24th February 2021

**Keeping in touch 6**

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Return to school:**

Following on from my email earlier this week and the Prime Minister's announcement, I am as ***delighted*** as I am sure you are, that Russell Lower School will **re-open to all children in all year groups on Monday 8th March.**

The start of 2021 has been one of the most challenging periods of our lives. We have all experienced the stresses, anxieties and difficulties of the national lockdown and its impact on our ability to come to school, to learn and to be sociable. Not to mention the economic ‘cost’ of the pandemic to so many. To further compound this, it has also come at the darkest, most miserable and coldest time in our calendar year. In addition, by now we all know someone who has had Covid, some of whom have lost their battle with this terrible virus. To everyone who has experienced the pain of losing someone during this time, please accept our most sincere condolences. Thank goodness, we are beginning to see some more promising signs ahead. We know this period of remote learning and lockdown has put untold pressure on parents like never before. We are so very grateful for your incredible hard work, support, tenacity and dedication in ensuring your children have stayed safe and learning during this time. Thank you for ALL your phenomenal support – you all deserve medals!

As I said to you in my email earlier in the week, we will be continuing with ALL our Covid secure measures in school.

**We will continue with staggered starts and finishes from 8th March**.  These will be the same as they were before Christmas.  A reminder of these is below.  Please use the appropriate gate, face coverings and maintain 2m social distancing at all times.  This will continue to keep us all safe and avoid any more bubble closures, or time out of school.

**The Aviary before and after school club will also recommence on Monday 8th March**.  This will be in year group bubbles and have limits on the numbers of children we can safely accommodate.  Please use the usual booking methods if you would like to use this facility.  Extra-curricular clubs such as sports clubs, French, Art, Drama etc. will not recommence immediately, but will start again after Easter.

As previously, please do not send your child into school if they, or anyone in your household, has Covid symptoms, or is awaiting Covid test results.

**Timings - staggered starts and finishes from Monday 8th March for all children:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gate** | **8.40am – 3.10pm** | **8.50am – 3.20pm** | **9.00am – 3.30pm** |
| **Foundation**  **Stage** | Greenfinch | Owls, Dove | Swift, Wren |
| **Main Queens Road** | Penguin, Swan | Puffin | Robin |
| **KS2**  **Field/A&F Motors** | Blackbird, Starling | Goldfinch, Nightingale | Woodpecker, Kingfisher |

**Catch up or Recovery?**

As I have said in previous letters, all our children have experienced the same terrible disruption to their learning over two academic years now. Our view at Russell is that we will work to ‘catch children up’ to their age-related expectations according to the grid below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current age of children:** | **Aim to be at least ‘age-related’:** |
| Year R/FS and Y1 children | By the end of Year 2 |
| Year 2 and Year 3 children | By the end of Year 4 |
| Year 4 children | By the end of Year 6 (end of KS2) in transition with Alameda and Woodlands/next schools |

We will not ‘panic’ or rush to do this just in this academic year, as this would put far too much pressure on the children. We are all for high expectations, but those have to be realistic and avoid inducing anxiety in anyone. From the 8th March, we will settle the children back to school quickly, focusing on rebuilding relationships, friendships and confidence as a priority. Please try not to worry about anything else at this point. Teachers will work quickly to find out where the gaps in learning are and put an appropriate plan in place.

We know children and parents have suffered even more during this third national lockdown and would encourage you to email your child’s class teacher, or call school, if there is anything you think we need to know about that will support your child settle back, in advance of 8th March. Thank you.

Below is a letter from the Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson, which is to reassure parents about the planned start back:

<https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/02/23/an-open-letter-from-education-secretary-gavin-williamson-to-parents-carers-and-guardians/?utm_source=24%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19>

Alongside this letter, the DfE have also issued updated guidance for parents:

[what parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=24%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) and[parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-of-children-attending-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=24%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).

If you have any queries or concerns about the return to school, please do not hesitate to contact us. We simply cannot wait and are counting down the days!

**The PTA**

You may well have joined the PTA on Saturday 20th February to enjoy some incredible magic and ‘Skittleman’ fun. Along with our superb PTA, he put on an excellent FREE virtual magic show for the children (and parents!) to enjoy. We had some incredible feedback and I want to thank all of our parents for your fantastic support with the event. It certainly did bring some much-needed sunshine to our school community during lockdown and half term!

I would also like to thank the PTA for their hard work and tireless efforts to get this all to come to fruition. It was no easy feat, especially in such short timescales, but I am sure you will agree that it was a resounding success. Thank you to Sarah and Grace the PTA Chairs, and to all the other PTA members who gave so freely of their time and energy!

Look out for more Skittleman fun in the future.

**More Inspiring Music Home Learning Lessons for you:**

Does your child love music? Do you want to broaden your child’s curriculum ‘diet’? Inspiring Music have designed these sessions (below) to be as kinaesthetic (active) as possible and included in each a non-screen activity.   Each page contains a variety of KS1 and KS2 appropriate musical activity videos as well as a self-marking Active Listening Quiz, which is designed to teach students about a specific type of music.

* [Home Music Sessions (Folk Music) from Inspiring Music](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDksInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAyMjIuMzU2NDQ5NzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3NpdGVzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20vdmlldy9ob21lbXVzaWNzZXNzaW9ucy1jb250aW51ZWQvc2Vzc2lvbi01LWZvbGstbXVzaWMifQ.LO8Q4n0OrYaXRqNtI4lk7-8i_OBCEOY7xEEFUWwhrmk/s/900610115/br/98152130300-l)
* [Home Music Sessions (Brass Music) from Inspiring Music](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAyMjIuMzU2NDQ5NzEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3NpdGVzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20vdmlldy9ob21lbXVzaWNzZXNzaW9ucy1jb250aW51ZWQvc2Vzc2lvbi02LWJyYXNzLW11c2ljIn0.vHOSdKCP6pIniLSq6RXozPv67AzTj6OVHkriW0AQi2U/s/900610115/br/98152130300-l)

**Assemblies:**

This week’s assemblies:

World Thinking Day (22/2/21) helping children to be calm and think clearly to make good choices – Mrs Walker (FS and KS1)

Values – Happiness - Mrs Bunney (KS2)

**Key dates:**

* **Thursday 4th March** – World Book Day – look out for lots of ‘themed’ learning this day around the book ‘Chalk’ by Bill Thomson, lots of ‘Masked Reader’ fun (I can’t tell you…it’s a surprise!) and optional dressing up. More details to follow
* **Thursday 4th March** – 6 – 7:30pm – NHS Stress and Well-being workshop for parents (Virtual)
* **Monday 8th March** – All children back to school (following the same pattern as before Christmas), Finance and Resources Governors’ meeting at 6:30pm
* **Friday 12th March** – Design an egg competition begins
* **Monday 15th March** – Curriculum, Learning and Standards Governors’ meeting 6:30pm
* **Thursday 19th March** – Red Nose Day – This year’s theme is ‘Share a Smile’. Get your best jokes ready for a joke themed day!
* **Friday 26th March** – Easter Activity Morning in school (sadly, without parents), Easter Hunt (in school), Break up for Easter holiday at 3:30pm

**Easter holidays 29th March to 9th April**

Premier Sports Holiday Camps running over both weeks of Easter holidays at Russell – details from Premier Sport, Mr Norman and Mr Cooksley to follow next week

* **Monday 12th April** – All children back to school (NO INSET DAY)

**How will the rest of the year ‘pan out’ and what can we expect?**

It is a very good question! Sadly, we don’t yet know what we will be able to do and what we won’t in terms of normal school events and trips. We will gradually make decisions, based upon careful risk assessments as we go. We will do our best to keep you informed in a timely manner and thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

I will write a further KIT 7 letter next week.

Please do take care and stay safe and well.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher