**JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

January 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our January 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.*

***Tuesday 18th January –*** *Governor Self Evaluation Meeting 6:30pm*

**Thursday 20th January** – *Census School Meals Day – please encourage your child to have a school dinner on this day as it improves our budget,* Year 3 swimming

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

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

***Tuesday 1st February –*** *NHS Low mood and worries parent workshop at 6:30pm (virtual – see separate letter from Pastoral Team*

***Wednesday 2nd February*** *– PTA EGM meeting, 7:30pm at Wingfield Club*

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

**Friday 4th February** - Y2, 3, 4 Gymnastics Festival (TBC), *Spring reports out to parents in advance of parents’ evenings*

**Monday 7th February** – Parents’ Evening 4:30 – 7pm (in person, see separate letter for details), start of CHUMS ‘shine bright’ week (focus on mental health)

**Tuesday 8th February** – Parents’ Evening 3:45 – 6:30pm (in person, see separate letter for details)

**Wednesday 9th February** – Grow your Classroom Y3 workshops

**Thursday 10th February** – Year 3 swimming, *Dental survey with a sample of FS/Y1 children (permission will be sought in advance)*

***Friday 11th February –*** *CHUMS Shine Bright non-uniform day (children dress in their brightest clothes and donate money to this very worthy cause) More information to follow. Break up for the half term holiday*

**Half term holiday 14/2 – 18/2/2022 – Premier Sport Holiday Camp**

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

***Tuesday 22nd February –*** *Thinking Day – Brownies and Rainbows may wear their uniforms to school today if they would like to, Year 4 Transition Festival at Alameda, Year 4 Swimming begins (10 – 11:30am)*

*Wednesday 1st March – Year 3 Faith Tour (more details to follow)*

*Thursday 2nd March – World Book Day (more details to follow)*

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

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

**Covid update:**

Since we have come back from the Christmas break, school cases have been gradually increasing again. For example, we have been notified of 9 children who have tested positive over/since the weekend across the school. Two of these children have contracted Covid for a second time within a month or so! We currently continue to be in class ‘bubbles’ to ensure, if there is any ‘spike’, that it is contained within the class. I intend to review this at the end of this week, and may stop bubbles from next week (at least in some year groups), if we can maintain low and stable Covid cases. Bubbles would then only be re-introduced if we met trigger threshold points with increased cases again. Thank you for your on-going patience and support with testing.

**A quick summary of recent changes includes:**

* From 11 January in England, people who receive positive lateral flow device (LFD) test results for COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate immediately and won’t be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This is understood to be temporary and for asymptomatic cases. If you have symptoms, still have a PCR test too.
* From Monday 17 January, people who are self-isolating with COVID-19 will have the option to reduce their isolation period after 5 full days if they test negative with a lateral flow device (LFD) test on both day 5 and day 6 and they do not have a temperature. For example, if they test negative on the morning of day 5 and the morning of day 6, they can return to their education or childcare setting immediately on day 6. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 of the self-isolation period, and the second must be taken the following day. All test results should be [reported to NHS Test and Trace](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result?utm_source=14%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19). If the result of either of their tests is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest. Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests or anyone who continues to have a temperature will need to complete the full 10-day period of self-isolation. Further [information on self-isolation for those with COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/self-isolation-for-those-with-covid-19-can-end-after-five-full-days-following-two-negative-lfd-tests?utm_source=14%20January%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) is available.
* As per [Government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person) 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. Due to the current challenges in accessing LFD tests, we recommend where possible that both adult and child close contacts tests on day 1, 4 and 7 within the 7-day period.  Contacts should take this test before they leave the house for the first time each day.

**Attendance:**

Thank you for getting as many children as possible back to school following the Christmas break. We desperately want to keep children at school every single day for the rest of the academic year if we possibly can! School attendance remains mandatory and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children and young people to attend their education setting regularly continues to be a national priority. As usual, schools are ONLY able to grant leaves of absence for pupils in **exceptional** circumstances. Any term time holiday, for any reason, is not classed as exceptional (even if rearranged due to Covid unfortunately). This is because there are 13 other ‘holiday’ weeks.

Regrettably, as is made clear in our Attendance Policy, Penalty notices can and will be issued by the Local authority where a child has any unauthorised leave for at least 5 days in a 12-week school period. Fines are £60 per child, per adult, so for a family of four, can be as much as £240. This money does not come to the school, but to the Local Authority. You can find more about the attendance policy here: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/attendance_and_leave_of_absence_1/521710>

**School Meals Census Day – Thursday 20th January:**

Thursday 20th January is our Spring Census Day. The number of children having a school meal on this day will reflect in our school budget. If our percentage of meals eaten on that day is high it results in more money coming into the school budget. This is crucial in maintaining current standards. **Please support us by encouraging your child to have a school dinner on Thursday. With your support we can make sure Russell continues to receive the highest possible percentage of the available money so the children continue to benefit.** Thank you.

**PTA update:**

You will be aware that every year, at the AGM, the existing PTA committee steps down and a new one is elected.  Last Thursday, at the annual AGM, **we were unable to elect a new committee for the first time at Russell Lower School**- even though the school has a larger population than ever before, and has continued to benefit enormously from the incredible community events and fundraising which significantly increases the 'Russell offer' that our children enjoy.  The meeting was attended by the committee, myself and just 4 other parents.  As such, the PTA (and all its wonderful events and fundraising) is currently unsustainable. **Please consider joining us for the Extraordinary General Meeting at 7:30pm on Wednesday 2nd February 2022**at the Wingfield Club to enable the PTA to have enough support to continue.  You don't need to join the committee, simply be prepared to help out at one event a year, for as little as 30 minutes of your time. More information about the EGM, and ways to 'join'/volunteer will follow from the PTA. Thank you in advance.

**Allergy Aware School:**

As you are aware, because at Russell Lower School there are several pupils and staff who have severe nut allergies, we have been a ‘nut free’ school to ensure that these individuals are able to participate in all the regular school activities without the risk of a serious and dangerous allergic reaction. Alongside this, we have other children and staff with health threatening food allergies which we accommodate on an individual basis within the school. In line with recent Health and Safety advice, the school is changing our stated ethos from being a ‘nut free’ school to an ‘Allergy Aware School’. This enables us to maintain our focus on eliminating nuts and nut products within the school but to also ensure that alternative allergies are equally considered. **Please see our website for** our Allergy Aware letter to parents and policy. Thank you in advance for your support. <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/we_are_an_allergy_aware_school/496669>

**A couple of pleas:**

Can I ask for your support with a couple of on-going and recurring issues please?

* Please can you ask your children not to play football on the school field before and after school? The amount of mud brought into a freshly cleaned school is just horrible! Thank you
* Please be aware that dogs (even being carried in arms) are not allowed on any Central Bedfordshire schools’ site, including at Russell Lower School. Thank you
* We appreciate that parking around school can be a real challenge. Please consider ‘park and stride’ where you park a little distance away from school and walk the last part. Please also refrain from parking in the ‘Residents Only’ section at the end of Queens Road near A&F Motors and parking inconsiderately across residents’ driveways in the school vicinity. This is causing real issues for our neighbours and we have had a large increase in complaints. Thank you

**Safeguarding:**

Please be aware that teachers and school staff must be able to ***see*** adults dropping children off in the morning, both at the classroom and in the Aviary. Please do not send children in alone from another part of the school site. This creates safeguarding issues. Only in the summer term of Year 4 can children walk to the classroom door on their own, and this is with written permission. Thank you for your support.

**Staff update:**

You will be delighted to know that during the Christmas holidays, Mrs Bunney had a healthy baby boy. She and Steve have called him Nate and both baby and Mrs Bunney are doing really well. We look forward to them visiting us soon.

**Ice skating and Aviary Club (Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th January):**

Thank you for all your support in coping with the Aviary being relocated on the first two days back after Christmas because we had an ice-skating rink set up in the main hall. Yes, totally mad on the first two days back, but SO amazing! We had so much fun and really learnt about resilience!

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

Thank you for your feedback regarding the PSHRE and relationships education at Russell. We are delighted that you are happy with the curriculum and will keep you informed of any changes and initiatives along the way. We plan an ‘Emotion Coaching’ workshop for parents at some point in the near future, to share some of the school’s successful strategies with you. Our next focused event will be supporting CHUMS ‘Shine Bright’ campaign in February with a focused assembly, specific learning activities and a ‘bright’ non-uniform day (See calendar above).

**Annual Parent Survey:**

As you know, each year we send out a questionnaire to our parents (and staff) in an effort to understand what we do well and what we could do better.  We use the same questions that Ofsted will use when they visit school next.  This way we hope to have addressed any concerns openly, and in advance. I would really appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete a quick survey (almost every question is multiple choice), so that I can continue to work with the governors to make Russell Lower School the best school it can possibly be.

This survey will be accepting responses until **10am on Friday 21st January**, and first came out in an email to you earlier this month. Thank you very much in advance for your time. Your feedback is valued and vital for continual improvement. <https://forms.gle/MJQpi86EHp4guNC57>

**REMINDER - 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.

**Now arrived:**

Our new bike and scooter shelter in the KS1 playground is a real improvement. Please do continue to encourage the children to come to school actively whenever possible.

**Could you foster?**

Would you like to find out how you can provide a family home to children in your area? Nexus Fostering is a well-established and highly regarded fostering agency, based in Ampthill, who are urgently seeking full-time foster carers willing to foster older children and siblings. The agency is rated Ofsted 'Outstanding' in all areas and place a high premium on the quality of support and care that they provide to every one of the foster carers and, in turn, the children and young people placed with them.

To find out more about becoming a foster carer in Bedfordshire and surrounding areas please call 0800 389 0143 or email foster@nexusfostering.co.uk.

 

**And finally**

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, and for continuing to give us your support during the continuing challenging times.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher