**DECEMBER NEWSLETTER**

December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our latest 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 or amended since the previous newsletter.*

**Tuesday 12th December –** Year 2 Christmas Theatre Trip (am), Foundation Stage Christmas Theatre Trip (pm)

**Wednesday 13th December –** Extra New Intake Meeting 2024 at 9:30am (due to overwhelming demand), 1:20pm Violin/Viola assembly (more details to follow)

**Thursday 14th December –** Year 1 Superhero Day, Choir perform at two care homes in Ampthill (pm), PTA/RoundTable Santa Sleigh around Ampthill from 5:30pm

**Friday 15th December -** Christmas activity morning with parents (9 – 10:15 am), Christmas Jumper non-uniform day

**Tuesday 19th December** – Last day of the school term, break up for Christmas today

**CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY Wednesday 20th DECEMBER – Tuesday 2nd JANUARY 2024**

**Tuesday 2nd January 2024 – INSET Day – SCHOOL CLOSED TO ALL CHILDREN**

**Wednesday 3rd January 2024 –** ALL children back to school today

**Thursday 4th January 2024 –** 2:45pm – Parent Volunteers in School Induction sessions, (more information to follow)

**Friday 5th January 2024 -** Extra New Intake Meeting 2024 at 9:30am (due to overwhelming demand this year)

***Wednesday 10th January –*** *Year 1 have Herring Green Farm visitors into school*

***Thursday 11th January*** *– PTA Meeting at 7:30pm, Wingfield Club – all welcome*

***Monday 15th January –*** *Full Governors’ Meeting, 6:30pm*

***Thursday 18th January*** *– School Meals Census Day – please help us to maximise our budget by getting your child to have a school meal this day, if at all possible – thank you. More information to follow*

***Saturday 20th January*** *– PTA Cinema event at Russell – more details to follow*

***Monday 22nd January*** *– Author visit and workshops for Year 4*

***Thursday 25th January*** *– Year 4 athletics festival at Alameda*

***Monday 29th January*** *– Safer Internet Assembly*

***Friday 2nd February*** *– 9 – 9:30am Writing Workshop for parents (Y1 – Y4) with Mrs Johnson and Mrs Wolf*

***Monday 5th February*** *– CHUMS shine bright week and assembly*

***Tuesday 6th February*** *– Safer Internet Day*

***Friday 9th February*** *– CHUMS ‘Shine Bright’ non- uniform day to raise money for this worthy charity – more details to follow*

***Monday 12th February***  *– 3:45pm -7pm – Parents’ Evening*

***Tuesday 13th February*** *– 3:45 – 6:45pm – Parents’ Evening*

***Wednesday 14th February*** *– Local Authority visit to school*

***Thursday 15th February***  *– Foundation Stage ‘Ice Day’ – to be confirmed*

***Friday 16th February***  *– Break up for half term*

**FEBRUARY HALF TERM HOLIDAY Monday 19th February – Friday 23rd February 2024 – Premier Sports Camp at Russell**

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

**Staffing update:**

We would like to thank Ms Sherie Titmus and Ms Leah McCabe for all their hard work and support as part of the incredible Russell staffing team. We will miss them across their Learning Support, Midday and Aviary roles, but wish them well as one begins a new role and one moves away from the Ampthill area.

**Resilience – the focus for the year:**

In the post-pandemic ‘shadow’ we have noticed that so many of us (children and adults) need to build our resilience back up again (both mental and physical). To begin this process, we have had staff training, held assemblies for the children and run parent workshops (slides can be found here: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/parent_workshops/180818> )

Being resilient is a very important life skill: being able to cope with any of life’s challenges and being able to ‘bounce back’ with a positive ‘can do’, solution-focused approach is a key skill for life. Many parents have asked us how they can help at home. There will be ‘Top Tips’ coming in the January newsletter, but in the meantime, please do look at the slides (link above) for more information too.

**Parking**:

Please can we all park safely, legally and considerately around the school site? Parking just a short walk away often works really well. Please avoid parking across driveways, in non-parking areas (such as the cobbles next to the garages on Neotsbury Road) and on pavements, as our parents with pushchairs cannot get past without going onto the road which is so dangerous for all concerned. Thank you.

**Dogs:**

Dogs and puppies - I am really sorry but our school is a **‘no dogs’ site**. This is the case between 7:45am and 6pm. Please do not bring any **dogs anywhere onto the school grounds** between these times, even if carried in your arms. Thank you very much for your support. At the end of November, a dog that was tethered to a post down by the wooden entrance gate jumped up at and bit a Ladybirds Nursery child. It broke the skin around her eye and left her with a bruise. If you do bring a dog to school, **it must be left outside of the school grounds – this means beyond the school fence perimeter.** Thank you for your support. We have very young children to protect.

**Fancy an outdoor challenge for all the family – it is so good for us, especially at this time of year:**

One of our parents has tipped us off about a fantastic challenge that they have taken part in for a few years now. It has really benefited their family, why not try it in yours?

It's called the **1000 hours outside challenge**. In short, a paper was published which explained that children spend approximately 1000+ hours on screens a year so this is a 'Challenge' to spend 1000 hours a year outside instead, or as well!

In 2022, our parents and their family hit 1140 hours and they are on track to hit this again this year.

There is an app you can use to track your hours and a Facebook page where people support each other and share fun ideas to increase hours outside.

There are also a few resources to get the children involved, such as colouring in pages where each little block you colour in represents an hour. Find out more here:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/EE9uwrQXFWQ4ja44/?mibextid=K35XfP>

[https://www.1000hoursoutside.com](https://www.1000hoursoutside.com/)

We thought some families might enjoy it as much as they have.

**Foundation Stage and Year 2 performances to parents:**

Thank you for your incredible support last week in attending our FS and Y2 performances – you really did pack the house out! There was standing room only (and not much of that!), to see the children’s shows. They were absolutely buzzing with excitement and their faces lit up when they saw you all. Thank you for all your support, including learning lines, providing costumes and learning (and listening to!) our songs.

**Christmas Events:**

Thank you for all your support over recent weeks.  It has been a lot of fun!  We enjoyed eight opportunities to get parents into school (three x Year 4 Samba performances, two x Year 2 Performances and two x Foundation Stage Nativities) as well as having a brilliant Christmas Lunch on Wednesday with a wonderful visit to 'Elfridges' for many children too.  We cannot thank the PTA Elves enough for giving up their days to deliver such amazing Christmas magic and fun! Thank you to everyone involved.

…And we still have Christmas Jumper Day/Christmas Craft Activity morning to look forward to on Friday too!

**PTA Mistletoe Mingle:**

A huge thank you to the PTA and the ‘mum’s’ choir who arranged and supported the ‘Mistletoe Mingle’ at Russell recently. It was a beautiful, crisp and cold winter’s evening and the hot chocolate and mulled wine went down a treat! The Christmas Tree (donated and decorated by the PTA) looks wonderful in Nathan’s Garden too. Thank you to everyone for your support and hard work; it got the festivities started beautifully.

**Christmas Tree Festival 2023 - update:**

On the weekend of 2nd and 3rd of December St Andrew’s Church held their Christmas Tree Festival. Russell Lower School’s tree was there with our ‘Russ-cycled’ inspired decorations – all made by the children - and possibly some of the best they have ever produced! They were phenomenal. Yet again, Russell Lower School was awarded First Prize as ‘overall winner’! Thank you so much for supporting us by voting for our tree. That was incredible enough, but the real achievement came in the shape of the choir’s performance on Sunday at 1:30pm. Our choir lead (and musician), Sadie was in the Lakes for the weekend (and of course a foot of snow fell there overnight on Saturday night!) After having to be dug out early Sunday morning, a message came through to Ms. Gallagher and myself to say, Sadie wasn’t going to make it to the church on time. Cue ‘a cappella’ choir renditions of our songs! The children were truly outstanding, being entirely unfazed by this (huge!) change of plan: they just got on with it and sang their hearts out without the music! Hats off to the phenomenal choir and Ms. Gallagher – resilience was firmly on show that day. Congratulations to them all!

**Reminder - Term dates 2024/2025:**

Please find on the website: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/term_dates_events__galleries/543714> our agreed term dates for 2024/25. These have been agreed with all lower and middle schools in Ampthill, Flitwick and Maulden.

**LAST CALL!!!! School admissions to Foundation Stage in September 2024 and Middle Schools**

It’s that time of year again! Even though the children have only just started in their new year group, you need to make your applications now:

**Children born between 01/09/19 and 31/08/20 are due to start school in September 2024.**

Parents/carers need to make an application to CBC **by 15 January 2024**, even if their child attends a nursery/pre-school on the school site. All the information you will need regarding your Starting School 2024 application is available on the CBC website (see hyperlink below) and in the ‘Starting School Leaflet’ attached to September’s newsletter.

Year 4 parents, please bear in mind that applications for **Middle School are also needed within the same timescales i.e. before 15th January 2024. Please note: this will not just happen automatically.**

For more information, please see information on the CBC website:

[School admissions | Central Bedfordshire Council](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/5/school_admissions)

**Maths and Inclusion Workshops for parents:**

Thank you for attending these workshops. We were delighted with the support, particularly for our ‘Resilience’ focused Inclusion coffee morning. Thank you again for making the time to come into school.

**Russell Lower School Values:**

Each half term, we teach the children about a different value. We then have a weekly ‘values’ assembly where we celebrate the demonstration of this value. The values this coming term coming will be:

**Spring 1**: Sharing and Caring

**Spring 2**: Responsibility and Cooperation

**PE and festivals news:**

Well done to all the children who have taken part in festivals this term, they have been an absolute credit to the school demonstrating both the Russell and RSSP values. Next half term year 3 will begin their swimming lessons and some of year 4 will attend a sportshall athletics event. We wish all those taking part the very best of luck. The year 4 Sports Leaders will also begin supporting the rest of the schools in achieving physically active lunchtimes. Linked to our sports premium we have also been busily working on gathering quotes to provide additional resources for our break times in order to support the children's physical activity outside, watch this space!

**And finally:**

Thank you for all your on-going support this term. It has been a really productive one, with lots of good progress made in so many areas. We are all exhausted now (children and staff) and very much looking forward to a well-deserved rest. ***From everyone here at Russell Lower School, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, safe 2024.***

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher