**DECEMBER NEWSLETTER**

December 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our December 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 December –** Y1 Superheroes day (more details to follow)

**Tuesday 17th December –** Theatre visits - Year 4(am), Year 1 (pm) - The King’s Polar Bear

**Wednesday 18th December** - Theatre Visits - Year 3 (am), Year FS (pm) - The King’s Polar Bear

**Thursday 19th December –** Theatre Visits - (Y2 am) - The King’s Polar Bear, *Choir visit to Care homes (am)*

**Friday 20th December -** *Flu immunisations (sorry - the NHS changed this, not us!),*Last day of the school term, break up for Christmas today

**CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY Monday 23rd DECEMBER – Tuesday 7th JANUARY 2025 (Premier Sports operating holiday camps on 2nd and 3rd January)**

**Monday 6th January 2025 – INSET Day – SCHOOL CLOSED TO ALL CHILDREN**

**Tuesday 7th January 2025 –** ALL children back to school today, Year 3 Faith Tour, all children complete Network Hands this week

**Wednesday 8th January 2025** - Vision Screening for FS children

**Thursday 9th January 2025 –** 9:30 - extra New Intake Meeting due to overwhelming demand, 2:45pm – Parent Volunteers in School Induction sessions, (see below)

***Thursday 16th January*** *- Census school meals day (more information to follow)*

***Monday 20th January -*** *SEND parents’ coffee morning, 9 - 10am (run by parents)*

***Thursday 23rd January -*** *7:30pm PTA Meeting at the Wingfield Club*

***Thursday 30th January -*** *Year 4 sports hall athletics festival for some children(pm - you will be notified if this involves your child nearer the time)*

***Monday 3rd February -*** *CHUMS ‘shine bright’ week, Governors’ meeting 6:30pm*

***Friday 7th February -*** *Shine Bright CHUMS non-uniform day (more information to follow)*

***Monday 10th February and Tuesday 11th February -*** *Parents’ Evenings from 3:45pm onwards. More information to follow)*

***Thursday 13th February -*** *Year 4 Tag Rugby festiva****l***  *for some children(am - you will be notified if this involves your child nearer the time)*

***Friday 14th February -*** *Year 4 Bikeability and break up for half term*

***Half term 17/02 - 21/02 with Premier Sport running a holiday camp all week***

***Monday 24th February -*** *Children back to school - NO INSET DAY*

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

**Attendance:**

Please be aware that it has been made clear to us by the DfE and CBC that schools should continue maintaining high attendance expectations and refer parents to NHS [guidance](https://links-1.govdelivery.com/CL0/https%3A//www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery/1/010001938745d358-b1aa5bf7-88c4-4662-b5bc-0d2f445ab15d-000000/1ZGGHHuqjqdTiz4qRZpMcbqfjW3STEvQYVSmzJeUQ8E%3D381) to know when a child is too ill for school. Pupils should not miss school on a precautionary basis and can normally attend school with a cough or cold, unless they have a fever or diarrhoea and vomiting. Thank you for your support with our attendance policy.

**Big thank you - Children in Need:**

A huge thank you for your support for this worthy cause. We raised around £1400 which is simply incredible and will help lots of children both in this country and abroad. Thank you.

**Big thank you - Santa Challenge and active travel to school:**

Well done and thank you, everyone. Russell Lower School was the most active school in terms of travelling to and from school in Central Bedfordshire this year! We made it to Lapland more than 3 times over, covering a distance of 6846 miles between us. This is great for our health and the environment too. Thank you and well done again, everyone! One lucky child will also be pulled out of a hat randomly to win the scooter as a prize.

**Building work update:**

Minor repair work to complete on the inside of the building is ongoing. We apologise for any disruption and unsightliness, but it is great that the roof now will not leak!

**Christmas Events:**

A huge thank you to the PTA and Bethan Blakely on vocals and to everyone who arranged and supported the ‘Mistletoe Mingle’ at Russell recently. It was a beautiful, crisp and cold winter’s evening and the hot chocolate and mulled wine went down a treat! The Christmas Tree (donated and decorated by the PTA) looks wonderful in Nathan’s Garden too. Thank you to everyone for your support and hard work; it got the festivities started beautifully.

Since then, we’ve had a lot of fun! We enjoyed ***eleven*** opportunities to get parents into school (three x Year 4 Samba performances, one Inclusion ‘cafe’, two maths workshops (FS and KS1/2), one Christmas Craft morning, two x Year 2 Performances and two x Foundation Stage Nativities) as well as having a brilliant Christmas Lunch on Wednesday with a wonderful visit to 'Elfridges' for all our children too. We cannot thank the PTA Elves enough for giving up their days to deliver such amazing Christmas magic and fun! Thank you to everyone involved and to all our parents for your support at these events - we know what a manic time of year it is!

**Community events - Christmas Tree Festival 2024 and choir events - update:**

On the weekend of 30th November and 1st December, St Andrew’s Church held their Christmas Tree Festival. Russell Lower School’s tree was there with our ‘Peace and Love’ inspired decorations – all made by the children - and hugely varied. They were phenomenal! Yet again, Russell Lower School was awarded First Prize as ‘overall winner’! Thank you so much for supporting us by voting for our tree. That was incredible enough, but the ’piece de resistance’ was the Russell Lower School choir’s performance. The children were truly outstanding, being entirely unfazed by a few ‘bluetooth’ technical hitches due to a lack of wifi in the building and very thick church walls! They were magnificent and really raised the roof - congratulations to them all!

**Foundation Stage and Year 2 performances to parents:**

Thank you for your incredible support this week in attending our FS and Y2 performances – you really did pack the house out! There was standing room only (and not much of that!), to see the children’s shows. They were absolutely buzzing with excitement and their faces lit up when they saw you all. Thank you for all your support, including learning lines, providing costumes and learning (and listening to!) our songs. We are particularly proud of our youngest children - they were brave and learnt so many words after only 10 full weeks in school: incredible!

**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 value this coming half term is:

**Autumn 2**: Peace

**Spring 1**: Courage

**PE and festivals news:**

Well done to all the children who have taken part in festivals this term, they have been an absolute credit to the school demonstrating both the Russell and RSSP values. Next half term year 3 will begin their swimming lessons and some of year 4 will attend a sportshall athletics event and also the postponed year 4 tag rugby event. We wish all those taking part the very best of luck. The year 4 Sports Leaders will also begin supporting the rest of the schools in achieving physically active lunchtimes, they can’t wait to get started!

**Online Safety/ESafety update:**

As part of our Online Safety Policy and procedures, we aim to reinforce the importance of children being safe online, both at school and out of school. In each newsletter we will be using one page poster guides from National Online Safety to highlight areas that we think are relevant to our children and families, helping you to keep up-to-date with what's going on in the world of online safety. We hope that this will help you gain the confidence and skills to have age-appropriate, informed discussions with children to keep them safe, healthy and resilient to life beyond the school gates.

**December - Setting up Apps, Games and software (see poster attached)**

**School Council and Eco Schools update:**

Our school council has continued to meet regularly this term and been very busy reapplying for our Green Flag Eco Schools Flag. Please see and read our attached School Council newsletter.

**New electronic toys/Christmas lights/Candles? Fire risks - be aware:**

Please read the article here for some up-to-date information from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKBEDSFR/bulletins/3c650f9>

**Reminder - Parent Helpers next volunteer session - Thursday 9th January at 2:45pm:**

If you haven’t volunteered in school before, but would like to, we would love to see you at our next volunteer information session coming up in January(see calendar above) – please sign up using the following Google Form and then just turn up - thank you!

<https://forms.gle/AZyZs4hcA88Mhan1A> Everyone MUST attend an induction session, but only if you have not attended one already and MUST have a DBS in place before volunteering with the children.

**Reminder - Aviary club charges – price increase from January 2025:**

Unfortunately, we are having to increase the charge for using The Aviary before and after school club from January. We are simply unable to sustain the rising costs of staffing, energy, consumables and food within the existing pricing structure. The new price will be £5.50 per hour. Thank you for your understanding. We would like to remind you that this facility is to enable parents to work; it is not for ‘play dates’ or general ‘childcare’ etc. This is important as we have reached capacity in most sessions and run waiting lists. We need to support working parents who have no alternative support as a priority. Thank you again for your support.

**LAST CALL - REMINDER - School admissions to Foundation Stage in September 2025 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 01/09/20 and 31/08/21 are due to start school in September 2025.**

Parents/carers need to make an application to CBC **by 15 January 2025**, **even if their child attends a nursery/pre-school on the school site.** All the information you will need regarding your Starting School 2025 application is available on the CBC website (see hyperlink below).

**Year 4 parents,** please bear in mind that applications for **Middle School are also needed within the same timescales i.e. before 15th January 2025. Please note: this will not just happen automatically.**

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

**Community information and events:**

Please see below

**And finally:**

Thank you for all your on-going support this term. It has been a really productive one, with lots of good progress made in so many areas - but one of the longest ever! We are all exhausted now (children and staff) and very much looking forward to a well-deserved rest. ***From everyone here at Russell Lower School, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, safe 2025, when it arrives.***

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and for ALL your support - we really appreciate working in partnership with you.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher

**Community information and events:**

**Wrap Up**

Do you have any coats or ski clothing that are no longer required?

Wrap Up UK is a project that Ampthill and District Rotary Club are supporting.

If you are able to donate a Winter Coat or Ski Clothing in good condition to help the homeless, please bring it to school and place it in the receptacle in the office foyer. Thank you.

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