

Thomas Russell Junior School

'Ambitious culture, strong team ethos, outstanding academic achievement, high expectations, exemplary behaviour' Ofsted 2019.



Newsletter



Issue No. 35

Headteacher: Mrs S Sharpe

5th June 2020

The Zoom logo, consisting of the word 'zoom' in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

Zoom-tastic!

I think you will all agree when I say it has been a Zoom-tastic week! We have been utterly delighted with how positively the Zoom tutor groups and lessons have been received. From a social point of view, it has been lovely for the children to feel reconnected to friends (and staff) they may not have seen since Lockdown began. From a staff point of view, I know they have absolutely loved seeing the children's faces and chatting to them, as well as enjoying delivering some face-to-face teaching in a way they have never experienced before. We have heard really positive messages about how children have come out of sessions buzzing and with a renewed sense of motivation in their learning. All of which is fabulous.

We know there have been a few teething issues too. One of these has been for children attending Key Worker provision at school missing Zoom lessons with their own teachers. We are completely set up for these now, so children just need to bring a note of the time, meeting ID and password with them to school and they will be able to access their Zoom sessions. They should also bring earphones if they have them, or alternatively, they can purchase their own set from the school office for £1.

We know some households have had issues with bandwidth and the number of devices available. With 252 children in school and over 80 siblings, we cannot guarantee that there won't be some clashes, but if you can let us know in advance, we may be able to swap children in to different groups or find another way to work around. Given that every child in school is having two lessons every week, that is over 500 lessons to arrange, invite and deliver - a mammoth task so your patience is appreciated 😊

I would like to say a huge thank you to staff for taking on something else new - a method of delivering teaching that they have never used before with enthusiasm and determination to make it work. It really is testament to the wonderful teachers and teaching assistants that we have at Thomas Russell Junior to get this up and running so brilliantly.

I've been asked to give a virtual Headteacher's Award to so many children for their engagement and participation in Zoom lessons, I'm doing something I've never done before and giving one to every adult and child in school who made it to a Zoom session - this is for you:



If you haven't made it on to Zoom yet, there is still time (and you can have a virtual HTA when you do make your first session)

There will be two Zoom lessons each week for every child in school.

We are also continuing with the Daily Doodle, so keep logging in to that each day too. In response to feedback, we are making a few small changes to the format of the Doodles, which will remain in place now right up until July. We are simplifying them just to focus on morning lessons, as the vast majority of families have told us this is where they focus their energies.

We will be providing mini-projects for the afternoon and mindfulness activities. The mini-projects are suitable for siblings to do together, to save trying to supervise one child in the garden dissecting flowers while another child is on the computer researching Iron Age relics! We will also be loading up the Daily Doodles for the week on a Sunday evening. If you're one of the ones who likes the excitement of opening a new Doodle each day, then keep the surprise and do that, but we hope this might prove helpful to parents who are working or busy and like to print things out in advance for their child to do.

We would continue to encourage you to do what you can, when you can and if you would rather be in the shed, teaching your child how to use a saw and drill to make a birdhouse or simply letting them watch a BBC science programme on TV then that is completely your choice. Like I've said numerous times, we are not here to tell you what you should be doing and we're certainly not passing any judgement - everybody is coping with Lockdown differently and we need to remember to be kind (to ourselves and others).

ParentPay refunds

We have made an insurance claim to obtain the 30% non-refundable deposit back for parents for Y4, 5 and 6 residential visits rather than transferring balances to trips dated in the future. We are much happier with this solution as we know there will be many of our families whose financial situation will have been adversely affected by the current crisis.

Please look out for credits on your account in the next 7 days. Thank you for your patience whilst we navigated this to obtain the best solution.

Update from Governors

As we promised, we have kept the decision on any wider opening of the school under very close review and I am now in a position to update parents as to the outcome of our Governor discussions yesterday.

You will recall from our communication previously that we had a significant number of key staff who were shielding or following 'stringent social distancing measures', due to their own or a household members' health. As we move past the peak of this crisis, I am pleased to be able to welcome back some members of this group in to school. We also set out a number of 'tests' that we wanted to see met before we could consider opening up access to a greater number of children. Today I am pleased to report that these tests have all been met, with the exception of point 1 - clear scientific evidence that it is safe to drop 2m social distancing. We are still not satisfied this 2m only needs to be adhered to 'where possible' and therefore any arrangements we put in place in school will be with strict adherence to the 2m social distancing rule.

Based on our updated risk assessment and increased staff availability, we believe we will be in a position to offer safe return to small groups of Y6 children from 15th June. We will achieve this by splitting the year group into two halves, offering 6P opportunity to attend on Monday and Tuesday. Deep cleaning all areas of school used on Wednesday and offering 6M the opportunity to attend on Thursday and Friday. Each of these classes will be split into Bubbles of up to nine children with one member of staff, which will remain the same every day. The remit of these days in school between 15th June and the Summer holiday will be to participate in a transition programme and virtual or socially distanced 'rites of passage'. Y6 parents please look out for a link to a questionnaire with further information.

Key Worker and Vulnerable children's provision will continue to be delivered in Upper and Lower School Bubbles. As always, please be aware that we will be guided by scientific evidence and detailed and thorough risk assessments. If at any point there are local, regional or national changes to the lockdown conditions or to scientific evidence which indicates significantly increased risk, we

will respond immediately in the best interests of the safety of our children and whole community.
This may include, but not be limited to, a need to withdraw provision at short notice.

As I am sure you can imagine - for Teachers and Teaching assistants covering all of these groups in school, delivering their Zoom lessons, planning the Daily Doodle and responding to all of the amazing children's work is no mean feat and they should all be commended and thanked for their marvellous commitment to the children and families of TRJS.

Vacancies

In other plans, looking further forward, we are delighted to announce that we have two vacancies to join 'Team TRJS'.

Two Temporary Teaching Assistants (15 hours)

September 2020 to August 2021

We are looking to appoint two **enthusiastic** and **highly motivated** teaching assistants to join our outstanding school on a temporary basis. These posts are temporary due to fluctuations in numbers of SEN children in school and the availability of funding.

The successful applicants will work alongside a knowledgeable and committed team, supporting children with additional learning needs of all abilities. Experience of implementation of wave 2 and 3 intervention strategies would be welcome, but is by no means essential. The ability to use your initiative and a high level of subject knowledge in both English (Reading, Writing and SPAG) and Maths is an absolute necessity. Subject knowledge will be tested during a skills test at interview. Applications are welcome from all good or outstanding teaching assistants, regardless of qualification. Flexibility, an ability to use initiative and a shared commitment to supporting our children to achieve their full potential are essential. Training will be available for the successful applicant.

Primarily we are looking for TAs to work during morning lesson time, but there may be some afternoon support. Working hours will be spread over the week. Availability to take additional hours to support in our wrap around care with Early Birds (8:00 – 8:50) and Night Owls (3:30 – 5:45) would be advantageous.

Applicants are required to fully complete an application form and are also asked to state strengths and experience within their letter (no more than 2 sides of A4). Please do not include CVs (these will not be looked at).

Visits to the school cannot be accommodated during the Covid-19 pandemic, but there is significant information about the school on our website and in our Ofsted Report.

Applications should be sent by e-mail only to headteacher@thomasrussell-junior.staffs.sch.uk

Closing date: Thursday 25th June at 9:30am

Interviews will take place: Wednesday 1st July – either face to face or electronically depending on restrictions.

Any appointment will be subject to receipt of satisfactory references.

Additional Information

This position is subject to an Enhanced Disclosure check under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Further details regarding this check are available from schools or by visiting www.crb.gov.uk

This Authority and school are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people/vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

*Best wishes,
Mrs Sharpe*