**DECEMBER NEWSLETTER**

December 2021

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 since the previous newsletter.

**Wednesday 15th December** – Begin streaming Elves and the Shoemaker theatre production

**Friday 17th December –** Last day of the autumn term

***CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY MONDAY 20TH DECEMBER – MONDAY 3RD JANUARY 2022***

**Tuesday 4th January 2022** – All children return to school – NO INSET Day, Ice skating event in school (more information to follow)

**Wednesday 5th January 2022** – Ice skating event continues (more information to follow)

**Thursday 6th January** –Year 3 swimming (more information to follow), *Herrings Green Farm Visit Year 1*

***Monday 10th January and Tuesday 11th January –*** *Dave Mason author visit to Year 4*

***Thursday 13th January*** *– Year 3 swimming, 8pm PTA AGM Meeting*

***Thursday 20th January*** *– Year 3 swimming*

***Friday 21st January*** *– Y3 Sports Hall Athletics Festival*

***Wednesday 26th January, Thursday 27th January and Friday 28th January –*** *Cultural dance workshops for all children*

***Thursday 27th January*** *– Year 3 swimming*

***Thursday 3rd February*** *– Year 3 swimming*

***Friday 4th February*** *- Y2, 3, 4 Gymnastics Festival*

***Monday 7th February*** *– Parents’ Evening 4:30 – 7pm*

***Tuesday 8th February*** *– Parents’ Evening 3:45 – 6:30pm*

***Wednesday 9th February*** *– Grow your Classroom Y3 workshops (TBC)*

***Thursday 10th February*** *– Year 3 swimming*

***Half term holiday 14/2 – 18/2/2022***

***Monday 21st February –*** *Children all back to school after the half term break – NO INSET DAY*

**Please see the school website for more dates beyond this**

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

**Covid update:**

Thank you for all your continued support with managing the Covid-19 risk in our school community. As you will be only too aware, this has been a much more challenging half term! That said, the ‘WhatsApp’ version of events is always far more dramatic than the actual picture at school, so please rest assured that I will always continue to give you accurate and up-to-date information as we have it. This way we can maximise education and minimise risk – it really is the only way forward. Who knows what the situation will be when we return from the Christmas break, we will just keep taking it one step at a time! However, please note, whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in: school attendance remains mandatory for all children, and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children to attend school around 97% of the time, remains our absolute priority because we know it is in their best interest, academically, socially and for their overall wellbeing.

**Changed Covid guidance:**

Please note the following Covid guidance which is **NEW AND CHANGED**:

**Daily Testing for Contacts of COVID-19 (DTCC)**

From Tuesday 14 December 2021 a [**national change to the self-isolation guidance**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/daily-rapid-testing-for-covid-19-contacts-launches-this-week)states that **fully vaccinated adults, and** **those aged between 5–18 years and 6 months who are contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case should take daily Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests**. **Contacts should test every day for 7 days, or until 10 days since their last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier**. **If they don't know the date of contact, they should take an LFD test every day for 7 days after they are notified of the contact. Contacts should take this daily test before they leave the house for the first time each day.**

Packs of 7 lateral flow tests can be collected from various location in Central Bedfordshire: <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/135/coronavirus/919/rapid_tests> or can be ordered online (subject to availability) at: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

**During the 7-day testing period, if the LFD test result is negative, then the close contact can continue with normal activities for that day**. Other members of your household can continue with normal activities provided your child does not test positive or develop symptoms within the 7-day testing period.

**If an individual undertaking DTCC has a positive LFD test result, or develops symptoms of COVID-19 they should self-isolate and order a PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test to confirm the positive result**: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus (COVID-19) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). If the PCR test is negative, you no longer need to self-isolate, **but you should continue to carry out the remainder of your daily tests**.

Under 5s are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily lateral flow testing, but they should limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19.

**Mrs Bunney update and Swift Class teacher update:**

Mrs Bunney’s baby is due any day now. We are already missing her in school and are waiting for the exciting news of a baby arriving at Christmas time (no – not that one!). We will let you know the lovely news, once we have it. We wish Mrs Bunney all the very best of luck over the next few days, weeks and months.

Sadly, Mrs Moore will be leaving for her new role as Foundation Stage Leader at the end of this week. We have loved having Mrs Moore as a colleague and as a wonderful teacher and will miss her very much. We wish her every success in her new role. Thankfully, we have been able to recruit very effectively and have Miss Corrina Leung (pronounced *‘learng’*) joining us in January. Miss Leung is a very experienced class teacher and has a lot of previous experience of leading a Foundation Stage team too. The children have already met her several times and are already feeling confident in her company.

**Christmas Tree Festival:**

Thank you for all your support during the St Andrew’s Christmas Tree Festival – we won!!! We were the ‘Overall Ampthill Christmas Tree Festival Winners 2021’.

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**Christmas Jumper Day/Father Christmas Visit and ‘Elfridges’:**

Thank you for all your support again last week.  It was a lot of fun!  We enjoyed nine opportunities to get parents into school safely (three x Year 4 Samba performances, three x Year 2 Performances and three x Foundation Stage Nativities) as well as having a brilliant Christmas Lunch on Wednesday, and Christmas Jumper Day on Friday, with a wonderful visit from Father Christmas and his Penguin helper, and 'Elfridges'.  What a week!

We cannot thank the PTA Elves and Father Christmas enough for giving up their days to deliver such amazing Christmas magic and fun! To quote one child ‘it was the best day EVER!’ Thank you to everyone involved.

Sadly, as you will know, we took the difficult decision to cancel the theatre visits we had planned this week.  Having spent all last week exhausting every option of how to make it as safe as we required, we were still not satisfied with the mitigations in place.  We are desperately sorry for the disappointment this caused many of you, but we have arranged for the performances to be 'live streamed' into school this week instead.  We appreciate it is not the same as having the full theatre experience, but it does keep everyone as safe as possible, especially so close to the Christmas holiday when I know many of you will want to meet up with older, more vulnerable relatives.  We did manage to persuade Mrs Bremner to get popcorn too!

Thank you to all the parents who had volunteered to help us on this trip.  We always really appreciate your support and will no doubt have another ‘in person’ trip arranged soon.

**Santa Challenge:**

Our target was to get to Lapland 2,027 miles away. We are delighted to announce that Russell Lower School made it all the way to Lapland (and home again!) with a total of 5,824 virtual miles. Well done to everyone, especially those who completed all 10 days using active ways to travel to school. They all went into a draw for the chance to win a band new scooter. The very lucky winner of this was Teddy P. Congratulations Teddy!

**Aviary Club on the first two days back after Christmas (Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th January):**

Due to the ice-skating rink being set up in the main hall, the Aviary Club will have the following arrangements for ***these 2 days only***:

**Breakfast club:** will take place in the DINING HALL for these two mornings. Please drop children off **at the external double dining room sliding doors.**

**After school club:** will take place in the Year 4 Classrooms. Please collect children from the external classroom door of Kingfisher Class (first Y4 classroom on the KS2 playground). Thank you for your support and apologies for any inconvenience this causes.

The Aviary Club will return to the main hall from the morning of Thursday 6th January.

**Russell Lower School ‘School’ Council:**

At Russell Lower School, we have a democratically elected School Council, comprised of two representatives from each class from Year 1 to Year 4. The school council meets regularly with Mrs Nilletti, whereby, the pupil voice, thoughts and ideas from each class are shared and important issues relating to school life at Russell Lower are discussed.

This year the main focus of the School Council is to become an Eco-School, with the aim for Russell Lower to be awarded the Eco- Schools Green Flag accreditation in July 2022. Eco- Schools is a child led, educational program, whereby, children drive environmental action and change across the school community.

As a School Council we will be completing a 7-step framework that consists of:

* Forming an Eco-Committee (Our School Council)
* Carrying out an environmental review of the school
* Forming an action plan to bring about environmental action and change at Russell Lower
* Making curriculum links
* Informing and involving the school community in our Eco-Schools work
* Monitoring and evaluating the impact of the action plan
* And finally, creating a school Eco-Code.

As a school council we are very excited about working with the whole school community to achieve our Eco-Schools Green flag and Russell Lower becoming a greener and more environmentally friendly school.

We look forward to starting work on our action plan and updating you all on our progress.

**Child friendly Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy:**

Keeping children safe is our number one priority at Russell. Sarah Knight is our Inclusion Lead and our Designated Safeguarding Lead. Nicki Walker is our Deputy Safeguarding Lead. Mr Keith Redman-Henry is our Safeguarding Governor. Following recent training, we developed a child-friendly version of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This can be viewed here: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/safeguarding_and_child_protection/385256> Do let us know what you think.

**Rotakids:**

The Bake sale last month raised £345 for the Polio appeal, and we sent Mrs Milway lots of filled shoeboxes for the appeal. There will be some very happy children around the world thanks to the Russell community – thank you very much for your generosity!

**Relationships education as part of the PSHRE curriculum – consultation:**

As part of your child’s educational experience at Russell, we aim to promote personal wellbeing and development through a comprehensive, taught programme of PSHRE (Personal, Social, Health, Relationships and Economic education). It aims to give children the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to live safe, healthy, productive and fulfilled lives, both now and in the future. The DfE (Department for Education) changed ‘relationships and sex education’ in 2020, and these changes came into effect in 2021. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

The guidance focuses on healthy relationships and keeping children safe in the modern world. It covers a range of topics relating to physical and mental health, wellbeing, safeguarding and healthy relationships. This guidance is statutory and forms part of the National Curriculum. In line with this, we have reviewed our policy so we can be sure that it is appropriate for children based on their age, physical and emotional maturity, religious and cultural backgrounds and special educational needs and disabilities. Consequently, we welcome your views on this and have opened a Google form for you to give us any feedback: <https://forms.gle/caekBmhrrCHR1XTK9> **PLEASE RESPOND BY FRIDAY 8TH JANUARY.**

This area of the school website has all the information you may require: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/personal_social_health_and_relationships_education_pshre/451393>

Thank you for taking the time to review and comment upon this. I will update you over the coming months.

**Tesco Community Grants Scheme:**

We are delighted to let you know that we recently made an application to the Tesco Community Grants Scheme which has been successful and our project will be put forward to a customer vote in the Flitwick Tesco store. Voting will commence in store from the first week of January 2022 and continue until 31st March 2022.   
  
The following information will appear on the voting unit when voting starts. Please look out for it.

Russell Lower School  
Growing and eating  
To develop understanding around health and wellbeing linked to diet and sustainability through providing class vegetable beds.  
  
The project with the highest number of votes across the region will receive £1,500 (or the amount that was requested up to this value), the second placed project £1,000, and the third placed project £500.   
To vote, you will need to make a purchase within store of any value. You will receive one token per transaction and it's not necessary to purchase a carrier bag in order to receive a token.  
Many thanks for your support and votes!  We will let you know how we get on and fingers crossed for some funding to support this excellent project.

**Take part in our cultural future:**

A team of researchers at the University of Bedfordshire has been commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council to undertake research on the arts and culture sector.

The purpose of the research is to review arts, culture and heritage provision, and the impact of Covid19 in Central Bedfordshire by collating views and experiences of those working in the sector.  Please see the [flyer](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTExMTUuNDg4NzM1MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2NlbnRyYWxiZWRmb3Jkc2hpcmUuYm94LmNvbS9zL2xsZzRhemVlOXAwNmhydmR3N2VrM3ZyZmVieGlvY3c2In0.WgXVrqtoOefP6sWUscGQebElHqXwIdE7fn70u9eedIE/s/900610115/br/120992203569-l) for further details.

The researchers are interviewing key stakeholders and providers of arts, culture and heritage activity.  If you wish to take part in an interview, please email [tamara.ashley@beds.ac.uk](mailto:tamara.ashley@beds.ac.uk)

Have your voice heard and be a part of creating the future of arts and culture in Central Bedfordshire!  Be part of the research by filling out the research survey available at this [link](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTExMTUuNDg4NzM1MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5zdXJ2ZXltb25rZXkuY28udWsvci9GM00zV0pZIn0.0Jjtcuo2N2Uc4JFBJy13swTEJbBKIE-_gaMDQGXKrNo/s/900610115/br/120992203569-l).

**Coming soon:**

A new bike and scooter shelter in the KS1 playground (you may well have noticed that the old one is now very much past its best!). This should be completed during the Christmas holidays.

**Community Events:**

The Ant Hill Comedy Club will be at Parkside Hall on Tuesday 28th December. Tickets £15.00 from [evenbrite.co.uk](http://evenbrite.co.uk/) or Cambridge Wines.



**LAST CALL FOR - School admissions to Foundation Stage in September 2022 and Middle Schools:**

We have been incredibly popular again this year, and even our SIXTH open day, which was added due to the fifth being over-subscribed, is now full! Please do make your application if you have a child due to start lower school or middle school in September. Thank you.

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Description automatically generated with low confidenceIt’s that time of year again!

**Children born between 01/09/17 and 31/08/18 are due to start school in September 2022.**

Parents/ carers need to make an application to CBC by 15 January 2022, even if their child attends a nursery/pre-school on the school site.

All the information you will need regarding your Starting School 2022 application is available on the CBC website.

Please bear in mind that applications for Middle School are also needed within the same timescales i.e before 15th January 2022.

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

**And finally**

Thank you for all your on-going support this term. It has certainly been a challenging one and we couldn’t have got through it without your support and understanding. ***From everyone here at Russell Lower School, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, safe 2022.*** Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher