**OCTOBER NEWSLETTER**

October 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our latest newsletter. These newsletters are sent out on a monthly basis to keep you informed about what is happening in school. If you ever want to contribute an ‘article’ or suggest information that should be on the newsletters, I would be delighted to hear about them.

*Please note events that are underlined and in italics are new or amended since the previous newsletter.*

**Monday 16th October** – Year 1 Toy Museum visit, Finance and Resources Governors’ Meeting, 6:30pm

**Tuesday 17th October –** Samba drumming workshops for Year 4 children

**Thursday 19th October –** Key Stage 2 Open the Book assembly, PTA Halloween Discos

**Friday 20th October –** Break up for half term

**Half term Monday 23rd October to Friday 27th October – Premier holiday camp at Russell**

**Monday 30th October – INSET DAY** at school – staff training – NO CHILDREN IN SCHOOL TODAY

**Tuesday 31st October –** ALL CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL -, Y4 Samba drumming workshops

**Wednesday 1st November –** History Workshop – Year 4 – Portals from the Past

**Thursday 2nd November** – Rugby Union festival for Y3 children (Blackbird), KS1 Open the Book assembly, *PTA Meeting 7:30pm at Wingfield Club*

**Friday 3rd November –** Individual School Photographs

***Tuesday 7th November –*** *Y4 Samba workshops*

***Thursday 9th November –*** *Y4 rugby festival for some children, Alameda Open Evening for Year 4 parents, 6:30 - 7:15pm*

***Sunday 12th November –*** *Remembrance Sunday – 11am Cenotaph, Alameda Walk*

***Monday 13th November –*** *Road safety week, anti-bullying week, 9:30am – New Intake Meeting September 2024, 10 – 12 Starling Class WW1 walk, 6:30pm CLS Governors Meeting*

***Tuesday 14th November –*** *Y4 Samba drumming workshops, 1:20 – 3:20 Kingfisher WW1 walks*

***Wednesday 15th November –*** *1:20 – 3:20 pm Woodpecker WW1 walk*

***Thursday 16th November –*** *KS2 Open the Book assembly at 1:20pm*

***Friday 17th November –*** *Children in Need Day – ‘Be SPOTACULAR’ (spotty non-uniform day – more*

*information to follow)****,*** *9am - PC Denton and on-line safety workshop for parents (TBC - more*

*information in due course)*

***Saturday 18th November –*** *Ladybirds Christmas Fayre 11am – 2pm*

***Monday 20th November –*** *Woodpecker pollution walk 2:15 – 3:15 pm*

***Tuesday 21st November –*** *Y4 Samba drumming, 1:15 – 2:15 Kingfisher pollution walk****,*** *Starling pollution walk 2:15 – 3:15 pm*

***Wednesday 22nd November –*** *Foundation Stage Maths Workshop to parents at 9:15am, KS1 and 2 Maths workshop to parents at 2:30pm – more information to follow*

***Friday 24th November –*** *Inclusion coffee morning for parents – more information to follow*

***Monday 27th November –*** *Santa Challenge begins, Full Governors Meeting 6:30 pm*

***Tuesday 28th November –*** *Samba drumming to parents in Y4 (TBC – more information to follow)*

***Thursday 30th November –*** *9:30 am -**New Intake Meeting – Foundation Stage September 2024, KS1 Open the Book Assembly at 1:20pm*

***Friday 1st December –*** *PTA ‘Mistletoe Mingle’ (more details to follow)*

***Saturday 2nd December and Sunday 3rd December –*** *St Andrew’s Christmas Tree Festival, with the choir singing (most likely on Sunday afternoon) – more details to follow*

***Tuesday 4th December –*** *Foundation Stage nativity to parents at 9:30am*

***Wednesday 6th December –*** *Foundation Stage Nativity to nurseries at 9:30am, Christmas Lunch day, FS Nativity to parents at 2:15pm (more information to follow)*

***Thursday 7th December*** *– Year 2 performances to parents (show 1 at 2:15pm, show 2 at 5:45pm) more details to follow, Year 3 Christmas Theatre trip (pm)more details to follow*

***Friday 8th December –*** *Year 4 Christmas Theatre Trip (am), Year 3 sports festival (Bocca/Kurling) for some children (am), Ladybird concert to parents at 2pm, Year 1 Christmas Theatre Trip (pm)*

***Monday 11th December –*** *PTA Elfridges Day – more details to follow*

***Tuesday 12th December –*** *Year 2 Christmas Theatre Trip (am), Foundation Stage Christmas Theatre Trip (pm)*

***Thursday 14th December –*** *Year 1 Superhero Day (TBC – more details to follow)*

***Friday 15th December -*** *Christmas activity morning with parents (9 – 10:15 am), Christmas Jumper non-uniform day – more details to follow*

***Tuesday 19th December*** *– Last day of the school term, break up for Christmas today*

***CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY Wednesday 20th DECEMBER – Tuesday 2nd JANUARY 2024***

***Tuesday 2nd January 2024 – INSET Day – SCHOOL CLOSED TO ALL CHILDREN***

***Wednesday 3rd January 2024 –*** *ALL children back to school today*

***Thursday 4th January 2024 –*** *2:45pm – Parent Volunteers in School Induction sessions, (more information to follow)*

**More detailed information on the above events will follow in due course**

**Free School Meals ‘Census’ Day:**

You will remember that a few Thursdays ago we asked you to encourage your child to have a school dinner so we had the highest possible number of school meals taken for our census. You all did an absolutely amazing job and a **staggering 90%** of children had a school dinner that day. Thank you so much for your support. This will mean we get the maximum funding possible from the government – thank you!

**Parents’ Evenings:**

Thank you for making the time to attend our parents’ evening last week. We really benefit from working together to support children to progress both academically, personally, socially and emotionally. Please expect a follow up call to arrange an alternative appointment if we did not get to see you over the two days. Attendance at these meetings twice a year is part of the minimum ‘engagement’ we expect as you support your children with school.

**School Attendance: it continues to be THE most important thing:**

You know us well: school attendance has to continue to be our number one priority. We cannot ensure children make good progress and feel happy and confident at school without it. Establishing the ‘no-negotiation, you are going to school today’ rule early on in lower school will make life much easier in the long run. Children are only required to go to school ***190/365 days a year – 52% of the time, or just over half the year***. Every single day counts. The government published ‘[Working Together to improve school attendance’](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) last September. A clear attendance policy was already in place at Russell. It can be found on the website [here](https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/school_policies/250): In practice, we were already doing all the things that the government required of us (such as using Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised term-time holidays or absences etc.) To support us further, and if at all possible, please arrange medical, dental etc. appointments outside of school hours. We know it is hard and not always possible. In addition, please do not ask your children to ‘fib’ about where they have been. We can see the anguish on their faces when they ‘forget’ and tell us about the amazing pool/caravan etc. This is simply too heavy a burden for such young children. If you have any questions or worries about school attendance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will always work together with you on this. If in doubt about whether a child is well enough, had enough sleep etc. to come into school, our general rule is **‘send them in’** – we can always send them home again. I attach a ‘summary of responsibilities’ for your information. Thank you for all your support in this most vital of areas.

**Extract from the government guidance on attendance:**

**What YOU must do:**

Try to contact the school before 8.30am each day of your child’s absence. ([pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk) ).

Tell the school in advance of any medical appointments and bring in appointment cards/letters/messages.

If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival.

Have a backup plan for if your child misses transport, call on a family member, neighbour or friend.

If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help.

**What WE will do:**

Check your child’s attendance every day.

Phone home to discuss your child’s attendance with you and write to you when we have concerns.

Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.

If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit.

**School admissions to Foundation Stage in September 2024 and Middle Schools**

It’s that time of year again! Even though the children have only just started in their new year group, you need to make your applications now:

**Children born between 01/09/19 and 31/08/20 are due to start school in September 2024.**

Parents/carers need to make an application to CBC **by 15 January 2024**, even if their child attends a nursery/pre-school on the school site. All the information you will need regarding your Starting School 2024 application is available on the CBC website (see hyperlink below) and in the ‘Starting School Leaflet’ attached to September’s newsletter.

Year 4 parents, please bear in mind that applications for **Middle School are also needed within the same timescales i.e. before 15th January 2024. Please note: this will not just happen automatically.**

For more information, please see information on the CBC website:

[School admissions | Central Bedfordshire Council](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions)

**Maths Workshops for parents:**

Maths is not taught how it used to be! Would you like to come and hear how we teach it and how you can further support your children at home? If so, please sign up using these simple Google Forms:

Foundation Stage Maths Workshop for parents – 9:15am – 10am, Wednesday 22nd November <https://forms.gle/72EdCqsc4ertYj5r6>

KS1 and KS2 Maths Workshops for parents – 2:30pm – 3:15pm, Wednesday 22nd November

<https://forms.gle/yapfG1omWr4psRnTA>

**PTA thank you:**

Thank you to all the PTA committee and volunteers who so tirelessly raise money for us throughout the year. Some of the things we spend the money on you raise are very visible (trim-trails, astro turf, outdoor gym equipment, sun shelters, play equipment, reading books, Nathan’s Garden, Theatre trips, leavers’ hoodies, etc.), but some you rarely see. For example: over the summer holidays, the PTA money donated to school enabled us to spend thousands of pounds refurbishing the Foundation Stage toilets so that our environment remains superb. I would like to send an enormous thank you to the entire PTA committee, all the volunteers and to parents for raising such incredible sums of money to continue supporting us to provide the children with the absolute best we can. Thank you all again. You have made some little people (and some big people!) very happy indeed.

**Russell Lower School Values:**

Each half term, we teach the children about a different value. We then have a weekly ‘values’ assembly where we celebrate the demonstration of this value. The values this term are:

**Autumn 1**: Respect

**Autumn 2**: Thoughtfulness

**Ex Russell student Luke’s Challenge (update):**

Last year, I wrote to you telling you about Luke, an ex-pupil of Russell Lower School and his epic, totally independent of adults, challenge. He is the epitome of resilience! Here is an update from his mum (who sends a big thank you to everyone who sponsored him):

The challenge was a long time coming as he broke his arm at the end of May, so we had to amend our plans and do the walk the first week of September. And what an adventure he had!

Luke walked the whole 96 miles, with a heavy rucksack (up to 12kg sometimes) in 7 days. Walking in high temperatures (even for Scotland) made it tough going in some parts, but he persevered, demonstrating outstanding strength and resilience. On average, he was walking for 8-10 hrs a day, covering between 16-19 miles!

He climbed mountains, paddled in lochs, camped in some remote wild locations and met some

fascinating people along the way - all on their own journey. He learnt lots about the history and landscape, but most of all discovered his own strengths and limitations. All with a huge smile on his face.

I am very proud of his achievement, especially as he has so far raised over £1,375 for Chums.

**PE and festivals news:**

We now have our Year 4 Sports Leaders in place and they have received their first session of training via Redborne Sports Partnership. They will be working with Mrs Bunney over the next half term to get up and running in leading fun and active sessions across the school over lunch times.

Our sports leaders for this year are:

WP - Ralph, Eva, Lottie

S - Harry, Imogen, Maizie, Dylan

KF - Harry, Amelie, Finley

Well done to them all!

**Community events:**

Utilita Ampthill fireworks Committee have sent the following information:



**And finally:**

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and all your support this first half term.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher