**DECEMBER NEWSLETTER**

3rd December 2020

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.

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.

**Wednesday 9th December –** Christmas Dinner

**Friday 11th December** – Christmas Activity Morning/ Christmas Jumper Day, *Santa Challenge ends*

***Monday 14th December –*** *10am – Parent Survey 2020 closes*

**w/c 14th December –** VirtualPantomime week

***Wednesday 16th December*** *– Deadline for Santa Challenge Cards to be returned*

**Thursday 17th December –** Class Christmas Videos sent home*, Year 1 Superhero Day and party*

**Friday 18th December** – *Santa drops off his presents and sends his video message,* Break up for Christmas

**CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY MONDAY 21st DECEMBER – FRIDAY 1st JANUARY**

**Monday 4th January – INSET DAY** – School **CLOSED** to children

**Tuesday 5th January –** Children return to school following the Christmas break

***w/c 11th January*** *– Tokyo Challenge Begins (more information soon)*

***Monday 11th and Tuesday 12th January*** *– Dave Mason (author) in working with Year 4*

***Tuesday 26th, Wednesday 27th and Thursday 28th –*** *Re-arranged Indian Dance Workshops*

***Friday 5th February*** *– Number Day*

***Monday 8th February*** *– Parents’ Evening (Virtual or telephone)*

***Tuesday 9th February*** *– Parents’ Evening (Virtual or telephone), Safer Internet Day 2021*

***Friday 12th February*** *– Break up for half term*

***FEBRUARY HALF TERM 15TH FEBRUARY TO 19TH FEBRUARY 2021***

***Monday 22nd February –*** *Children return to school (NO INSET DAY), Thinking Day – Rainbows and Guides may wear their uniforms to school to mark this occasion*

***Thursday 4th March –*** *World Book Day*

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

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

**Safety around the school site:**

Please see below for information that went out in an email earlier this week. Thank you for being so positive and supportive!

Thank you for all your support this term in working tirelessly with us to keep the school community safe, and bubbles open.  Ideally, we do not want a single child to miss a single day of school.  We know how precious it is, and we know what impact it has.

As we move out of 'lockdown' and into Tier 2 this week, not a great deal will change for us (see below for the link for parents and carers regarding the tier restrictions).  We will invite peripatetic teachers back into school (for example, for instrument lessons) from Wednesday, and we will plan to resume other extra-curricular clubs in the new term. We continue to attempt to make school as 'normal' as possible, but we can only do this with your continued diligence and support.

With this in mind, and as we all get tired following the long autumn term, not to mention 'Covid fatigue', I would like to ask with your assistance over the final 15 school days of 2020.

Remaining vigilant on and around the school site in the following ways would be greatly appreciated:

* Please continue to arrive on site on time (no more than a few minutes early for your staggered start/finish time) and with only one adult per child please
* Please continue to keep to the 2m social distancing requirements around the site, and wear a face covering if you can
* Please leave the site quickly after collecting/dropping your child; please do not gather in groups to chat before/after school
* Please do not allow the children to play on the equipment before or after school - it will have been thoroughly cleaned (between bubbles) and we may not realise that we then need to do it again
* Please do not allow the children to ride scooters or bikes on the school site.  These should be 'walked' once within the school gates to keep everyone safe.  We had a nasty collision with a pre-school child only last week
* Once outside the school gates, please continue your onward journeys quickly to avoid 'bottlenecks' and gatherings
* Please continue to keep your child off of school if they, or anyone in your household has Covid symptoms (a high temperature over 37.8 degrees, a new, continuous cough , a loss of or change in normal sense of taste or smell), or is awaiting the result of a Covid test

I am so sorry that I am having to be so 'bossy'.  I can assure you that it is simply to keep everyone as safe as possible, and to keep the maximum number of bubbles open.  Across the Redborne pyramid this term there have already been 18 positive cases (staff and children).  With the most recent being on Friday. Just think how much 'normal' school has been missed.

The children do know that all the rules come from school, so you can blame me!  The children also know why we have those rules: to protect the number one Russell Right - the Right to be Safe.

Not only will these measures continue to keep us all safe, they also ensure that we comply with DfE, H&SE and Ofsted guidance, and our statutory duties.

As always, **thank you so much for the incredible way you have worked in partnership with us this term.  We really do appreciate it and know what a lucky school and staff we are**.

Updated guidance for parents is available here:

[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDExMzAuMzEyNzMzNDEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5nb3YudWsvZ292ZXJubWVudC9wdWJsaWNhdGlvbnMvd2hhdC1wYXJlbnRzLWFuZC1jYXJlcnMtbmVlZC10by1rbm93LWFib3V0LWVhcmx5LXllYXJzLXByb3ZpZGVycy1zY2hvb2xzLWFuZC1jb2xsZWdlcy1kdXJpbmctdGhlLWNvcm9uYXZpcnVzLWNvdmlkLTE5LW91dGJyZWFrPyJ9.37t_KhqWQtuMErV5gUFM6uTyrnvR_wAKlKyp11oMKec/s/900610115/br/90704356602-l) – updated 27 November 2020 to reflect the local restrictions

**Covid Plea:**

Please can we remind you that you must keep your child at home if they, or any member of your household, have Covid symptoms (high temperature over 37.8, a continuous new cough or a loss/change in normal taste or smell).  In this case follow the stay at home guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Please also note that **everyone in your household MUST also stay at home** if anyone in your household is **going to have a Covid test or has had a test and is still awaiting results**.  Equally, in line with government advice, please only get a test if you/your child has Covid symptoms (as above) because, as you have just read, your child will then need to stay off school and your whole household will need to isolate until a negative result comes through.  If you are in any doubt, do not hesitate to give us a call and we will be happy to advise you.

**Parent Survey 2020:**

You will have seen from an email sent out earlier this week, that we are seeking views from parents about what you feel we do well, and what we can improve further. Thank you to all of you who have already done this for us. Your feedback is really valuable to us. If you haven’t yet had the chance to put your views across, please do use the following link to complete the survey by 10am 14th December at the latest please. Thank you. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJiEuH98O4gg5HLRmLem8ePiaIQB2qCR5STA4SulWHy0VdFw/viewform?usp=sf_link>

**Staff update:**

Some of you will know that Miss Thompson is expecting her first baby in the spring. We have been busy recruiting and I am delighted to pass on the wonderful news that two super Russell teachers will be making a return to cover Miss Thompson’s maternity leave. Firstly, the incredible Mrs Lewin (who took early retirement from Year 4 in 2019) will be covering the class (end of January to Easter), and then the fabulous Miss Burnage (who also left Year 3 in 2019 to travel and work in Australia) will take over from Easter onwards. I cannot tell you how delighted we all are that these outstanding professionals have applied to return to Russell. We are very lucky and cannot wait to see them again!

**St Andrew’s Christmas Tree Festival:**

I now have details of where we can ‘view’ the trees once they have been entered: <https://www.ampthilltrees.org/> . From the 12th December, you will be able to view the Russell tree. This year, all of our Aviary Club children have worked tirelessly to produce a tree with a theme of ‘Our Favourite Christmas Pantos’. St Andrew’s Tree Festival begins on 12th December (virtually this year!). Please try to find the time over the weekend of the 12th and 13th to ‘log on’ and vote for the Russell Lower School tree!

**Christmas ‘Performances’ and plans:**

Sadly, many Christmas events will be different this year, but we have tried our best to adapt and carry on. The run up to Christmas at Russell will include:

* ‘Bubble’ Christmas Card exchange
* Christmas lunch with teachers and crackers; fun and music – 9th December – menus home soon!
* Christmas Activity Morning/Christmas Jumper Day – 11th December – please come to school in your favourite Christmas jumper and enjoy a festive morning of ‘crafty’ Christmas activities. Donations will be collected for Save the Children.
* Christmas parties – we will continue to have parties in our bubbles, but will just ask for one ‘treat snack’ to be brought in to be eaten instead of sharing party food. More information to follow from the teachers.
* Christmas recordings will be sent home on 17th December – Foundation Stage (The Nativity), Year 2 (Twas the Night Before Christmas) and Year 1,3 and 4 - a Christmas poem or song
* Santa will drop off sacks of presents to each class and send a video message for the children to ensure his visit is ‘Covid-safe’!
* Virtual Christmas Panto on the big screen in the hall with popcorn

**Christmas gifts:**

Thank you for already asking if you can still buy staff gifts!  Yes, of course – and thank you.  This time, any gifts can be taken straight to the classroom by your child.  The teacher will have a place to store these safely for 48 hours before taking them home.  This keeps any risks as low as possible.  Thank you very much!  Please also be assured that any gifts staff give to the children will also have been stored securely for the required period before being bought home.

**Poppy Appeal:**

We were utterly overwhelmed by your generosity this year in collecting for the Poppy Appeal.  With your support we raised over £600 (which is double last year’s).  This would be incredible any year, but in such difficult economic times we know how extremely grateful the British Legion are.  They were bowled over!  Thank you so much for your generosity.

**Reminder: Ampthill Happy Deer for Christmas Competition**

Please see the information and poster below about the ‘Happy Deer for Christmas’ Competition from Roy Tebbutt from Ampthill District Rotary Club. It looks like lots of fun!

*The competition is aimed at encouraging a bit of Christmas Cheer in Ampthill. We would be grateful if as many families as possible would take part in the competition.*

*Any material for a reindeer can be used and we look forward to seeing creative flair and a sense of fun.*

*We look forward to some wonderful entries of photographs of deer at*[***ampthillrotarydeer@mail.com***](mailto:ampthillrotarydeer@mail.com) ***Stay safe for Christmas.*** *Thank you. Roy Tebbutt. For ADRC*



**PTA Support:**

We cannot thank the PTA enough for all their hard work and continued support this term – even in these incredibly difficult fund-raising times they have all been simply amazing! We now have some brand-new Phonics and Accelerated Readers books (£1000), we are all benefitting from the wonderful Christmas Tree in Nathan’s Garden that we were donated courtesy of Woburn Sands Emporium thanks to the PTA spotting this opportunity and the Russell community rallying round to provide nominations. The PTA are also paying for the virtual panto, the children’s gifts from Santa, not to mention all the planning for the virtual Christmas raffle and the great week of fun we are having with the ‘Great Birley Gift Giveaway’. We really do appreciate it – it has made a HUGE difference. Thank you all.

**Assemblies:**

Please do take a look at the website to view our latest assemblies, including values assembly. This half term we are focusing on ‘peace’, next half term it will be ‘courage’.

We have enjoyed lots of Zoom assemblies recently, including: The power of good manners, Anti-bullying, 5 to thrive, Black History and the Right to be Included and Santa Challenge 2020 (with some brilliant Geographical knowledge in it).

**Could you be a Community Champion?**

CBC are calling on people throughout Central Bedfordshire to help them to reach their friends, family, neighbours, colleagues and thousands of other local people, with trusted information and advice related to COVID-19. Sign up and join their existing network of 197 community champions.

Anyone interested in joining their network of 197 Community Champions should visit and register at [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/community-champions](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/community-champions) . Please see the attached for more information.

**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**](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)and not via the class email address.

**Reminder - School Admissions for September 2021:**

Central Bedfordshire have now opened the school admissions process for children starting school for the first time in September 2021. Ampthill and the surrounding area is growing quickly and we were incredibly popular again this year (practically filling all 90 places very early on), so please make sure you make your application on time so that you do not miss out on a place at your preferred school. You have until 15th January to apply for a place. Anything after this is considered a ‘late application’ and your first choice may no longer be possible. Do contact the school office if you need to make an appointment to visit us: [office@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:office@russell-lower.co.uk)

**Please note that you also have to apply for your child’s Middle School place if they are currently in Year 4, this is not automatic. The deadline for this is also 15th January and can be done through the Central Bedfordshire Admissions website. We have been made aware, that the local authority are concerned that a lot of our Year 4 parents have not yet done this. You can follow the link below to do this:**

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions/495/school_admissions_applications>

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 you! ***From everyone here at Russell Lower School, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, safe 2021.*** Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher