**JANUARY NEWSLETTER**

January 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 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*, Year 3 swimming*

***Friday 19th January*** *- MP Alistair Strathern into school for an assembly with KS2*

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

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

***Tuesday 23rd January -*** *Mayor, Susan Clinch into school*

**Thursday 25th January** – Year 4 athletics festival at Alameda, *KS2 Open the Book assembly*

***Friday 26th January -*** *Parents’ Evening Slots open at 7am*

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

***Wednesday 31st January -*** *6pm - Parents’ Evening slots close at 6pm*

***Thursday 1st February*** *- Eco Heroes workshops for Year 1*

**Friday 2nd February** – 9 – 9:30 am 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, *7:30 pm - Fireworks Presentation night*

***Thursday 8th February -*** *KS1 Open the Book assembly*

**Friday 9th February** – CHUMS ‘Shine Bright’ non- uniform day to raise money for this worthy charity – more details to follow, *9am Resilience and Positive Intelligence Workshop for parents (see below), Spring reports out to parents today*

***Sunday 11th February - 3pm*** *- Civic Service at the church with some of our pupils*

**Monday 12th February**  – 3:45 pm -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’ (see separate email)

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

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

***Monday 26th February*** *-* ***ALL Children back at school - NO INSET DAY*** *- Thinking Day so Brownies can wear their uniforms to school instead of school uniform if they would like to, Full Governors Meeting and training at 6:30pm*

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

***Thursday 7th March -*** *World Book Day 2024 - more details to follow*

***Monday 11th March -*** *British Science week begins, Finance and Premises Governors’ meeting at 6:30pm*

***Thursday 14th March*** *- KS1 Open the Book assembly*

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

***Monday 18th March*** *- Easter in a box (Y3) and Curriculum, Learning and Standards Governor Meeting at 6:30pm*

***Wednesday 20th March*** *- Easter in a box (Y3), Y3 Football festival for some children*

***Thursday 21st March*** *- PTA Spring Discos after school - more information to follow*

***Friday 22nd March*** *- Easter in a box (Y3), Year 4 to Verulamium*

***Monday 25th March*** *- Easter Assembly, Full Governors’ Meeting at 6:30pm*

***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*** *- 2:45 pm - Parent Volunteer session (sign up below using the Google Form)*

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

**Parent Survey Results:**

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete the parent survey at the end of last term. This will be shared with staff and governors.

Highlights include:

* 99% of parents said that their child is happy at school
* 99% of parents said that their child feels safe at school
* 99% of parents said that they would recommend the school to another parent
* 98% of parents said that children behave well at Russell
* 98% of parents said that bullying is not an issue or is dealt with quickly
* 98% of parents said that their child does well at Russell
* 98% of parents said that they feel that they are aware of what children are learning
* 97% of parents said that if they have ever had to raise a concern, it is dealt with properly (with most parents saying very effectively)
* 97% of parents said that their child has a good range of subjects at Russell
* 96% of parents said that school has high expectations in all areas for their children

***\*\*\*These are phenomenal results and are the envy of other schools - thank you\*\*\****

**What was mentioned by multiple parents in terms of what we do well?**

Brilliant/great/amazing teachers, Brilliant/great/amazing SLT (senior leadership team) and whole staff team (including support staff), wonderful school, amazing school, Mrs Walker/great Head, caring, supportive, friendly, children love school, enjoy coming to school, happy school, great learning, amazing office staff.

**What was mentioned by more than one parent in terms of what we can do better?**

Please can you make more Aviary and after school sports club places available? - *We already have the biggest after school clubs available in the area, catering for ¼ of the school to stay every day. We will continue to think of creative ways to expand this provision, but we may genuinely be at capacity.*

Can SEND parents know more about how their child is supported to be successful? - *Yes, please do see the MAPS sent home, as well as signing up for the extra-long parents’ evening slots for our SEND children: these should provide you with all the information about your child’s support.*

**We are more popular than ever!:**

I am delighted to say that we have had our ‘biggest’ year ever in terms of applications for the school. Our applications for places in Foundation Stage for September 2024 have surpassed 100+ with Russell named as their first choice for our 90 places, which is our best ever application round. Many prospective parents told us it was our ‘incredible reputation out in the community’ that had persuaded them, as well as seeing what a great environment and set of staff we had here during ‘open day’ visits. Thank you again for all your support.

**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 evident!

**Parking issue:**

Thank you to the vast majority of parents who always park considerately around the local area to access school. We really appreciate it. Can I please remind all parents to follow this example and park safely, legally and considerately? We were recently contacted by a neighbour and the police due to an illegally and dangerously parked car and a particularly offensive interaction. A gentleman was returning home from a night shift working for the NHS when one of our parents swore at him and threatened him after he pointed out that they couldn’t park legally or safely where they had. This was in front of children too. The neighbour also has recorded evidence of this. Please can I urge you all to park safely, legally and considerately around the school site, and if at all possible, to ‘park and stride’ so that the children also experience walking to and from school. I know it is not easy and thank you for all your support.

**Children in Need - final amount raised:**

I am delighted to say, after an initial miscalculation (by the administrators - not us): Russell raised **£1734.78** for this incredible charity last term. Simply a HUGE thank you to you all.

**Parent workshops for the spring term:**

As always, we try to offer our parents what they have asked for - you asked for more support for behaviour and resilience at home and a writing workshop. I am delighted to have these in the calendar for this half term. Please sign up below. I have been asked why our workshops tend to be on a Friday morning? This is because, via our surveys, you have told us that this is the best time to catch you and it is when you have childcare (as the children are already at school). Please note, the slides will always be on the parent workshop tab of the website afterwards for your information - we appreciate not everyone can attend. Thank you in advance.

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

Please come and join Mrs Johnson (our English lead) and Mrs Wolf (interventions) to find out more about how we teach writing at school and how you can support from home. This will cover everything from gross motor skills, to fine motor skills, handwriting and complex sentences to writing in a specific genre - all packed into half an hour. Please come and join us and sign up here: <https://forms.gle/NpjmirYZkktG8VsF6>

**Friday 9th February - 9 - 9:45am Resilience and Positive Intelligence workshop for parents (whole school) with Mrs Walker and Karen Potter (coach):**

As you will see below, we have been working hard training our staff and working with children on building our wellbeing and resilience using Positive Intelligence strategies and approaches. Our staff have been so impressed with how this has impacted them personally and at school, and the impact it is already having on children. We know this could have a huge impact on parents too - and equally support us in our parenting to make this more successful too. Please come along and find out about this exciting step forward at Russell. Please sign up here: <https://forms.gle/ute2enXe53StTd1P7>

**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>

**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 be 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.

We have introduced the ‘Russell Recharge’ once a day in all our classrooms since January. The children have learnt to ‘calm their brains’ using the 5-finger breathing technique which enables them to ‘flick the switch’ from the fight or flight side of the brain to the ‘thrive’ side, which enables them to ‘boss their brain’ and take control of their thoughts, feeling and behaviours much more effectively. We have already heard about and seen some great impact around school.

We have been lucky enough to work with Karen Potter, a Positive Intelligence coach over the last term. Here is a little bit about Karen too:

"Having worked as a teacher for 15 years before retraining as a life and mindset coach, my passion is still supporting children, but now I do this by working with the adults that care for them (both parents and educators). It has been a pleasure to introduce Positive Intelligence training to Russell Lower School as part of their whole school focus on Resilience. Our minds constantly sabotage our potential for both performance and happiness. Positive Intelligence uses breakthrough, research-based tools to strengthen the part of your brain that serves you and quietens the part that sabotages you. This helps you to handle life’s challenges with a more positive mindset and less stress, improving your overall mental fitness and resilience. I know first-hand from my own experiences as a teacher and as a parent how vital it is for us to work on our own resilience and wellbeing if we want to be able to support our children with theirs, so I am looking forward to collaborating on the upcoming Resilience and Positive Intelligence parent workshop (sign up above). If you'd like to find out more about what I do you can visit my website [karenpottercoaching.com](http://karenpottercoaching.com/). "

 **Equals recharged ‘calm’ brain** **Equals - resilience** 

As Karen has said, we plan to share much more about our approach to resilience and Positive Intelligence, both in school and for you as parents at home in our upcoming **Resilience and** **Positive Intelligence Workshop on Friday 9th February 9 - 9:45am with presentations from both myself and Karen Potter**. We truly believe this approach has the power to help you personally, as a parent and in your professional life - do come along and find out what it’s all about. Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/ute2enXe53StTd1P7>

**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 1**: Sharing and Caring

**Spring 2**: Responsibility and Cooperation

**PE and festivals news:**

This half term year 3 have begun their swimming sessions and these will move into year 4 next half term. We hope they have fun and develop lots of new skills. Some year 4 children will also be attending a sports hall athletics event at Alameda this half term in which they will take part in various track and field events, we wish them luck! We have recently had new netball posts delivered and some balance bikes in order to support our physical activity across school. This will also be supported by our Sports Leaders getting up and running this half term supporting physical activity during lunchtimes, a great opportunity for them and the other children!

**Community messages:**

**Fostering:**

Could you foster a child? Nexus Fostering based in Ampthill, is a local fostering agency supporting and training foster carers to help and care for local children that are unable to live with their birth families. Unfortunately, the number of children being taken into care in Bedfordshire is increasing so the need for Foster Carers is as urgent as ever.

“At Nexus Fostering based in Ampthill, we’re looking for local people like you to become foster carers. By providing a loving and stable home environment, you can support the increasing number of children and young people in the local area who cannot live in their family homes. Not all children require long-term care. We also need foster carers for short-term placements, respite care, and to provide temporary homes to support young parents and their babies. So, if you have a spare room and are ready to change lives, please give us a call on 01462 431774 or email Rebecca on rebeccar@nexusfostering.co.uk

Please see the attached leaflet

**Beat the January Blues:**

Please see attached details of the Mayor’s ‘Beat the January Blues’ charity event scheduled on Friday 26th January.

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**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