



THE RUSSELL SCHOOL



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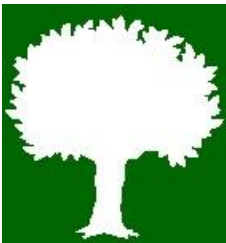
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Headteacher's Update:

Dear families,

And just like that, our first half term comes to a close – and we have so many positives to reflect upon. The children have settled into their new classrooms, built new friendships and developed new skills. We have welcomed parents and carers into school for workshops, parents/carers meetings, curriculum talks and a Year 6 assembly. As a whole school, we have spent lots of time thinking about relationships as part of our new whole-school values. This has been reinforced through our *Rights Respecting* Lens. We have been out and about on trips. We have welcomed visitors into our assemblies. We have spent October reflecting on Black History Month. Our school is enriched by our fantastic community and we have been lucky enough to welcome some of our community to share what Black History Month means to them. We have also celebrated Diwali and explored how lights are symbolic in many different cultures. And last but not least, we have really enjoyed getting to know our new families and we are all very grateful to all families for their engagement, support and advice.

Thank you to all of you who attended our first parents / carers' eve of the academic year. If you didn't make it, we will be in touch to see if we can set up an alternative meeting as it is such a valuable experience. As promised, we will invite families back in to look at books next half term. Further details are below.

The Friends of the Russell School have been very active, running a much-enjoyed Spooky Disco last Friday and we held our AGM at the beginning of this month. There is a whole page below dedicated to our PTA activity so please do have a look. As part of their amazing work, and in order to celebrate our new addition to the school hall (see below), we are delighted to tell you that we will be hosting a Nutcracker-themed piano recital on Thursday 20th November from 6.30pm. This is a really exciting opportunity and one not to be missed! More details below.

After half term, your children will be moving on to new topics and areas of learning. Do talk to your children about their learning highlights of the first half term. On **Tuesday 18th November at 3.15pm, Yr 1- 6** families will have the opportunity to see some of these highlights in books. Please come in to your children's classrooms at the end of the day and your children will share their learning with you. If you have children in a number of classes, you are welcome to move around as you need to.

As you know, school attendance is of significant national importance, with updated guidance given to schools. The school's overall attendance for the first half of the autumn term is now significantly below the national average, which is very disappointing. Of course, some of this is due to illness but some is due to term-time unauthorised holidays. As I have shared before, please be aware that there is now a national threshold for considering a penalty notice. **The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. One school day counts as two sessions.** As a school, we consider penalty notices from the start of the Autumn 2 term. Nevertheless, we will continue to consider individual circumstances and will always try to find ways to support families and children around attendance in order to avoid penalties.

At some point in the next half term, we will hold a 'stay inside' (lockdown) drill in school. We will talk to the children first, before we action this, ensuring this is managed carefully so as not to cause upset. We will use the example of a deer from Richmond Park getting on to the school site, meaning we all have to stay inside.

Thank you to all of you, as ever, for supporting the school. We have had a great first half-term and I look forward to the next half. But first, I hope you all have an opportunity to enjoy some rest, relaxation and family time and to all our families who celebrated Diwali, I hope you had a wonderful time with your families.

Laura Brooks

Headteacher

Mobile Storytelling Library Brought to Life!

Some of you may have noticed the addition of our beautiful, bespoke mobile library which was created for us as part of last year's history and orchard planting project, The Mapping of Yggdrasil. The intricate, hand-carved designs are the work of the children and the library is now topped with the viking-inspired creations which Year 5 made last week as part of their history workshop. A huge thanks to Parent Eleanor for bringing this project to life.



Friends of The Russell School Focus:

Newsflash!

♪ A Grand Arrival: Our New Yamaha GB1 Baby Grand Piano 🎹



There's a new star in our school hall — a stunning **Yamaha GB1 baby grand piano**! This beautiful instrument marks an exciting new chapter for our music and performing arts and for the whole school community.

Music is at the heart of life at our small (but mighty!) school. For a school with a roll of just 202 pupils, our musical achievements are nothing short of remarkable — from *Russell Rocks*, our summer fair and music festival, the thriving *Russell School Orchestra* (something not at all common for a primary school, less so a small one like ours!) to last year's *October concert at St Andrew's Church* and festive *Carol Singing at Ham House*. Even Ofsted have praised the strength of our music provision and the opportunities it offers our pupils.

The arrival of the Yamaha GB1 will not only inspire our young musicians but also open up new opportunities for the school. We hope to use it for concerts, performances, and music exams — and to generate revenue by hiring our hall for musical events and dance performances. It's an investment that will enrich our children's learning, the wider community, and the school's future.

We would like to extend our heartfelt **thanks to all the parents, carers, and children** who have helped to make this possible — whether through organising or performing in musical fundraising events, baking cakes, Bounce-a-thon participation sponsorship, seeking grant funding or simply cheering from the audience. Your passion and generosity have made a lasting difference.

Funds raised by YOU through the Friends of the Russell School (PTA) have funded, and continue to fund, many wonderful activities and resources such as:

- Subsidised class trips to Sayer's Croft (Y5), Thames Young Mariners (Y4), Isle of Wight (Y6), Farm (Y1 & Y3)
- Our very own stage
- A weekly Gardening club
- Vocal lessons (Y4)
- Music Tech lessons (Y5)
- Pupil Parliament trip
- A school orchard
- Repairs to the tree fort and play equipment

The success of our musical fundraising reminds us what we can achieve together. Whether your passion is for art, sport, science, gardening, or community projects — every contribution helps our school to grow and shine.

Let's continue to make a joyful noise together — and keep music (and creativity) alive in every corner of our school!

Save The Date!



To celebrate the arrival of our beautiful new grand piano, Tchiakovsky's *Nutcracker* will be coming to School next half term! The London-based, globally-renowned pianist Alexandra Dariescu will be performing a special, virtuosic one-off performance for the children, families and friends of the Russell School on the evening of **Thursday, 20th November 2025**. More details about tickets will follow shortly but please reserve the date and let your friends and family know! This is a concert not to be missed.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/manage/events/1827654516859/details>

The Russell School Education Fund (RSEF)

The Russell School receives its funding from the government on a per-pupil basis, but student numbers are much lower across the UK than they have been in the past – and Ham is an area which is particularly affected by this issue. **We currently have 25 spaces across the school which accounts for over £100,000 of funding.**

School budgets are being stretched to cover increasing overheads, meaning the school must make difficult decisions on what can be prioritised.

The RSEF is allocated at the discretion of our amazing headteacher Ms Brooks to invest in the future of our school, and to ensure we can continue to provide a creative, exciting curriculum for our children.

We really appreciate the contributions of existing donors, and we understand that some families are not able to donate to this voluntary fund.

Each year we will update parents and carers on how the money is spent.

As a guide, a donation of £1 or £2 a day per child would make a huge difference. Anyone who is unable to make this level of donation is of course welcome to contribute a smaller amount, and larger donations are greatly received if your circumstances allow.

Together, we can achieve great things.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a government scheme that allows us to claim back 25p for every £1 you donate, **at no extra cost to you**. If you are a taxpayer, you can opt to add Gift Aid to your donations.

If it's easier, simply scan the QR code below:



Nursery

Our Nursery children have been busy little explorers, investigating the world around them and making exciting discoveries!

They experimented with magnets, testing which materials stick and which do not, and used torches to explore light and shadows, observing how colours and textures change in darker spaces.

As part of our Black History Month learning, the children loved listening to and acting out the story Handa's Surprise. They explored different ways of moving their bodies as they pretended to be animals from the story. We also learned how people greet one another in Kenya and enjoyed listening to the rhythmic beats of an African drum while singing an African song, Kye Kye Kule. Nursery children expressed their creativity through beautiful block prints.

This week, our Nursery children celebrated Diwali, the Festival of Lights. They had a wonderful time making and tasting traditional coconut sweets, exploring textures and smells as they mixed the ingredients. It was a fun, hands-on activity and everyone agreed the sweets were delicious.



Reception

It was all about celebrating in Reception! We started off the week exploring the Hindu festival of Diwali. We made Rangoli patterns using coloured powder, we dressed in Indian clothing and tried on bindis! We listened to the story of Rama and Sita and understood why it is called the festival of lights, with diva lamps guiding Rama and Sita home. We also made our own diva lamps using clay and gems. Then we started to look ahead to the half term with many children excited about Hallowe'en! We had pumpkins in the classroom which children were keen to carve and explore. We used all our senses to describe what we could see, smell and feel inside the pumpkin, with children describing it as stringy, slippery and *smells like sweets*! It's been a fantastic term of getting to know all the children during our 'This is me' topic. Next term, we will be talking about all the weather changes in more detail during our 'Autumn is here, Winter is coming' topic.



Year 1

What an amazing first half term! The children have accomplished so much already in such a short space of time and I'm incredibly proud of them. It is great to watch the children develop a love for reading and become more confident with their writing. Their fluency in maths has improved and they have been particularly enjoying their shape unit. To end the half term we have had a special collaboration with Year 6 to consolidate our history knowledge from our topic *School Days*. The children have been immersed into school life in the Victorian era. I hope the children have a well-deserved rest and you all have a wonderful half term! Miss Dittrich

Year 2

Year 2 have finished their first half term with a flourish! As part of Black History Month, we have all researched and written fact files on Katherine Johnson, whom our class is named after. Did you know that Katherine Johnson was an American mathematician whose calculations of orbital mechanics as a NASA employee were critical to the success of the first U.S. crewed spaceflights?

In DT, we have used our understanding of 'moving parts' to create a colour monster-themed moving model. Well done Year 2. It's been a very busy start to the year!

Year 3

Another busy fortnight in Year 3. We have been concluding our Stone Age topic and making our own Stone Age homes, using materials we foraged from the playground. In English we were able to sequence important events from our trip and have been using our speaking and listening skills to explain our ideas. We have been practising our 4 and 8 times tables and adding 2-digit numbers using column addition. Thank you for attending Parents' Evening. If you were unable to attend please don't hesitate to contact me via the office for an appointment when we return next half term. I hope everyone has a restful and enjoyable break and I look forward to seeing everyone for the busy new term!



Year 4

What a fantastic half term Year 4 have had! The children have really enjoyed using all of their knowledge about the Anglo-Saxons to write non-chronological reports, including all the amazing facts they learnt on our trip to Richmond Museum. In particular, they were fascinated by the processes of braiding and weaving fabric, and even got to have a go at these during the workshops! We have concluded our science topic, electricity, by using our knowledge of circuits to create an alarm. We also applied this to our DT project of making lighthouses.

Year 5

It has been a wonderful term in Year 5! The children have shown great enthusiasm and resilience across all areas of learning. In English, we explored Viking myths and enjoyed reading *How to Train Your Dragon*, using the text to inspire our own creative writing. In maths, we developed our understanding of decimals through practical problem-solving and reasoning. Our science topic, *Properties and Materials*, allowed us to investigate and experiment to deepen our understanding of how materials behave. The children were introduced to coding using Micro:bits, discovering how technology can bring their ideas to life in Design and Technology. We are incredibly proud of the effort and curiosity the children have shown this term. Well done, Year 5!

Year 6

We made it and what a finish! Dibb Class have pushed their knowledge of the Victorian era to new levels. The children enjoyed their life-like workshop trip as it allowed them to know what true Victorian life was like as well as developing their new love of drama. The love of drama has continued into their final week as they have created their own class assembly with enactments of Queen Victoria's life as well as being great role models to Year 1, showing them what schooling was truly like during the Victorian era. Dibb Class have fully settled into Year 6 now as all children have taken their new job roles very seriously and are eager to continue this into the Autumn 2 term.



Part Time Administrator Required

St Peter's Church, Church Lane, Petersham is looking for a part time (10 hours a week) parish administrator. The successful candidate will have administrative and organisational skills, good written and verbal communication and an ability to relate to a range of people and situations. He/she will also be sympathetic to the aims of the church and its mission in the community.

If you are interested, please contact the Parish Office st.peters.petersham@googlemail.com for full details. Closing date for applications: 20th November 2025.

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E: info@lafosteringse.org.uk

T: 0300 131 2797

W: [achievingforchildren.org.uk/
contact-fostering](http://achievingforchildren.org.uk/contact-fostering)



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ESOL

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If you are interested in free English classes with a crèche and would like more information, please call Banres Children's Centre on 07904 556423. This group is for learners at Level 1, requiring a basic understanding of English.

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NOTICEBOARD

Upcoming dates for Autumn term

27.10.25	Half term week
3.11.25	Children return to school
10.11.25	Anti-Bullying Week
10.11.25	Yr 3 Safer Walking on 10 th - 12 th November
12.11.25	Yr 5 Sayers Croft. Return on Friday
17.11.25	Road Safety Week
18.11.25	Parent/Carer book look – at pick up time
20.11.25	Piano Recital School Hall from 6.30pm
5.12.25	Christmas Fair in the hall from 3.30pm
10.12.25	YR 3 – 6 Panto trip Nursery – Year 2 Panto at the Russell School
12.12.25	Christmas Jumper and Christmas Lunch day EYFS Singalong
16.12.25	Carol Concert at St Peter's (timings TBC)
17.12.25	KS1 Festive production (timings TBC)
18.12.25	KS1 Festive production (timings TBC)
19.12.25	Final day of term. Finish at 1.45pm
5.1.26	INSET day – school closed for children
6.1.26	Children return to school. Gates open 8.30am

Breakfast Club

Breakfast Club is available from 7.45am – 8.30am. Please book online with ScoPay AT LEAST 4 days prior to the session/s required.

Active Club is also available from 3.15pm to 6.00pm. Please contact Active Club directly.

Both are such a valuable resource for the school – please use them!