**FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER**

February 2024

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.*

**Thursday 29th February -** Book Fayre at Russell (more details to follow), KS2 Open the Book Assembly

***Monday 4th March –*** *Local Authority visit to school*

***Tuesday 5th March*** *– Year 4 Swimming*

**Thursday 7th March -** World Book Day 2024 - more details to follow *(come to school as your favourite book character (any character is fine) – the whole school will be reading Paddington books and having a wonderful ‘Paddington’ themed day with a special assembly to get things started)*, *PTA AGM at the Wingfield Club, 7:30pm*

**Monday 11th March -** British Science week begins*, Big Walk and Wheel week begins, Easter in a Box activity with Goldfinch Class,* Finance and Premises Governors’ meeting at 6:30pm

***Tuesday 12th March*** *– Year 4 Swimming, School Improvement Advisor visiting school*

***Wednesday 13th March –*** *Easter in a Box with Nightingale Class*

***Thursday 14th March*** *– KS1 Open the Book assembly at 1:20pm*

**Friday 15th March** - Comic Relief Day (details to be confirmed), Design an egg competition begins (more information to follow), Y2 Rugby Festival for some children, *Easter in a Box for Blackbird Class*

**Monday 18th March** - Curriculum, Learning and Standards Governor Meeting at 6:30pm

***Tuesday 19th March*** *– Year 4 Swimming, Police visiting Foundation Stage with a police car*

**Wednesday 20th March** - Y3 Football festival for some children

**Thursday 21st March** - PTA Spring Discos after school - more information *on Classlist App*

**Friday 22nd March** – *Inclusion Coffee Morning at 9am (see details below),* Year 4 to Verulamium

***Saturday 23rd March –*** *PTA/School Council Litter Pick (starting at school) – all welcome!*

**Monday 25th March** - Easter Assembly *with Rev. Dominic*, Full Governors’ Meeting at 6:30pm, *Foundation Stage walk to Kings Arms Gardens and St Andrew’s Church*

***Tuesday 26th March*** *– Year 4 Swimming, Alameda Science Leaders in working with Year 4*

**Wednesday 27th March** - Condover Meeting for Y4 parents, 9am, (main hall with Mrs Tuck), Year 1 and 2 scoot fit sessions, judging of the design an egg competition takes place

**Thursday 28th March -** Easter Craft Activity morning - come in and join us for a crafty morning (9 - 10:10 (YFS/Y1/Y3) and 9 - 10:30 (Y2/Y4) (more details to follow), Easter Hunts at school, Eco Challenge begins (PTA), Break up for the Easter Holidays

**Easter Holidays 29th March - 14th April 2024 - Premier Holiday Camp on site**

**Monday 15th April** - ALL Children back to school - NO INSET DAY

**Wednesday 17th April** – *5 Year Old’s Oral Health survey in school,* 2:45 pm - Parent Volunteer session (sign up below using the Google Form)*, Year 3 to Celtic Harmony*

***Monday 22nd April –*** *Finance and Premises Governors’ meeting at 6:30pm*

***Tuesday 23rd April –*** *Co2 safety sessions from Hazard Alley – to Penguin Class*

***Wednesday 24th April –*** *Year 3 Faith Tour, Co2 safety sessions from Hazard Alley – to Robin Class*

***Thursday 25th April -*** *Co2 safety sessions from Hazard Alley – to Greenfinch Class*

***Friday 26th April –*** *Transfer Festival for Y4 children at Alameda*

***Wednesday 1st May –*** *Condover Hall Visit for Year 4*

***Thursday 2nd May –*** *Condover Hall Visit for Year 4, KS2 playground markings updated*

***Friday 3rd May*** *– Condover Hall Visit returns, PTA Happy’s Circus event from 5pm (see Classlist App for more details)*

***Monday 6th May*** *– BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY – school closed*

***Tuesday 7th May –*** *Bikeability – Year 4 (more details to follow)*

***Wednesday 8th May –*** *Bikeability – Year 4 (more details to follow)*

***Tuesday 14th May –*** *Golf festival (rescheduled) some Year 4 children*

***Friday 17th May –*** *Cricket festival some Year 4 children*

***Friday 24th May –*** *Break up for May Half term today*

**May half term holidays 27th May – 31st May 2024 - Premier Holiday Camp on site**

***Monday 3rd June –*** *All children back at school – NO INSET DAY, ‘Bounce’ sessions for each class begin today*

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

**Census in January:**

THANK YOU! We asked you if your child could join us in having a school dinner one Thursday in January so that we could maximise our school budget and we had a **90%** take up that day! That is brilliant (last year it was 85% and our best previous was 88% - so you ‘smashed it!’) and this will ensure that we get as much out of the government as we possibly can for the children at Russell. Thank you again for all your support.

**Civic Service:**

Thank you to some of our brilliant Year 4 children (and their parents) for being part of the Civic Service on Sunday 11th of February. What a wonderful job they all did! The children showed the Ampthill community how we got awarded our **Green Flag and became an Eco School** recently. They shared all the actions they had taken and the Eco Code they have created and disseminated. The children did a fantastic job to a very large number of very important local dignitaries! Well done and thank you.

Please find below the link for photos taken from the event:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/benpeet/albums/72177720314728900/>

**Safeguarding update:**

Our number one ‘Russell Right’ is to be safe, and safeguarding children ‘trumps’ everything. As a community, we are all responsible for keeping children safe from harm. We now have a new confidential dedicated safeguarding email address, should you wish to share any information with us that you feel will help keep a child safe. This is:

[safeguarding@russell-lower.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@russell-lower.co.uk)

Please do not hesitate to contact us, if you need to.

Our safeguarding leads at Russell are:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead**: Sarah Knight

**Safeguarding Governor:** Hannah Leech

**Deputy Safeguarding Leads:** Louise Bunney and Nicki Walker

*\*\*\*Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility\*\*\**

**Reading ‘push’:**

Thank you so much to everyone who is supporting us from home with our ‘read 4 x a week’ ‘push’. We know it makes all the difference and we can’t thank you enough for your support. The increased confidence and enthusiasm in the children is definitely evident!

**Fireworks support:**

We want to say a big thank you to the Ampthill Fireworks Committee as this year we were lucky enough to be the beneficiaries of a very generous sum of money which will help us to replace some, now dangerous, old astro turf and safety surface underneath our Reception children's play equipment.  This will cost thousands of pounds and is not covered by any of the money the council/government give us or sport premium money so we are on our own!  As you can imagine, this is fundamental to young children: getting outside, playing, being physically active and safe so we are really grateful to the committee for their support with this.

**Parents’ Evenings:**

A huge thank you to everyone for attending Parents’ Evenings before half term. We consider these meetings an essential part of supporting your child’s progress and education so please expect us to come back to you if you have not yet attended one. Thank you to parents who took the time to give feedback to our Governors – there were so many lovely comments, thank you. We really appreciate it. Thank you also for your suggestions – for example opening Aviary even earlier than 7:45am and ‘scrapping’ the logoed PE T-shirt. We carefully consider all suggestions. Thank you again.

**Parent workshops for the spring term:**

Thank you for your support at our workshops so far this term. There has been a brilliant turn out and lots of support, particularly at our Resilience and well-being workshop at the end of the last half term. Coming up, we have:

**Inclusion Workshop – Friday 22nd March 9 – 10am:**

Come and find out more about the Graduated Approach for SEND and ‘Ordinarily Available Provision’. Everyone is welcome, whether your child has SEND, or not, Mrs Knight would love to see you. Please see the ‘poster’ below and sign up using the Google form: <https://forms.gle/J9MeTWLS2DuJqUeb8>



**Parent Volunteer session - Wednesday 17th April at 2:45pm:**

If you would like to volunteer to help in school, but have never attended a volunteer session or completed your DBS check (disclosures and barring check), please sign up here for our next volunteer session: <https://forms.gle/1CsNJbhUba1FHhTHA>

**Year 4 – walking to and from school independently from after Easter:**

As many of you will know, we very much encourage our Year 4 children to walk to and from school independently after Easter. This builds their confidence and independence in advance of going to middle school in the autumn term. We strongly encourage parents to begin preparing their children for this as this half term is so short. **Very soon, Year 4 parents will receive a link to a Google Form and also some additional information**. This will enable you to tell us what your children plan to do each morning and evening, as we appreciate some may be different to others. Please complete this in a timely manner for us, whilst remembering **children are only allowed to walk on their own to and from ‘normal’ school (not Aviary Club/Breakfast Club or from after school clubs). This is for safeguarding reasons – there are lots more people around at 3:30pm and 8:40am than there are at earlier and later times.)**  The Year 4 teachers will soon begin discussing walking to and from school with the children . Since only one year group walks to and from school, we can implement additional safety measures. Morning registers for Year 4 will be taken promptly and checked first by our office staff. If a child is absent without notification from their adults at home, we will immediately make a phone call. Children who walk home without an adult will be released first to ensure a prompt exit. As part of their lessons, the Year 4 team teaches children what to do in various situations, such as where to meet their adults or what to do if no one is at home. We do not have facilities to store mobile phones, and most parents appreciate not having to send them with their children, reducing pressure to buy phones. If you believe your child needs one for specific circumstances, please discuss it with their class teacher to ensure our safeguarding procedures

are followed. Although you may not be accompanying your child, other adults from different year groups often walk with their children and inform us of any behavior issues ‘enroute’. However, they frequently commend the excellent behavior of our Year 4 children during their walks to and from school.

**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.

**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 2**: Responsibility and Cooperation

**Summer 1**: Friendship

**Supporting Charities:**

Thank you for your continued support raising money for good causes. Soon, we will be supporting Red Nose Day (more details to follow – although nothing ‘special will be required)

In recent months, collectively we have raised:

The Rotary Bake Sale - **£185** for the Polio appeal (£80 more than last year!)

CHUMS - **£350+** (£351.21 cash, plus many online donations – thank you) to support children’s mental health locally

**PE and festivals news:**

This half term there will be year 2 rugby and year 3 girls football festivals taking place as well as year 4 swimming lessons. We know all the children involved in these will not only have a great time but will also develop some very important skills.

We are also excited to have [Scootfit](https://www.scootfit.co.uk/) coming back into school to carry out some very active disco scoot sessions for years 1 and 2. Last year these were a huge success with our year 2 and 3 children and we hope this year will go down just as well, encouraging more active travel to and from school as well as outside of the school day.

**And finally:**

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

Many thanks and kind regards,

Nicki Walker

Headteacher