



## Primary newsletter

Friday 5 June 2020

It has been wonderful to welcome Reception and Year 1 back to the Larch, together with our keyworker group, this week. Whilst, of course, rather different from usual, it is remarkable just how well children have settled in their 'bubbles', re-connected so positively with their friends, and engaged with their learning. I would really like to take this opportunity to thank everybody in our community for their partnership in this positive re-engagement in school: parents for their trust and confidence in us and their positivity this week; staff, who have adapted so wonderfully and have prioritised health and safety together with wellbeing and learning - a buzz of learning is now so evident in the Larch again; governors, who have been incredibly supportive and highly engaged in ensuring that all plans are exactly right; and our wonderful, wonderful children!

And also from Mrs Saunders...

We all want to thank Mrs Kirk for her wonderful leadership during these past few weeks.

### Teaching and learning

Years 2, 3 and 4 are continuing to work incredibly hard at home. We remain as equally impressed with the way in which they are showing our school values (resilience and determination in learning) as their achievements in learning too.

This week **Year 2** have worked hard in grammar, recapping adverbs, irregular verbs and contractions. On Friday the children used their knowledge to help solve the mystery, 'Who Stole Mr McGregor's Carrots?' and did a brilliant job! In Maths they focused on number sequences, working out the rules to help fill in missing numbers. The children have shown such dedication to tackle the challenges given! To kick start our topic of 'Rainforest and Jungles' further, Year 2 were tasked with creating posters looking at different types of habitats and the animals that live there. In PRE, as a follow up from learning about the Jewish heroine Esther, Year 2 have been making and designing costumes and props to celebrate Purim. At the end of the week the children were asked to listen to 'Zadok The Priest' by Handel and write about what they would do if they were King or Queen for the day!

In **Year 3**, we have been revising previously learnt concepts and skills, and we have been really impressed by what we have received! The children wrote brilliant animal poems using only similes and metaphors, explained their reasoning behind their interesting inferences about an illustration and looked at different grammar skills. In maths we have revised the 4 operations and we have been really pleased to see the children practising and becoming very strong with their times tables and division facts! We have also received fact files about Julius Caesar, illustrations and research about the flora and fauna of different climates and labelled dissections of flowers. Well done for a great start to the new half term!

In **Year 4**, in English we have been using metaphors and similes to describe a third horrible aunt in James and the Giant Peach and we are moving on to writing instructions for the contents of "the white bag!" For maths over the next couple of weeks we are revising fractions and decimals. Today we are celebrating World bike day with photographic or bike riding challenges or finding the most interesting bike facts- no wikipedia history allowed! Well done Year 4!

And so, to learning in school. When I visited classes on Wednesday, it was just as if we had not been away!

**Bubbles 1 and 2** (Reception) were busy doing big maths, and I was impressed to see both their addition and subtraction calculation skills. Staff were reinforcing some of the important work that you have done at home in supporting children to write their numbers correctly, and apply these to calculations. One hedgehog took this to a wonderful extreme, showing his numbers from 1 - 59 for me! **Bubble 3** (Reception) were busy talking about 'The hungry caterpillar' (one of our texts from our Literary canon) when I visited - I have seen paintings, detailed drawings and wonderful sentences too. **Bubble 4** (Reception) were working on their phonics when I visited and both Mrs Getley and the children were incredibly excited to tell me how well they were doing. From tricky words to all of their digraphs and trigraphs, we are very pleased with their reading. Programming beebots was their next challenge! In **Bubble 5** (Year 1), Flat Stanley has been their text of the week. Much enjoyment and some great writing has been achieved. In maths, children have been learning to add two two-digit numbers (for example,  $24 + 12$ , by splitting these into tens and ones). **Bubbles 6 and 7** (Year 1) were focussing on phonics too - and particularly practising words with split vowel digraphs (for example, 'plate' or 'flute' or 'stone') - do look out for these in reading please! **Bubble 8** (Year 1) were making sure that they were identifying and including nouns, adjectives and verbs in their writing. The Jolly Postman is highly popular too! I know that column addition is to follow! And, finally, when I visited **Bubble 9** (Years 2, 3 and 4) they were totally engrossed in James and the Giant Peach: echo reading is such a great strategy for immersing children in what they are reading and practising the fluency and expression that we need to read and to fully comprehend.

Outdoor learning has been so important this week too - from the outdoor classroom, to walks in the woods, to fantastic chalk drawings on the playground and much more! We look forward to PE Friday this afternoon!

### **Achievements**

To welcome children back to the Larch, we held mini assemblies in bubbles today. A huge congratulations to the following children who have been particular stars:

Bubble 1: Elliott, Nellie, Eva, Max

Bubble 2: Lily, Maggie, Harrison, Kenzie

Bubble 3: Rosie, Olivia, Mattia, Harry J

Bubble 4: William, Felix, Ava, Tunde

Bubble 5: Khush, Leni, Lewis, Loris

Bubble 6: Stanley, Lewis, Ava, Francis

Bubble 7: Sienna, Lois, Harry D, Ellis

Bubble 8: Angus, William, Gemma, Oscar

Bubble 9: Jenson, Lucas, Lily, Thayla

We are so pleased that reading has continued to be such a focus at home. Many of you still learning at home in Years 2 - 4 have popped in to return books and swap books. We welcome you to do this, but please could we suggest that **if you need new books you come between 10am and 11am on a Tuesday and Thursday?** It is lovely to see you and to smile, but it would help us with the organisation of this if we had slots where we can make sure that we are available. We would like to congratulate a number of children in Reception who have now progressed and graduated from reading eggs! Well done to Harry B, Eva, Harrison, Maddie and Max.

We are also delighted to announce that a number of Year 4 children have been successful in their applications to become our very first Larch librarians. A big well done to Lola, Zachary, Holly, Brody, Summer, Abbie, Eva O and Rebecca. Thank you too to Mrs Syme who has been sending out so much helpful information to ensure that we all keep up with our love of reading at this time!

Despite these challenging times, the music plays on! An enormous thank you to all Year 3 and 4 musicians, Mr Taylor and the wonderful instrumental teachers who have ensured that music lessons can continue. It is great to know that music practice and teaching is continuing. Do keep going - because music ensembles, the Larch orchestra and more will be back! Well done to all.

## Exciting developments at Simon Balle

I wanted to let you know of two exciting projects that are taking place here this term. Firstly, we have a new room, the mobile closest to the Larch reception, just beyond the bicycle racks - named 'The Sycamore room.' This room has been completely refurbished, and is a wonderful and very large space. It will be used for Explorers from September 2020, but also for an indoor lunch club, and it has much more potential too - from drama to dance and cookery perhaps... We will keep you updated with photos to follow. Secondly, further playground development will take place in the summer months, with an exciting new structure to be added to the main playground (on the grassed area, perpendicular to the astroturf) - this will provide lots of opportunities for climbing and play, a high-up play and learning space, some shade, and a bike rack for our school bicycles. Again, photographs will, of course, follow.

## Other notices

- Next week (the week beginning 8th June), there are just one or two minor changes to 'bubble' spaces and staffing. Bubble 3, with Miss Ponder, will be moving upstairs to the Doves classroom - please don't worry your children at all because we will take them to their new space on Monday morning just as we did this week. Bubble 4 will be taught by Mrs Getley (as this week) but also by Mrs Prendergast; similarly, Bubble 5 will be taught by Mrs Ludlow (as this week) but also Mrs Lafferty. Bubble 8 will be taught by Miss Pearce. Finally, Bubble 9, our keyworker bubble, will move to the Larch hall on Monday, taught by Miss Boyce and Mrs Hawkins. We are sure that these minor changes will run smoothly - they are important for ensuring that we continue to support home learning for Years 2, 3 and 4.
- On the whole, the staggered drop-offs and pick-ups have worked well this week- and we thank you for your patience with this. A couple of requests from us please, which are really important. Please try to stick precisely to your 10 minute window - this helps us to ensure that there are not too many families gathering at once, and that this process can be as efficient as possible. If your slot is 8.30am - 8.40am, please try to avoid all being ready at 8.30am. If you are waiting for us to open the doors, please do not send children straight in as this risks the mixing of bubbles. We will call to children or announce bubble numbers. At the end of the day, please ensure that your children stay with you and that you leave promptly - again to avoid any mixing of bubbles, which is essential. Many thanks for your support.
- Kids connection - our school uniform suppliers - have moved shop, though they are still close by in Hertford. Their details are below. They are encouraging parents, at this time, to complete online orders wherever possible. For our first **Year 5** cohort in September 2020, I am pleased to let you know that we now have a new PE uniform, which is smart, with our Simon Balle logo, allowing children to represent the school when matches, fixtures and events resume. Black shorts and black tracksuit bottoms are just the same, but instead of coloured house T shirts, there is a Simon Balle PE top (the same for all) which is almost ready to be purchased from Kids Connection.

## KIDS CONNECTION

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- For Years 1 - 4, we hope that you have received your child's report through 'go for schools' this week. We hope too that you were proud of all that your child has achieved so far this year. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with your child's class teacher or with me if there are any questions that have arisen in reading this information.

Apologies for such a long newsletter, but I hope it has been helpful and informative.

***Wishing you all a positive fortnight ahead. We would like to thank all those parents who have made such positive comments and expressed their thanks and gratitude for everything we have done over this difficult time- through emails, letters, videos, social media feedback and comments in the playground. In these challenging times, a huge thank you for the part you are playing in our special Simon Balle community.***

***Mrs Rachel Kirk (Vice Principal) and Mrs Alison Saunders (Headteacher)***