**MARCH NEWSLETTER**

 March 2021

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.

We will be continuing to take each half term at a time. Please note events that are *underlined and in italics* are new since the previous newsletter.

***Thursday 25th March –*** *8pm – PTA meeting (virtual)*

***Friday 26th March –*** *Easter Activity morning in school, Easter Hunt*

***Easter Holidays 29/3 – 9/4 2021 – Premier Sport Holiday Club every day (except Bank Holidays)***

**Between *1st of April and the 30th April* -** Year 1 ***Doodle Maths Spring Challenge*** (information sent to year 1)

***Monday 12th April –*** *Children return to school – NO INSET DAY*

***Monday 19th April –*** *The Big Pedal Begins – join us in finding active ways to travel to school*

***Tuesday 20th April to Thursday 22nd April –*** *Whole School Maypole Dancing sessions*

***Monday 26th April –*** *Vision Screening in Foundation Stage, 6:30pm Finance and Resources Governors meeting*

***Tuesday 27th April –*** *Ampthill Early Years Network Meeting, Foundation Stage and Year 1 hearing screening*

***Wednesday 28th April –*** *Class Photographs*

***Monday 3rd May –*** *May Bank Holiday – school closed*

***Tuesday 4th May –*** *Art Adventurers begins again, Year 4 Bikeability*

***Wednesday 5th May –*** *Year 2 Scooterbility – to be confirmed*

***Tuesday 11th May to Thursday 13th May –*** *Whole School Bollywood Dance Sessions*

***Monday 17th May – Walk to School week -*** *join us in finding active ways to travel to school*

***Friday 28th May –*** *Break up for half term*

***May Half term – 31/5 to 4/6 – Premier Sport Holiday Club every day (except Bank Holiday)***

***Monday 7th June –*** *Children return to school – 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:**

At the time of writing this letter, we have been exceptionally lucky not to have had to close any bubbles since returning on the 8th March. I would like to thank every single one of you for your continued vigilance and support. It is keeping us safe and in school – thank you!

Please can we ask for your continued support with:

* Ensuring children are not playing on the school equipment/trim trails etc. before and after school (it is cleaned carefully between bubbles)
* Continuing to socially distance (even in queues for classes) and not ‘moving forward’ until a previous class has finished. This ensures we are not ‘bubble mixing’. Thank you.

**What do I do if I think my child has Covid symptoms?**

Please keep them (and your household) isolated at home and take a test as soon as possible. Some parents have told us they cannot get their children to ‘do’ a test (due to swabbing their throat being too hard). Please note that if you find the throat impossible, you can swab both nostrils instead. We would really encourage you to do this rather than not do a test at all. Thank you. I attach the latest testing guidance from CBC (mostly for secondary students) which does tell you about how to access household testing, if needed.

**Other safety issues:**

* Please be reminded we are a nut (and nut products) free school



* Please take great care walking with children and driving in Saunders Piece. We have had several very near misses! We appreciate the road is narrow and busy, but please do not mount the kerb/pavement as it is so dangerous for pedestrians and please be extra vigilant if you are walking. The pavement on the other side of the road (furthest from school) may be the safest as it is always ‘protected’ by parked cars. Please take real care.

**Swimming Update:**

Normally, we take Year 3 and Year 4 swimming for half a term at some point over the academic year. Unfortunately, this is not going to be possible this year due to extensive swimming pool closures, and not being able to have satisfactory risk assessment from Flitwick Leisure Centre, the coach company and school all combined. Pools are only due to re-open on 12th April and many staff are still on furlough. As you know, safety is our absolute number one priority and we regret that on this occasion we cannot make the risk assessment ‘work’. Year 3 will get the opportunity to swim when they are in Year 4. Year 4 children must swim at some point during KS2 (it is on the National Curriculum to be covered at some point up to and including Year 6), so we will talk to the children’s next schools and ensure this is available to them either in Year 5 or Year 6 of middle school. Please accept our apologies that this has been impossible to arrange safely this year.

**Staff update:**

You will be delighted to know that Miss Thompson has remained fit and well through her pregnancy and begins her maternity leave from Easter. We wish Miss Thompson all the very best and will pass on news of her baby once we hear it. In addition to Miss Thompson, we have had the wonderful news that Miss Rawlings is also expecting her first baby in the summer holidays. We are equally delighted for Miss Rawlings, and wish her all the best of health over the coming months too.

As a result of the ‘Russell Baby Boom’, we have been busy recruiting some wonderful maternity leave teachers to join our talented teaching team. I am delighted to say that we have hit the jackpot again with two fabulously experienced and dedicated teachers joining us from September. Mrs Natalie Nilletti will be joining Year 3 and Ms Lara Lyons will be joining Year 4. They both have a wealth of experience in Key Stage 2 and will bring rich new skills to Russell. We are very excited to have them both.

**Term Dates:**

Please find attached term dates for next academic year 21/22. These are also available on our website. <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/term_dates/180>

**PTA:**

As you will have seen from their recent correspondence, the PTA has been busy arranging exciting events for the Easter holidays: following fantastic feedback, they are thrilled to announce that SKITTLEMAN IS BACK! The PTA are hosting a ‘Virtual Family Games Night’ on **Saturday 10th April 18:00-20:00.** The event will be streamed via Zoom absolutely FREE! The PTA will be covering the cost in the hope it brings Russell families some interactive fun that the whole family will enjoy this Easter.

**Don’t forget to register for this free event by 12:00 on** **Friday 26th March** by completing the Google form (link in the letter sent previously by the PTA)

Scavenger Hunt sheets will also be sent home on Friday too – with more information to follow in an email.

Any questions at all please do contact the at: pta@russell-lower.co.uk.

**Tokyo Challenge:**

**Russell Lower School** has been taking part in Team GB and Paralympics GB's virtual **Travel to Tokyo challenge** and we're encouraging the entire school community to join in too!

We have turned the school into a **Travel to Tokyo team**and they will be making a 47,349 kilometre virtual journey around the world to reach Tokyo in time for the 2021 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Thank you for all your support with this wonderful, active whole-school challenge. Having just checked, I cannot believe how far we have already travelled...we are already on our way to Sydney in Australia! See link below:

<https://www.getset.co.uk/travel-tokyo/russell-lower-school-mk45-2td/school-team-7503?schoolSlug=russell-lower-school-mk45-2td&teamId=undefined>

Please continue to log your activity and share where we are with your children. There is some wonderful Geography knowledge to be gained, especially through the wonderful travel guides! We may not be able to travel at the moment – so join in with the next best thing!

<https://www.getset.co.uk/resources/travel-to-tokyo/travel-guides>

Please send us photos and videos of you and your family getting active, so we can share how we’re doing on the school website!

Don’t forget, if you take part in the PTA Scavenger Hunt over Easter you can upload your activity to the Tokyo Challenge too!

**Easter Events:**

Design an Egg competition - Judging took place today. There were some utterly brilliant designs. Thank you for supporting the children to have so much fun creating their entries. Two winners in each class will receive a winner’s rosette and an Easter egg. All children that entered will receive a Headteacher’s sticker and a chocolate lollipop too. Again – a huge well done to everyone!

Easter Hunt during Friday 26th March - Thank you to the PTA for the sweet treats

Easter Activity morning – Friday 26th March

PTA Easter Fun – Skittleman Free Family Quiz on 10th April and Scavenger Hunt over the Easter holidays (sheet to follow)

**Is your child in receipt of Free School Meals (not universal infant free school meal)?**

**Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) – update for Easter Holidays**

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme will be running over the Easter Holidays for parents of children in receipt of Free School Meals.

Please see this [flyer](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAzMTUuMzY5OTE2MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2NlbnRyYWxiZWRmb3Jkc2hpcmUuYm94LmNvbS9zL2ZrazA2eHdpZmN0bHY4MjFsNGg5cW5jbzd4aGVuYWxwIn0.qZK11jBC1OZy-j__7Bb0S4LrY6t3jv85jwhv_eS1hb8/s/900610162/br/99910921639-l) for details of exciting activities for your children.

You will need to click this link below to register to receive information about the activities and how to book places.

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/xfp/form/249>

If you do not have access to the internet you can contact Children Centres by phone on either:

0300 300 8115 or 0300 300 6515

The Children’s Centre staff will be able to assist you to ensure you can get to register and book on to activities.

Partners in the programme include 4YP, Adult Learning and Noah Enterprise, Barton Kids Club, Bedford Blues, Children’s Centres, Dawn to Dusk, FullHouse Theatre, Holiday Active, Kidz Zone, Inspiring Music Service, Seasons and Vandyke School. It looks really great fun!

Activities will be booked on a first come, first served basis.

**Winter Grant - Free School Meals (not universal infant free school meals) – Easter Holidays 2021**

Central Bedfordshire Council has extended the Winter Grant scheme and will be now providing FSM e-vouchers for children eligible for Free School Meals over the Easter Holidays. CBC will be commissioning WONDE to do this and parents/carers will be able to select a supermarket from a range of providers including Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Sainsbury, Aldi, Iceland and Waitrose.

Parents/Carers will be receiving a supermarket voucher to the value of £40.  This will consist of £30 (to cover 2 weeks) for the FSM element and an additional winter utility fuel allowance of £10.  Please note, the voucher must not be used for age restricted items such as alcohol or tobacco.

**Vaccinations:**

**Are your family up to date with the MMR vaccine?**

Most of us know that measles can make children very poorly, but did you know that measles can also lead to life threatening complications if you are not vaccinated. Central Bedfordshire Council, in collaboration with Public Health, are encouraging parents and carers to find out if their family are fully protected against measles. It’s difficult to know which services are available during the current pandemic, but parents can be confident that the MMR vaccination is not affected by Covid. If a child is due to have their vaccination, or has missed one, they are available through your GP.

**How many doses of the vaccination do children need to be fully protected?**

The MMR vaccine is given in two doses, the first dose of the vaccine is at 1 year of age with the second being given at 3 years and four months. If you’re older children have missed their second, don’t panic! They can be vaccinated and protected. Get in touch with your GP to find out how.

**Missed a vaccination?**

If a child has missed a vaccination, don’t worry, you can contact your GP to arrange a new appointment during the Covid pandemic. A catch-up vaccine is also available.

For further information on the MMR vaccine, get in touch with your local GP or visit the [NHS website](http://www.nhs.uk/MMR).

*Don’t wait…vaccinate*.

**Reminder - Contact details**:

You will be aware that we may need to contact you at very short notice if we have to close a bubble (class) due to a positive Covid-19 test result. We will contact you via email and mobile phone text alert so **PLEASE ENSURE WE HAVE UP-TO-DATE MOBILE NUMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES** SO THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE. Thank you. **Please notify changes in writing via the** **office@russell-lower.co.uk**and not via the class email address.

**What a term!**

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, and for your on-going support through this, most challenging, of terms. We have really appreciated working in partnership with you to support our wonderful children the very best we can.

We sincerely hope you have a safe, fun and restful Easter holiday – with no home schooling! (but, you know me, we would really appreciate you continuing to read regularly please). We look forward to seeing you all back and raring to go at school on Monday 12th April (straight after the holiday ends – no inset day).

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher