kirk and Mr Michael Moss (Co-headteachers)