**JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

20th January 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our January newsletter. I hope that you have all had a lovely, restful break over Christmas. It seems a long time ago already now! The few weeks back at school have been very calm and settled, which is lovely to see.

Please note events that are *underlined and in italics* are new since the previous newsletter.

**Tuesday 21st January –** Y4 Transition Festival, *Governors’ Vision Evening*

***Wednesday 22nd January –*** *Herrings Green Farm Visit to Year 1*

**Friday 24th January –** Y2 and Y3 Gym festival

***Monday 27th January –*** *All-weather grass surface begins to be fitted around KS2 Trim-trail (outdoor gym equipment to follow)*

***Tuesday 28th January –*** *Parent governor nomination closes*

**Thursday 30th January –** Open the Book assembly

**Monday 3rd February** – CHUMS Shine Bright Mental Health week

**Monday 10th February –** Parents’ evening – 4:30pm to 7pm

**Tuesday 11th February -** Parents’ evening – 3:45pm to 6:30pm, Safer Internet Day

**Thursday 13th February –** Maths ‘wow’ day, Open the Book Assembly

**Friday 14th February –** Chums ‘shine bright’ mental health awareness day, *Non-uniform day to support CHUMS, Foundation Stage Ice Party Day*

***HALF TERM HOLIDAY – 17TH FEBRUARY TO 21ST FEBRUARY 2020***

***Monday 24th February –*** *Children return to school following half term – please note: there is NOT an INSET day on the Monday as there often is. Children come straight back to school on Monday please,* *Celebration of* *World Thinking Day – Brownies and Rainbows may wear their uniforms to school*

***Tuesday 25th February –*** *Triple P Parenting Course Session 1 (6 – 8pm)*

***Thursday 27th February –*** *KS2 football festival, Book Fair in school 8:40 – 9am and 3:30 – 4pm*

***Friday 28th February*** *–Year 4 swimming begins, Book Fair in school 8:40 – 9am and 3:30 – 4pm*

***Monday 2nd March*** *– 6:30pm Finance and Resources Governors’ meeting, NSPCC ‘Speak Out’ Assemblies to children Book Fair in school 8:40 – 9am and 3:30 – 4pm*

***Tuesday 3rd March*** *– Year 3 visit to Celtic Harmony 8am – 4pm, Triple P Parenting Course Session 2 (6 -8pm, Book Fair in school 8:40 – 9am and 3:30 – 4pm*

***Thursday 5th March*** *– World Book Day come to school dressed as your favourite book character and join in with lots of fun reading activities and themes running in school, Open the Book assembly*

***Friday 6th March –*** *NSPCC Sponsored Circuits event*

***Monday 9th March*** *– PTA Meeting 7:30pm*

***Tuesday 10th March*** *– Triple P Parenting Course Session 3 ( 6 -8pm)*

***Wednesday 11th March*** *– Year 4 Swimming Festival*

***Friday 13th March*** *– Design an egg competition begins, KS1 Multi-skills Festival*

***Monday 16th March*** *– British Science Week begins, Curriculum, Learning and Standards Governors’ Meeting at 6:30pm*

***Tuesday 17th March*** *– Triple P Parenting Course Session 4 (6 – 8pm)*

***Wednesday 18th March*** *– Year 3 Sharing assembly to parents and Year 4 – 3pm*

***Thursday 19th March*** *–Year 4 trip to Verulamium, Open the Book Assembly*

***Monday 23rd March*** *– Full Governors meeting – 6:30pm*

***Tuesday 24th March*** *– Year 2 sharing assembly to Year 1and parents at 3pm*

***Wednesday 25th March*** *– NSPCC Assembly to children, Height and Weight for FS children*

***Monday 30th March –*** *Year 3 Netball Festival, Easter Assembly to children*

***Thursday 2nd April*** *– Open the Book Assembly, Egg Judging Day*

***Friday 3rd April*** *– Easter breakfast morning 8am – 10:30am, Easter hunt (gifts from PTA), Easter Raffle drawn, Break up for Easter at 3:30pm*

***Easter Holiday 6th April to 17th April 2020***

***Monday 20th April –*** *INSET Day – NO CHILDREN AT SCHOOL*

***Tuesday 21st April –*** *All children back at school today, , 9am and 2:45pm Parent Helper sessions*

***Wednesday 22nd April*** *– Y4 Bikeability and Y2 Scooterbility, Big Pedal begins*

***Thursday 23rd April*** *- St George’s Day (Cubs and Scouts can wear their uniform to school), Y4 Bikeability and Y2 Scooterbility*

*Friday 24th April - 9am Condover Hall Year 4 Residential Trip meeting, Year 4 Bikeability, Year 2 Scooterbility*

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

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

**Staffing update:**

Welcome to Becky Cox our new Puffin Class teacher. She is really super; we are so lucky to have her. Puffin Class are already having a wonderful time with Mrs Cox. We would also like to welcome Sara Taylor in Year 1 and Sophia Bunn in Year 4, both who are student teachers. We look forward to working with them all this year.

We are currently recruiting for a full time HLTA to take over from Miss Leece when she goes on maternity leave. We will make a permanent role for the new HLTA and very much hope Miss Leece returns too, so building even further capacity in our fantastic support team. We are also currently looking to recruit a full time (Monday to Friday 12 – 1:15pm, term time only) Midday Supervisor to join our team. If you would like to find out more about either of these roles, or would like an application pack, please come and see Mrs Summerfield our Office Manager.

**We are more popular than ever:**

At this time of year, Central Bedfordshire inform us about how popular we are as the ‘first choice school’ on school application forms. I am delighted, and very proud, to tell you that we have hit an all-time high this year – even beating (by 3 children) our all-time high of last year! In the face of many challenges to schools, including some very significant government budget cuts, I am so pleased that Russell is continuing to thrive. I believe this is mainly due to the excellent staff and supportive partnership with parents. Thank you so much for your continued support.

**Triple P Parenting Course – The Positive Parenting Programme**

We are very lucky to have been able to secure some in-house training around positive parenting (Triple P) and would like to offer you the chance to attend this much sought after course. The seminars are an introduction to the strategies of Triple P through a series of four seminars. These are talks that will provide you with some valuable strategies and knowledge around positive parenting as well as enable you to hear from and share with other parents in a friendly and supportive environment.

**We think it’s really helpful for every parent**

Each seminar content aims to support parents to improve relationships with their children, set boundaries, develop effective responses to poor behaviour and effectively plan for future behaviour.

**Let’s be honest, it’s the hardest job in the World!**

Look out for the separate letter coming out soon and save the dates (all Tuesdays and all in the main hall at Russell 6 – 8pm):

* 25th February
* 3rd March
* 10th March
* 17th March

**School Meals Census:**

Thank you for your support on school census day. As you know, the number of children who eat a hot meal on Census day hugely affects our school budget. Please do continue to encourage your children to eat a hot meal on this day, even if they do not eat one normally. 81% of children had a hot meal last Thursday, which will support the school budget going into next financial year – thank you.

Since we changed our meal provider in December there has been a lot of very positive feedback. Thank you. They provide more ‘real’ food which has meant some children are taking a bit of time to adjust. For example, when we have chicken we have a whole breast now instead of slices (with a few herbs on too!), and salmon fish fingers instead of cod. We are continuing to get the children’s feedback on the meals to ‘fine-tune’ the menu. We want a balance of great nutrition and taste, with real enjoyment. For example, we are looking into changing back to cod fish fingers due to popular demand. We will continue to keep you updated and talk to the children, including running school meal assemblies.

We have received a request for parents who are willing to complete a short survey about children’s lunches **(please note: this does not relate to our school meals, but more to do with packed lunches).** If you would like to take part please follow the link below. The survey is being conducted by Meg Highland who would value your feedback.

It only contains 8 questions: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NK5ZCG5>

**Safety in and around school:**

Can I please remind you that we are a totally **NUT FREE** school. Please do not send any nuts or nut products into school with your child. We have both children and members of staff who suffer with severe anaphylaxis, which is life threatening. Please help to keep us all safe by checking carefully everything sent into school.

**Near miss** – we had a very frightening near miss on Saunders Piece recently. Can we please remind you to drive incredibly slowly around the school site? Roads are narrow and congested and it can be incredibly dangerous for pedestrians. Thank you to everyone who already parks and drives so considerately around our school.

**Talk to the Governors:**

Governors will be attending the parents evening in February. We plan on having a "governors table" so please stop by and ask us questions about the school and governing board or just come and say hello. We would be delighted to see you!

**PTA News:**

I am absolutely delighted that at the PTA AGM in January we were able to form a new committee. Thank you to all the new members of the committee, both with named roles and without, we really do appreciate all your support and hard work! I would like to thank Leanne Scott for her tireless and enthusiastic work last year chairing the PTA. We really appreciate both her, and the whole PTA teams, hard work and money raising over the last year. Yet again it has added a staggering amount in excess of £20 000 to benefit all of the children in many varied ways – not least the start of the new all-weather surface around the KS2 Trim-trail and the new planned outdoor gym! So much was achieved and we are incredibly grateful to them. We look forward to working with Amy and Lucienne (the new Chairs) and the rest of the PTA team again this year.

**School Council News:**

The School Council would like to thank you all for supporting their stall at the PTA Christmas Fayre last term. Thank you for supplying such wonderful (often incredible home-made) cakes for them to sell and then for buying them back again (with hot chocolate of course!) to raise money. The whole event was hugely successful with their stall raising almost £370! The School Council’s chosen charity is the Rainbow Trust Children’s Charity, so we will be getting funds off to them.

The School Council is currently working on an ‘Eco Code’ for the school. We want to do as much as we can to be ‘environmentally friendly’ in the things we do and the decisions we make, whilst continuing to achieve our core educational purpose. If you have any ideas at all that you would like the school council to consider, please do email the school office who will pass them on. Thank you.

Email: office@russell-lower.co.uk

**Reading and Accelerated Reader Book finder:**

Thank you for continuing to read regularly (4 times a week) with your children at home and recording this in their diaries. We know that ‘spaced, repetitive practice’ is the best way to learn to read, and home reading is key to this as well as what we do in school. Thank you.

Some parents have asked how they can check if a book they have at home is in our Accelerated Reader Scheme, or how to buy books they know links to it. Please find below links to AR’s book finder service and the home website. Thank you for your on-going support with this. Reading results continue to be excellent and it is a real strength at Russell.

<http://www.arbookfind.co.uk>

**Safer Internet Day**

Safer Internet Day is now around the corner on Tuesday 11th February 2020. We are very aware of how much technology the children are now using and the influence this is having on their behavior and motivation particularly. We would very much encourage you to be aware of the resources available at the following website:

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

If you would like any further information about keeping your child safe on-line, please look at the website under the E-Safety tab.

**Head teacher for the day:**

I have had the pleasure of two Year 3 children supporting me in my Headteacher role for 2 days over the past two weeks. As a result of a Ball ‘Lot’ the boys joined me in all my daily duties (and couldn’t believe how much walking was involved!) and particularly enjoyed handing out Gold Certificates in our Celebration Assemblies on Friday.

I asked the boys (Freddie Forsey and Albert Baron) for their comments so I could include them in this newsletter. They were as follows:

‘I have seen some great work, super Maths and great Art too! The children have good listening skills. I was impressed by the manners shown around school. So many thank yous and doors being held open, not just for me, but for each other.’

Thank you for your help boys! They were fun days.

**CHUMS – Shine Bright. Wear Bright – Friday 14th February**

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week is 3rd – 7th February 2020. Sadly nowadays, 1 in 10 children has a diagnosable mental health disorder – that’s roughly 3 children in every classroom! We will be supporting this initiative with assemblies, activities and a fund-raising non-uniform day on 14th February. More information will follow shortly.

Please do look at our website ‘Pastoral Support’ Tab, in ‘Useful resources and books.’ We have uploaded some new resources to help with mental health, anxiety and well-being:

* Wheel of well-being (used with all staff and children at Russell and based on international research)
* Anxiety CHUMS leaflet to give you practical strategies to support children
* Mindfulness helps mental well-being resource sheet. Simple, everyday strategies to support children and adults

**School Attendance:**

As you know, we are passionate about ensuring all children have the best possible attendance record. This is because evidence shows us that there is an extremely strong link between attendance and how well children do in their education (and therefore life chances) and consistent school attendance also supports good mental health.

At Russell, we aim for 97% attendance and contact parents where attendance is lower. You will remember all the Redborne Pyramid Schools brought in a new common attendance policy in September, which does include fining parents. Please do look at our attendance policy on the website, or come and talk to Mrs Bunney (who leads attendance) or myself if you would like any support or further guidance on this. We are also happy to discuss possible consequences before you apply for a Leave of Absence if you would like to. We are always happy to talk things through. Thank you for your support with this vitally important policy.

**High Sheriff Citizenship Award 2020:**

Please see the attached information about the High Sheriff Citizenship Award for 2020. There are three categories for the Award – the High Sheriff’s **Adult** Citizenship Award, the High Sheriff’s **Young Persons** Citizenship Award and the High Sheriff’s **Group** Award. The closing date for the nominations is the end of January, so please use the attached information if you would like to make one before then. Thank you.

**PE/Festival news:**

We are very busy with festivals and sporting events this term. Festivals coming up this term are:

* Year 2/3 gymnastics
* Year 2 football
* Year 4 swimming lessons
* Sponsored Circuits with the NSPCC
* Year 4 swimming festival
* Year 3 netball
* Year 4 Bikeability
* Year 2 Scooterbility

You will be contacted via letter if you child/ren has been selected to attend one of these festivals.

Some children have also already attended KS2 sitting volley ball and a year 4 transition event this term.

**Coming Soon:**

All-weather grass around the KS2 trim-trail so it can be used much more frequently to support children’s activity levels.

An outdoor gym in KS2.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, and for your on-going support.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. N. Walker

Headteacher