**OCTOBER NEWSLETTER**

9th October 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our October newsletter. These newsletters are sent out on a monthly basis to keep you informed about what is happening in school.

As things are so ‘up in the air’ at the moment (to put it mildly), we will be taking each half term at a time. Please note events that are *underlined and in italics* are new since the previous newsletter.

**Monday 12th October** – Parents’ Evening 4:30pm to 7pm, Finance and Resources Governors meeting at 6:30pm

**Tuesday 13th October** – Parents’ Evening 3:45pm to 7pm

**Wednesday 14th October** – New Intake Meeting (Sept 2021 starters) at 9:30am (field)

***Thursday 15th October and Friday 16th October*** *– Individual Photographs*

***Monday 19th October –*** *Year 4 Air Quality walk (1)*

***Tuesday 20th October –*** *Year 4 Air Quality walk (2)*

***Wednesday 21st October*** *– Year 4 Air Quality walk (3)*

***Thursday 22nd October –*** *PTA Meeting at 7:30pm (virtual)*

**Friday 23rd October –** *PTA fundraiser Dress Up Day,* School breaks up for half term

**Half term – 26/10 – 30/10 – Premier Sport Holiday Club**

**Monday 2nd November – INSET DAY – School CLOSED to children**

**Tuesday 3rd November** – **Children return** to school following the half term break

***Wednesday 11th November*** *– Year 4 WW1 Day, Remembrance Day*

***Friday 13th November –*** *Children in Need Day (more details to follow)*

***Monday 16th November*** *– Anti-bullying week, Curriculum, Learning and Standards Governors Meeting at 6:30pm*

***Tuesday 17th, Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th -*** *Indian Dance Workshops across the school in class bubbles*

***Monday 23rd November*** *– Road Safety Week*

***Wednesday 25th November –*** *Hinduism Workshops – FS bubbles (Diwali) and Year 4 bubbles*

***Friday 27th November*** *– Foundation Stage Maths Workshop to parents (Loom video link will be sent home), KS1 and 2 Maths Workshops to parents (Loom video link will be sent home)*

***Monday 30th November*** *– Full governors meeting at 6:30pm, Santa Challenge Assembly*

***Tuesday 1st December and Wednesday 2nd December –*** *Flu vaccinations*

***Wednesday 2nd December*** *– Year 1 Phonics lesson modelled for parents (link to video sent home)*

***Wednesday 9th December –*** *Christmas Dinner*

***Friday 11th December*** *– Christmas Breakfast Morning/ Christmas Jumper Day*

***W/C 14th December –*** *Pantomime week*

***Thursday 17th December –*** *Class Christmas Videos sent home*

***Friday 18th December*** *- Break up for Christmas*

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

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

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

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

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

**Summer Challenge:**

Thank you to the huge numbers of you who entered the summer challenge. It was a real success with lots of brilliant feedback from parents and children who took part telling us it was not only really good fun, but gave a focus to the long holiday and meant ‘real life learning’ continued. The certificates and prizes have now gone out to everyone. Thank you for your patience in waiting for the prizes to be delivered, and for taking part so enthusiastically.

**Free School Meals ‘Census’ Day:**

Thank you for your incredible support during the school meals census day. We reached an amazing 87% which is great and will reflect positively in our school budget. This was an incredible achievement at any time, but especially now in the current circumstances. Thank you! There is a second census day in January, and I will ask you again for your support.

**Safety around the school site:**

Thank you for continuing to support our staggered starts and finishes, and all the safety measures around school. Please continue to keep moving onto and off site quickly using the left-hand side of all paths/routes and the one-way systems in place. Please also remain socially distanced (ideally always 2 metres apart), even outside. If the number of cases continues to rise, we may need to move to asking adults to wear face coverings the whole time whilst they are on the school site. We will keep you posted on these safety measures.

**Jewellery and watches:**

Please can we remind you that Jewellery is not permitted in school, with the exception of plain, stud earrings. All earrings should be removed on PE days. Although we do not recommend ears to be newly pierced during term time, any child who is unable to remove their earrings for PE should come to school on PE days with the earrings covered by tape.

Although we do want children to be encouraged to learn to tell the time, we would prefer children not to wear watches (or ‘fitbits’). There are clocks in every classroom and on every playground for this purpose. Sadly, watches get damaged, lost or fiddled with when they are brought in. Please be aware that anything that is brought into school is done so at your own risk. I am sorry, we cannot guarantee things will not get damaged or lost.

**Recovery Curriculum:**

As you know, we are currently delivering a ‘recovery curriculum’ at Russell. The children have ‘bounced back’ brilliantly on the whole – we are so proud of them! In order that we give all our children the best possible chance to ‘catch up’ lost learning now, can we please ask for your support too? If possible please:

1. **Hear your child read every day** if at all possible (but at least 4 times over a week) and record it in their reading diary. There is nothing more important we could ask of you!
2. **Build independence each day** – little things like being able to dress/undress themselves, do up their own coat, carry their own belonging, turn the pages of their own reading book, put their own belongings away all make a huge difference in school. It makes your child feel confident and saves us a lot of time that we can use for learning instead
3. **Build further resilience** and develop a willingness to ‘try your best’ and ‘have a go’ and ‘make mistakes to help you learn’. These skills are perfect to develop at home when trying new things. We talk about the ‘power of yet’. Instead of saying ‘I can’t’, encouraging a ‘I can’t yet, but I will’ mentality

These 3 key things will really support our recovery plan at Russell – thank you very much in advance.

**Remote learning (if needed!):**

You will be aware that Coronavirus cases continue to rise nationally and locally and we have to be prepared for either bubbles to isolate or, if needed, a further closure period! We, like you, want to **avoid both of these at all costs**. We agree with you…remote education is no substitute for the real thing and will never come close. Thank you for all you are doing to help keep each bubble safe, and to keep us all in school.

However, we need to hope for the best, whilst planning for the worst. In that respect, you will know that we have experimented and sought feedback on 3 main remote methods:

1. Home learning ‘packs’ on the website
2. Loom videos/recorded lessons
3. Trial of Google Classroom with a small group of children and parents in Year 3

In addition, we put out a request for feedback via a Google Form so we knew your ‘Ability to access remote learning during Covid 19’. This has given us valuable feedback. That you for the massive response. Over 322 parents have already completed it. Thank you. Some of the main finding were:

* 99.7% of you have access to wifi at home
* 48% of your children have their own device to use
* 60% of you prefer a mix of ‘live’ teaching at set timetabled times and pre-recorded session. This was overwhelmingly the favoured option
* You told us that learning in school is best and you don’t want remote education – we completely agree!

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this. We have read every comment – and you made some brilliant ones! We will continue to develop our remote learning policy and improve our offer further – whilst hoping we never have to use it again!

**Parents’ Evenings:**

Thank you for your patience and understanding regarding holding remote Parents’ Evenings. We *think* we now have all your appointments booked! (If you didn’t book an appointment we have made one for you. This will be a telephone consultation and we will email you letting you know when we will call. Please remember it is likely to be a ‘no caller ID’ number.)

We have never attempted to use technology across the school on this scale before – and really hope the wifi can cope! We have been assured by our technicians, Partnership Education, that it can. Please bear with us over the two evenings. If things go horribly wrong, we promise you will get contacted in due course with an alternative date and time; your parents’ evening will happen. Thank you in advance for understanding, and supporting us to keep to our strict time limits to stay ‘on track’. Fingers crossed!

**Sharing Assemblies:**

Sadly, we are currently unable to offer sharing assemblies. We will review this ‘offer’ later in the year.

**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 the class email address.

**Music Mark School:**

We are very proud to have been awarded the ‘Music Mark’ for our curriculum and extra curriculum work during the last academic year. As soon as we can, we hope to resume as many of our musical offers as possible. We are continuing to teach music as part of our curriculum and to offer peripatetic instrument lessons. Do let us know if your child is interested in learning an instrument.

*“Music Mark believes in the fundamental right to experience a high-quality music education for all children and young people, in and out of their schools.”****Bridget Whyte, Chief Executive***



**Christmas ‘Performances’ and plans:**

Sadly, we will be unable to continue with our usual Christmas ‘shows’ where we invite you into school to watch the nativity and Christmas productions. However, each class will be planning to put together a short Christmas performance which we will record and ‘send’ to you.

Wherever possible, we are finding creative ways to carry on regardless! For example, our Christmas Breakfast Activity and Christmas Jumper Morning will continue for the children, but we will be unable to invite parents in, and we are investigating an on-line pantomime instead of our usual theatre trip. It is incredible how we are all adapting! Rest assured, we will still have lots of Christmas magic and fun at Russell!

**Sports and events at Russell:**

You will see from the calendar that we intend to continue with everything we possibly can in a Covid-secure way. For example, we will still have some permitted visitors into school (such as the Hindu workshop) so that the children can continue to access a broad and rich curriculum. In addition, we still plan to get ‘out and about’ going for walks around Ampthill in our bubbles (such as the Year 4 pollution walks). Again, we have undertaken careful risk assessments to ensure the children and staff are not at any greater risk than staying in school.

Sporting festivals continue too, but with adaptions so that we take part from school (joining virtually) and in bubbles. This term we will experience:

* Y3/4 Dodgeball
* Y3/4 Table tennis
* Y3/4 Sports hall athletics
* Whole school cross-country
* Y1/2 Tennis
* Y1/2 Rugby

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

Have a lovely, safe weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher