**Wednesday 13th January 2021**

**Dear Parents and Carers,**

**Keeping in touch – January 2021 - No. 1**

Firstly, thank you SO MUCH for the enormous amount of support you have shown for remote home learning and the Key Worker/Vulnerable bubbles. We realise how demanding remote home learning is for parents (and children) and really appreciate all your hard work. We have had some super ‘lessons’ and some fantastic assignments ‘turned in’! We appreciate that many of you are still working – both at home and out of the home, so you do not have infinite time to spend supporting your children’s learning. Yet again, school is a very strange place without most of your children in it. This is not ideal for anyone, not the children who are in school, the children who are out of it, the staff or the parents. We can all only do our best!

Updated government guidance for parents which covers the new national lockdown period can be found using the link below. We sincerely hope that this will only be in place until we can get everyone back to school safely after February half term.

<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>?

**Key Worker and Vulnerable bubbles:**

As we all know, the pandemic in the UK is now at a critical level.  Thank you for supporting us in following the latest government guidance (7/1/21), which states that, **'Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.'**At Russell, we have over 90 children on our Key Worker and Vulnerable register.  This is over 20% of the children at Russell who are still physically coming into school every day. We are totally full! Please continue to review your own circumstances, and if you can reduce your child’s contact with others, by reducing their time in school we would appreciate it, for everyone’s safety. Thank you.

**Home learning - Google Classroom:**

We have all been on the most enormous learning curve over the last week. Thank you for persevering with technical issues to support children’s learning. **We need all children to be ‘attending’ remote learning please.** This will be absolutely vital to ensure children continue to progress and come back to school without having ‘slipped behind’. Legally, parents still need to do all they can to ensure that their children are educated through this lockdown period (sorry!). We absolutely know how hard this is and will do all we can to support you. **Ensuring your child can access the ‘live’ teaching and continuing to hear your child read every day will be absolutely essential during this period. If we can do anything further to support you to ensure this can happen each day please just let us know.** The great news is that even in week 1, we already have around 66% (2/3) of children joining every lesson live and 20% of each year group physically in school learning. That is 86% ‘attendance’ before we think about those accessing recorded sessions. Thank you.

**The ‘live’ session –** The live session should be a short-ish (no longer than 20 minutes as children really only have an attention span of + or – 2 minutes their chronological age!) ‘teach’ part of a lesson. Teachers will usually use this part of the ‘lesson’ to share the WALT (we are learning to…) or lesson objective using their Lynx file. This provides a similar introduction to if they were at school. Please note that this ‘live teach time’ is not the best time for parents to ask questions or raise queries, that is best done via Google Classroom or email afterwards.

**Attendance –** We need to know that children are a) engaging with live teaching b) doing the ‘work’. If your child’s teacher notices a child is not ‘attending’ or ‘turning in’ work they will contact you and ask how we can help.

**Assignments and Curriculum -** As we continue to learn about Google Classroom, please bear with us. We apologise in advance if we set tasks that are difficult to edit/complete etc. As we receive your feedback we will make appropriate adjustments. We will continue to offer the most broad and balanced curriculum we can, with a fourth lesson from across the curriculum.

**Marking and Feedback** - Every piece of work that is ‘turned in’/handed in by your child should be acknowledged by the teacher by being assigned a mark, or being ‘liked’ (Tapestry) etc. At least one piece of work each day for each child will also receive a personal learning comment.

**Time work will be ‘posted’ –** You have told us how helpful you have found it being able to see the work set the night before, so we will all ensure that all work is ‘posted’ on Google Classroom by the latest of 6pm the previous day.

**Quantity of work/lessons –** The government have set a requirement for schools to set 3 -5 hours of learning a day, with lower school children being at the lesser end of the scale. These hours will be made up of a mixture of ‘live’or recorded lessons, follow up tasks and ‘every day’ tasks, such as reading, TTRS, spelling practice etc.

**Apart from Google Classroom/live learning what else do we need to do?** Apart from ‘attending’ live lessons and ‘turning in’ school work, **keeping reading going is STILL our number one request**. Please try to find some time most days to continue with this. If you haven’t already, you may like to have a look at the 'Oxford Owl' website that you can sign up to for free - this has lots of online reading books similar to those we have in school and they are split into age groups (see below)



Did you also know that your child can still do Accelerated Reader Quizzes from home?  Please visit the Kids Area of the website, Accelerated Reader tab for further information. These sites are great too:

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/storybooks-and-games/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/stories>

Central Bedfordshire Libraries have also offered some support on-line. They have: ebooks, audiobooks and other e-resources available. Anyone can sign up remotely to be an online member of Central Bedfordshire Libraries. Parents can fill in an online form for children (and themselves) to have an online membership. [**www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/libraries**](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/libraries)

**Other learning activities around Google Classroom you could build in:**

* Ask your child to read for 10 mins a day
* Ask your child to use TTRS(Times Tables Rock Stars – Year 3 and 4)/Flurrish (Year 2)/Doodle Maths (Year 1 only)/Hit the button (any year) for 10 mins a day

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/maths-games/hit-the-button>

* Ask your child to practise their spellings (from phonics and spag – spelling, grammar and punctuation sessions)
* Dedicate time to get outside for fresh air and exercise each day - Just a simple walk or kick about in a garden/park would be sufficient. It replenishes our vitamin D and oxygen levels, and just makes us feel a whole lot better

Don’t forget that you are also doing more learning than you think! There is an awful lot of learning in everyday experiences. For example, watching the TV with subtitles on so that the children will be reading without even knowing it. Likewise, cooking/weighing and measuring is Maths, going through old family photographs and talking about times in the past is History, looking at the clock and telling the time each time you change activity is learning to tell the time, counting out shopping, sweets etc. is Maths. Creative and life skills are equally as valuable and important. You could bake cakes, cook dinner together, get the paints out, build a den, listen to or create music, or do some gardening together.

**We have already found that remote home learning is very much like homework – some love it, want more of it and want it harder; while some parents and children wish they didn’t have to do it, want less of it and want it easier!** We simply cannot meet everyone’s needs, but if you would like further learning for your children, on top of that which is already provided, please use the following recommended sources to supplement learning activities:

<https://whiterosemaths.com/homelearning/> (Maths – following our curriculum)

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/> (All subjects)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons> (All subjects)

**Did you know that during lockdown there will be learning on TV?** - programming for primary school pupils will be on CBBC between 09:00 and 12.00 every weekday. **iPlayer** - all episodes will be available on catch-up, via [**iPlayer**](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAxMTIuMzMxNDgwMTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5iYmMuY28udWsvaXBsYXllci9ncm91cC9wMDkzY3Y4NSJ9.Ruc25i2s86sfT-GsHDCkiiUh1xhObhPIahcT-61DYkM/s/900610115/br/92955184740-l).

<https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/kids_area/156> (Russell website - Kids Area – see links to other websites on the left-hand side)

**Consistent routines**

The key to successful reintegration into school (and your sanity!) after this lockdown is having had a consistent routine and expectations throughout.

We all know that we thrive on routine. I know it sounds a bit formal, but an actual timetable up on the fridge could help. I also know some children who actually get into their uniform! Whatever works!

Once again, thank you for all you are doing. **We know that this is a REALLY HUGE ASK**, but we really appreciate it and know your child will benefit from it enormously.

**With all this on-line learning, where can I go to get support to help keep my child safe?**

Most people, including children, have been spending more time online, whether that is in the classroom or at home. This will be the case more than ever during the national lockdown. It is important to have regular conversations about staying safe online and to encourage children to speak to you if they come across something worrying online.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

These resources provide guidance to help parents and carers to keep children safe online. They will, amongst other things, support you to talk to your child about a range of online safety issues, set up home filtering in a child-friendly way and set up age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices.

Don’t forget our E-Safety tab on the website too. Technology, more than ever, really is a wonderful thing if we can just use it safely. What I would emphasise is that **our lower school aged children need to be supervised at all times whilst using the internet/YouTube etc**. The following are very good too:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/new-guidance-parents-and-carers-looking-screen-time>

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

<http://www.digitalresilience.org.uk/>

**Extreme generosity in a difficult time:**

We would very much like to extend our enormous thanks to Mr Jan Telensky of JT Consultancy Ltd who is the very kind boss of one of our parents at Russell. He has very generously donated 20 brand new Chromebooks (like a laptop) to Russell, along with storage and charging cases. These are currently on order and will be available to children, both in and out of school, from next week to support with the switch to Remote Learning (and beyond). Mr Telensky wanted to spread some joy and happiness at this time of great difficulty. He has certainly done that here and we cannot thank him enough! Once these arrive, we will contact those parents who we know are at the top of our waiting list.

**Tips on mental health and well-being and working from home with children:**

This lockdown, even more than the first, is a real challenge for everyone. We know that remote learning is definitely not the same as school learning. It is simply the best we can all do in very difficult circumstances. In recognition of the impact of ‘lockdowns’, Central Bedfordshire Council have produced two leaflets to help with **mental health and well-being** and **working from home with children**. They are **attached** to the email you have received today and are simple, one-page documents if you feel they may help you. In addition, WHO has produced a [poster](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MTcuMjAzMDE4MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy53aG8uaW50L2RvY3MvZGVmYXVsdC1zb3VyY2UvY29yb25hdmlydXNlL2hlbHBpbmctY2hpbGRyZW4tY29wZS13aXRoLXN0cmVzcy1wcmludC5wZGY_c2Z2cnNuPWYzYTA2M2ZmXzIifQ.CiOkmwZrKiHEk4_rt848yhgRrrp3nUPQZOS6aXmw9gE/br/77548013046-l) on helping **children cope with stress during the COVID-19 outbreak**.

**Updated support information for young people and families:**

This is a really tough time for everyone. It was bad enough the first time. We have a tab on the website ‘Coronavirus updates (including Risk Assessment)’ with lots of resources which could help support you and your child. Please do take a look. In addition, please see below for a confidential advice and support line for parents and carers. Do get in touch if you need any support over the coming days or weeks:

Parentline is a confidential text messaging advice and support line for Bedfordshire parents and carers of children aged 0-19. Text: 07507 331456 or see the website below:

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/health-visiting/parentline>

**Could your child now be eligible for Pupil Premium (confusingly called Free School Meals (FSM) even when all children in FS/KS1 are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals)?**

Some parents may find the need to apply for Pupil Premium/FSM, particularly in KS1 who previously received the universal offer and who are now receiving a qualifying benefit.  This [link](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9pbmZvLzUzL2JlbmVmaXRzLzQvZnJlZV9zY2hvb2xfbWVhbHMvNSJ9.je23q3va-e6uGVA4C8htvce_P1QDry482VPD2Xextb4/br/76882480553-l) takes you to the information and the telephone number is 0300 300 8306.  Information for parents can be found at this [link](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDA0MDEuMTk1OTQ5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5jZW50cmFsYmVkZm9yZHNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9pbmZvLzUzL2JlbmVmaXRzLzQvZnJlZV9zY2hvb2xfbWVhbHMvMyJ9.6mutbVnf5ljAY7eZe-yanZkN4SO6JGlO_SA_Gkp6Kro/br/76882480553-l).

**If you think you may qualify, do pick up the phone and ask.**

**We are STILL here!**

We continue to be here for everyone remotely. The best method of contact is via telephone (01525 755664) or via email:

For all general enquires: office@russell-lower.co.uk

For all Special Educational Needs enquiries: send@russell-lower.co.uk

For any safeguarding concerns: office@russell-lower.co.uk FAO Mrs Bunney

For closure provision/Key Worker and vulnerable enquiries: office@russell-lower.co.uk

To contact a teacher about your child’s learning at home: classname@russell-lower.co.uk

To contact our pastoral support team: pastoralsupport@russell-lower.co.uk

Please note: The Pastoral Support tab of the website has an area called ‘Anxiety, Stress and Relaxation’. There are lots of resources here to help both adults and children. Do have a look.

Website: [www.russell-lower.co.uk](http://www.russell-lower.co.uk)

Thank you for all the hugely positive feedback we have received, and the numerous messages of support. We really do greatly appreciate it.  **We know that this is incredibly tough on you as parents too.** No one would ever want to be in this position and we know how hard it can be educating your children at home. **Please do not stress yourself about the home learning.** Please pick up the phone and talk to us and we will do everything possible to help you establish an effective, manageable routine.

We miss the children very much, but know we must follow the government’s guidance to keep everyone in our extended community safe. However, we are already yearning for us to all be back in school and being taught ‘normally’ again!

Thank you so much for your on-going support at this extremely challenging time for us all. I apologise for this extremely long first KIT letter of the year. I will aim to keep you updated weekly, but hopefully with much shorter letters!

Take very good care of yourselves and stay safe.

Many thanks and kind regards,

**Nicki Walker**

**Headteacher**