Thursday 2nd April 2020

**Keeping in Touch – No.2**

Dear Parents and Carers,

By the time you receive this, we will have been ‘closed’ to almost all our children for nearly 2 weeks. As I said to you last time, school is a very strange place at the moment, but then the world is too, isn’t it? I hope you are all managing to adjust to living on top of each other all the time. I know in my house we have never needed to find so many ‘desks’ and spaces for people to work. Table top spaces are a commodity to be cherished! Equally, my carefully-planned evening family walk is now already a distant memory…why won’t everyone just do what they are told?! I hope you are having more success in your families!

Before we ‘break up’ for Easter, I just wanted to write to you to ‘keep in touch’ and share a few more pieces of information.

**As the Easter holidays approach:**

Firstly, thank you SO MUCH for the enormous amount of support you have shown for home learning. We realise how demanding this is for parents and really appreciate all your efforts. We also appreciate that many of you are still working – both at home and out of the home, so you do not have infinite time to spend teaching your children. As a staff we are aware that many parents are unable to print learning materials off at home - we are therefore trying to adjust the tasks that we are setting to reduce/stop the need for this - please bear with us as we adjust our planning for home learning.  This is new to us all too.

Keeping reading going is our number one request. Please try to find some time most days to continue with this. If you haven’t already, you may like to have a look at the 'Oxford Owl' website that you can sign up to for free - this has lots of online reading books similar to those we have in school and they are split into age groups.

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/>

We all know what a strange, scary and uncertain time it is…it doesn’t feel like the Easter holidays are upon us at all. However, we will be going into the Easter holidays w/c 6th April and w/c 13th April. We will NOT be uploading our weekly learning resources for these two weeks as we wouldn’t have been at school anyway. Below, you will find lots of other interesting ideas of things you can do together instead if you want to keep some structure going. However, ***it is really important that children still feel like they are getting a ‘holiday’ from school (and school work!). Equally, you as parents (and now teachers!) really need that break too!***

The children (and you) will come back to it on 20th April with much more enthusiasm if they have had a break. We suggest having a clear calendar up on the wall to show the children which are ‘school work days’ and which are ‘weekends’ and which are ‘school holidays’. You can then make your expectations for what happens on each day clear. It is important to both maintain routine, but also have different types of day to look forward to.

Try to make your life as easy as possible, so that there is learning in everyday experiences. For example, one of my top tips would be to watch the TV with subtitles on. I am sure many of you do this anyway; the children will be reading without even knowing it! Likewise cooking/weighing and measuring is Maths, going through old family photographs and talking about times in the past is History, looking at the clock and telling the time each time you change activity is learning to tell the time, counting out shopping, sweets etc. is Maths. Once again, thank you for all you are doing. We really appreciate it.

**Design an Egg competition – yes, there is still time!**

We understand that lots of you intend to continue with the 'Easter Egg Design' competition at home. Thank you for all the designs that have already been shared!

It would be great if you could upload photographs of your design onto the school Facebook page for us all to see <https://www.facebook.com/Russell-Lower-School-1479735168958006/>

The idea is to make a design using hard boiled egg(s).  In the past we have had Kings and Queens, rock bands, animals and insects…and even unicorns, and many sporting activities.

On our website ([www.russell-lower.co.uk](http://www.russell-lower.co.uk/)) under 'gallery' you will see a selection of photographs of past entries.

We look forward to seeing your designs on our facebook page  <https://www.facebook.com/Russell-Lower-School-1479735168958006/>

(If you are unable to upload a photo then please email to [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk) and we will endeavour to include these too - please add your consent for us to do this on the email).

Remember to regularly visit the school Facebook page as Mrs Bunney shares lots of links on there on a daily basis.

**Breakfast Morning tomorrow (Friday 3rd April):**

We are really disappointed not to be holding our breakfast morning on Friday. Again, if you want to share any breakfast photographs on Friday on our Facebook page please do so!

We would love to see what you all get up to (and eat!) Hopefully, we can persuade some teachers to share their breakfast photos too!

**Keeping children fit and active once Joe Wicks wears off!**

Our Active Partnership, teamBEDS&LUTON, has uploaded a series of fun physical activities and links for both children and adults to enjoy at home.  I think you’ll all agree it’s more important than ever to keep our bodies and minds healthy.  The activities will be added to regularly, so keep an eye out for new releases!  Here are the website links:

[https://www.teambedsandluton.co.uk/getting-active-at-home](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMzAuMTk0ODA4NjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy50ZWFtYmVkc2FuZGx1dG9uLmNvLnVrL2dldHRpbmctYWN0aXZlLWF0LWhvbWUifQ.UYRIFIjTHrCXN0rYrqXBquXySKcfiYk7WuZUE24uVgQ/br/76783094321-l)

[https://www.teambedsandluton.co.uk/covid-19-teacher-support](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMzAuMTk0ODA4NjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy50ZWFtYmVkc2FuZGx1dG9uLmNvLnVrL2NvdmlkLTE5LXRlYWNoZXItc3VwcG9ydCJ9.KU5COubf6Q7hChG4PbP-DWn9J2ebJJS-_VTIfDpWZ1I/br/76783094321-l)

**Learn about Fire Safety in an age appropriate way**

Kempston White Watch from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, bring you a ‘virtual school visit’.  Suitable for young primary school children.

Kempston Firefighter Tom Field said: “Whilst we cannot physically attend our usual school fire safety visits, we really want to continue to engage with our communities. Therefore, we decided to create a ‘virtual school visit’ that can be shared online to help spread important fire safety messages.”

Station Commander Simon Williams added: “During this period of unprecedented isolation, it is important that we continue to engage with our communities in order to help keep them safe. I’d like to thank Kempston White Watch for producing this video and would encourage people to share this widely with family and friends.”

The virtual lesson includes:

* Find out what Firefighters do
* Story time with 'Frances the Firefly'
* What to do if there is a fire - 'Get Out, Stay Out, Call 999'
* Test a smoke alarm
* What to do if you catch fire 'Stop, Drop and Roll'

Click [here](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDYsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMzAuMTk0ODA4NjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy55b3V0dWJlLmNvbS93YXRjaD92PVRVMUREVHRWZnZjJmZlYXR1cmU9eW91dHUuYmUifQ.0YgzWa8dt3RrpICeVILFA9wIjHeJ8jLhPolPbilUz00/br/76783094321-l) to watch the video.

**Join free Geography and Science live lessons this spring**

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| #Fieldworklive will be a fortnight of **FREE** live lessons which will take place from **Monday 20th April – Friday 1st May 2020**, focusing on a range of Geography and Science content aimed at Primary KS2 (Ages 7-11), KS3 (Ages 11-14), GCSE (Ages 14-16) and Progress GCSE to  A Level (Ages 16-18).  You can view the [**list of sessions available and book here**](https://r1.dmtrk.net/65YE-VTJ-K48AQ-EGCQ-1/c.aspx). All sessions are supported by a**FREE resource pack**which has beendesigned for you to prepare your students prior to the live session. The pack will include some pre-lesson activities and handouts.  If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to [**contact us.**](mailto:schools@field-studies-council.org) |

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| |  | | --- | | [Browse the sessions](https://r1.dmtrk.net/65YE-VTJ-K48AQ-EG93-1/c.aspx) | |

**Hungry Little Minds (for 0 – 5 year olds)**

The Department for Education is working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support directly to parents, including online resources they can access for their children at home. The Department for Education’s [Hungry Little Minds campaign](https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/) features tips and practical activities that parents can do with their children at home to support early learning.

**Screen time and E-Safety**

As a parent, I know how hard it is to know the ‘right’ answers to questions like ‘How much screen time is too much’, and ‘How do I keep my child safe on the internet?’ You will probably been under more pressure than ever to allow ‘screen time’ at the moment – and we aren’t helping putting so much of the learning on-line, sorry! Please do look at the following resources to help you decide what is right for you and your family, what the research says and how you can keep your children safe. Also, don’t forget our E-Safety tab on the website. Technology, more than ever, really is a wonderful thing if we can just use it safely. What I would emphasise is that **our lower school aged children need to be supervised at all times whilst using the internet/YouTube etc**.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/new-guidance-parents-and-carers-looking-screen-time>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

<http://www.digitalresilience.org.uk/>

**Updated support information for young people and families:**

This is a really tough time for everyone. It is unprecedented in our lifetimes. We have created a new tab on the website ‘Support during COVID 19 school closure period’. There are lots of resources here to support you. Please do take a look. In addition, please see below for a confidential advice and support line for parents and carers. Do get in touch if you need any support over the coming days or weeks:

[**Parentline**](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMzEuMTk1NDQ2MzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2NlbnRyYWxiZWRmb3Jkc2hpcmUuYm94LmNvbS9zLzk2eHlyeW0wODE1cGY4N2wyNWYxcjk5cDhieWZyanlvIn0.2MO23voH6re1MtwILIpisZsEt6QaHPWoYOrgycXMSnk/br/76840389030-l) - a confidential text messaging advice and support line for Bedfordshire parents and carers of children aged 0-19. Text: 07507 331456

**Are you experiencing hardship?**

CBC have sent us this message that may help:

Where schools are finding that parents are coming to them seeking advice as they are struggling there is a webpage, [Support for individuals in hardship](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9pbmZvLzI2L3B1YmxpY19oZWFsdGgvNzM3L2Nvcm9uYXZpcnVzXy1fY292aWQtMTkvOCJ9.6c61wyIiurs0Ev7OLC6Yiap6Won1zDN4fLygax1URl0/br/76882480549-l), on Central Bedfordshire Council’s website which includes an [online form](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTYsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay94ZnAvZm9ybS8xNTEifQ.yR6u4ls4CsZ6th8vZ7y8x2RV9-GY_mL7VjtANERKgIU/br/76882480549-l) and a telephone number 0300 300 8900 – we would advise that, where possible, parents try the online form first.

**Could your child now be eligible for Pupil Premium (confusingly called Free School Meals (FSM) even when all children in FS/KS1 are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals)**

Some parents may find the need to apply for Pupil Premium/FSM, particularly in KS1 who previously received the universal offer and who are now receiving a qualifying benefit.  This [link](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9pbmZvLzUzL2JlbmVmaXRzLzQvZnJlZV9zY2hvb2xfbWVhbHMvNSJ9.je23q3va-e6uGVA4C8htvce_P1QDry482VPD2Xextb4/br/76882480553-l) takes you to the information and the telephone number is 0300 300 8306.  Information for parents can be found at this [link](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9pbmZvLzUzL2JlbmVmaXRzLzQvZnJlZV9zY2hvb2xfbWVhbHMvMyJ9.6mutbVnf5ljAY7eZe-yanZkN4SO6JGlO_SA_Gkp6Kro/br/76882480553-l).

**If you think you may qualify, do pick up the phone and ask.**

**Summer term Theme Webs:**

Teachers are still planning to share with you their theme webs for the Summer Term. This is so that you can see the big picture of learning that would have taken place if we were at school. It may allow you to see where work set fits in, and to ‘read around’ subjects if you would like to.

These can be found on the school website: [www.russell-lower.co.uk](http://www.russell-lower.co.uk) under the Curriculum tab, and then the year group. Please bear with us, it may take a few days before all year groups’ webs are in place.

**Condover Residential and other planned trips;**

We are currently not cancelling the residential visit to Condover, as we are awaiting further directives from the government.  By waiting for the government to lead on this, we can ensure that all the correct procedures are followed in terms of securing everyone full refunds. I can however assure you all that we would never undertake any visit that puts any child or staff member at risk, and that our policy remains that we are not currently planning to undertake any forthcoming trips.  This will be reviewed upon our return to 'normal' school. Sorry, I cannot be more definitive at this stage, but I am sure you can read between the lines! It is highly unlikely that this trip will go ahead. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

**And finally:**

If you think we can help with anything, or perhaps signpost someone who can, please do get in touch:

For all general enquires: [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)

For all Special Educational Needs enquiries: [send@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:send@russell-lower.co.uk)

For any safeguarding concerns: [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk) FAO Mrs Bunney

For closure provision enquiries: [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)

To contact a teacher about your child’s learning at home: [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)

To contact our pastoral support team: [pastoralsupport@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:pastoralsupport@russell-lower.co.uk)

Website: [www.russell-lower.co.uk](http://www.russell-lower.co.uk)

Thank you for all the hard work you are doing with the children at home. We really do greatly appreciate it.

I hope you have a lovely (if different) Easter holiday at home together and can enjoy the extra family time together.

I will be in touch again after the break.

Stay safe, keep well and take good care.

Many thanks and kind regards,

**Nicki Walker**

**Headteacher**