**MARCH NEWSLETTER**

March 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our March 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.*

**Saturday 25th March** – PTA/ACCG Litter Pick

**Monday 27th March** – Year 1 visit to Woburn, *Foundation Stage to Kings’ Arms Gardens and St Andrew’s church,* Easter Assemblies, *6:30pm – Full Governors’ Meeting*

**Tuesday 28th March** – Year 4 swimming, *Goldfinch Class Easter in a Box with ABC*

**Wednesday 29th March –** *Design an egg competition, entries in today (judging), Blackbird Class Easter in a Box with ABC*

**Thursday 30th March -** *Nightingale Class Easter in a Box with ABC*

**Friday 31st March** – Easter Activity Morning, *9 – 10:15am* (one adult per child invited into the classrooms – as happened at Christmas) – to join us for Easter ‘crafty’ fun, Easter hunts and treats, Break up for the Easter holiday. *Sorry, we do not have space in the classrooms to accommodate Alameda children too. 3:30pm – 4pm, PTA pre-loved uniform sale on the field*

**Easter holidays – 3/4/23 – 16/4/23 with Premier holiday camp running**

**Monday 17th April – INSET DAY – school closed to children (staff training)**

**Tuesday 18th April – ALL CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL TODAY,** *PTA Sunflower Growing Competition starts today*

**Wednesday 19th April –** 2:45pm – Parent Volunteer sessions, Badminton Sessions in school

***Thursday 20th April –*** *7:30pm – PTA meeting at the Wingfield Club*

***Friday 21st April –*** *PTA Fun Run ~~from 3:30pm~~* *Please note: this was changed at the last PTA meeting to be held during the school day – each class will have a slot to complete their runs*

**Sunday 23rd April –** Russell Choir at St Andrew’s Music Festival (pm)

**Monday 24th April –** 6:30pm – Finance and Resources Governors’ meeting

**Tuesday 25th April –** Greenfinch Cricket Festival

**Wednesday 26th April to Friday 28th April –** Year 4 residential to Condover Hall

**Monday 1st May –** School Closed – Bank Holiday Monday

**Friday 5th May –** Coronation Day celebrations at school

**Monday 8th May –** School Closed – Extra Coronation Bank Holiday Monday

**Tuesday 9th May –** Year 4 Bikeability, *Year 3 to Celtic Harmony*

**Wednesday 10th May –** Year 4 Bikeability, Badminton sessions in school

**Thursday 11th May –** Year 4 Cricket Festival

**Monday 15th May –** Year 4 Transition Festival – all Year 4 children

**Saturday 20th May –** Russell Lower School Ball

**Wednesday 24th May –** Year 2 Marston visit (Penguin/Greenfinch)

**Thursday 25th May –** Year 2 Marston visit (Robin)

**Friday 26th May –** Full house theatre trip – whole school (am), PTA Ice lolly sale after school

**Half term holiday 29/05 – 2/06**

**Monday 5th June –** Children back to school – NO INSET DAY

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

**Local Authority Visit to school:**

Last week, two local authority advisors and two governors undertook two learning walks at Russell. This was to check on the school’s ability to challenge all children in their learning and to ensure that high standards of learning were continuing post-Ofsted. The local authority advisors asked why Ofsted had not awarded the outstanding grade, based on what they had seen. Praise indeed! They were very impressed by what they saw and have asked that we also support other schools. A glowing visit! The feedback summary is below:

***Feedback Summary:***

*Russell Lower School is highly effective at creating opportunities for the infectious learning of difficult things.  Children are curious, motivated and have the skills needed to access continually higher learning.  Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff use their great subject knowledge, higher order questioning (top 3 Blooms areas of Synthesise, Evaluate and Analyse) as well as carefully designed learning tasks and the belief that are many ‘right’ answers and possibilities, to enable a very good level of greater depth learning across all subjects.*

**Safety: a couple of pleas**

Please can we ask you not to drop children of any age at the school gates please? Only Year 4 children may walk to school on their own (with permission) after the Easter holiday, and this includes being dropped at the school gate. Parents must deliver children to the classroom doors please, and hand them over to school staff. The children’s safety remains paramount.

Please can you ensure children do not play on the school field (football) or on the school equipment after school? There are three very good reasons for this: firstly, that on two occasions, footballs have hit tiny children in pushchairs/prams and caused real distress. Secondly, that this is the time of day when we have had the most serious injuries on the school grounds. Finally, we want to get Aviary and Premier Club children outside quickly and safely to begin enjoying their time. Please move swiftly off the school site at the end of the school day. Thank you so much in advance.

**The school office: a couple of pleas**

Please can we request that children do not use the visitor/staff toilets by reception at the beginning and end of the school day? Children can use their own year group toilets when they get ready for home at the end of the day, and they can come into school from 8:40am to do the same in the morning. Sadly, there are only 2 toilets for over 70 staff members and everyone needs them at the beginning and end of day as we cannot come out of class at other times either. Children have multiple toilets within their year group areas. Thank you.

In order to minimise the administration time of medication being given to children, can we please remind you that the vast majority of medicines will be administered around 12 noon. We simply do not have the staff ‘spare’ during other times of the school day, without it having a huge impact on our core purpose: learning. Thank you for your support.

**PTA AGM:**

Thank you to everyone for your support at this month’s PTA AGM. As always, it was time to try to persuade some new members to step into some named roles so that the PTA can continue to do its brilliant work for the school.

I would like to thank all of the committee who stepped down this year for their incredible hard work and dedication to raising funds for the school. Again, it has been a phenomenally successful phase for the PTA, contributing an additional £10 000 to each of the last two financial years. All of which has been spent on more resources, and experiences for the children. A particular thank you goes to Nina Page who has been a wonderful treasurer for many years, to Lynsey Wright who has been a fabulous co-chair and to Rachel Butcher as secretary. Equal thanks go to the new committee, including Lindsay Birtles who again sits as Co-Chair. We are really grateful to you all for ‘stepping up to the plate’ and look forward to working with you all for the good of the children.

**School trips and visits:**

We really do appreciate how tough the current financial climate is and know that money is tight for everyone. However, please know that unless parents support us by paying for school trips, these may not be able to be offered. The government do not give schools any money to take children to places like: Woburn Safari Park, The Toy Museum, Verulamium, the Faith Tour, Theatre Visits, residential visits or Celtic Harmony so we rely on parents paying their contribution towards this (as well as generous support from the PTA on some occasions). Please understand that without sufficient support and payment, school will be unable to run these valuable curriculum enrichment opportunities for the children. We know they make the world of difference to children’s development and learning. Thank you again for all your support.

**Police Competition winners:**

In February, our Foundation Stage children entered the Police Valentine competition. The fantastic winners were:

Florence, Blake, Eva, Samuel and Nell – congratulations to them all!

PC Carne and the Mayor of Ampthill presented the lucky winners with a prize and a certificate on Wednesday 22nd February. Well done everyone!

**Supporting Charities:**

Thank you for your continued support raising money for good causes. Most recently, Red Nose Day (although we don’t know how much we have raised for them yet).

In recent months, collectively we have raised:

The Rotary Bake Sale - **£105** for the Polio appeal

CHUMS - **£540** to support children’s mental health locally

And…an INCREDIBLE…**£1167** for Children in Need, making us the biggest fund-raising school locally. Thank you for your incredible support and generosity.

**PE and festivals news:**

This half term, all children received Irish dance lessons linked to St Patrick's Day. The children learnt some traditional and modern Irish dance moves and experienced traditional Irish music. The feedback was very positive and they said they learnt things such as:

* in Irish dancing you do not use your arms
* the kissing gallop
* different feet movements
* Irish dancing is hard but fun!

Over recent weeks some of year 3 have attended a badminton event and some of year 4 children attended a tag rugby event. Year 4 have also been receiving their curriculum swimming lessons.

**Book Fair:**

Thank you for your support with the book fair. We received over £600 of commission for school – all of which was turned into books for the children – thank you so much.

**Community Events:**

A message from the Ampthill Festival team:

Get ready to rock out with us Friday, July 14th at AmpRocks! We're bringing you an incredible line-up featuring Grammy award-winning Clean Bandit, along with Black Honey, Kula Shaker, and Jacob & Amelie.

It doesn't stop there as Saturday, July 15th we’re bringing you AmpProms, where the amazing Ampthill Concert Orchestra, Redborne Jazz Band, and Ampthill Town Band will be performing alongside some incredible special guests. Get ready for an unforgettable experience filled with timeless melodies and breath-taking fireworks.

Don't wait too long to grab your spot to avoid disappointment. Tickets are available at [www.ampthillfestival.com/tickets](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ampthillfestival.com%2Ftickets%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR27mGRLT-YELJX5e62RDQOKR8d5HW5Kwv92m_xJkHYwd-Emd2QwWWrjhoY&h=AT1QEJzvx4PObvw9oMGLDuBJUNBhBwx7Gufc_Y6EZJDSNNoZcJomszPmj2YLaCd37OWvyFPSZxuCYXeg2jYT_pqlZRGwPRNi7ChFXVeTbV_2B4FMxrhd3EsyNerEkHOq9Hby78hjm59bKcpVAiel6uHi8Q&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT3EFBvQc-0Lx71r8SqUUotGhhsA2l1Rcdp60_Tq93jB3v_yfpd5c_PkEqsFkY8DUaphd8rluN3KUjI-rI6Q39X3Zty6PNduQ_nqcXMdnbTToK1iDu1lZhfqVfy3CYeDQw3A6eZYJ0NejkzYMwyamdFGp92djUAMKLFZiOL-m0MDbCp8RAwtR0foueqnzCR7ftwOg_m1JAvs). (See poster below)

Come along and join in the fun at Flitwick, with a comedy night, afternoon tea for the Kings coronation, an Easter egg trail and a scarecrow contest (Flitwick residents only).

Please see attached the posters for these events. Tickets are available to book by calling 01525 631900, or you can pop into the Town Council Offices at The Rufus Centre.

Please see the rest of the newsletter for community events/posters etc.

**And finally:**

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and for all your support this term again. Have a lovely, much-needed Easter break with the children when it arrives.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher

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