

Update from the Headteacher

Dear Parent/ Carer

Two weeks into the term and we are all now finding our feet, settling into our routines and getting used to remote lessons in real time. The attendance and engagement levels are excellent and whilst, if we are honest, this situation is not ideal, I am incredibly proud of the staff and students for getting on in the best way possible. The award of nearly 1400 merits last week speaks volumes about the students' application to their work (this week's is even higher!) We are also very mindful of reports in the press regarding screen time and eye health and I'd encourage all students to pay particular attention to the advice on protecting their eyes in the well-being section below.

I'd also like to say 'Well done' to those students who took exams this week. I was very impressed with the maturity shown by all those studying vocational subjects as they made decisions about whether to take the exams this month. They, and schools, will not be placed in this situation for any future exams this year as it has now been confirmed that any further written BTEC exams this year will not now go ahead.

This brings me on to what would have been the Summer exams. The Ofqual consultation regarding 'alternative arrangements' for Years 11 and 13 is due to be published later today. This has attracted some media attention with the suggestion of the introduction of 'mini exams'. There is indeed a proposal for additional 'externally set' assessments to be used, but these are proposed as part of a raft of measures/evidence to ensure the grades awarded are as fair and accurate as possible. Whilst grades awarded will have their basis in teacher assessment, it is expected there will be quality assurance and sampling of work by the exam boards. Of course, these are all proposals currently and it is really important that Ofqual hears the voices of those directly affected and not just the wider profession. If you could encourage your son/daughter to respond, it will be much more representative. We will have a two week window in which to share our views on the proposals and I'll make sure the consultation is made available to all relevant stakeholders following its release.

Earlier this week, our Year 11 students received their mock exam results and guidance on next steps. I was keen to stress that the one thing they can control is continuing their hard work - and for us, it is 'business as usual'. We are therefore pleased to see the DfE's commitment for any final assessment to be submitted to the exams boards as late as possible, so that we can continue to teach and students can continue to show progress.

Onto other types of testing - this week has seen a scaling up of the rapid lateral flow tests in schools, with more than one hundred tests being carried out this week. This work will mean that when we can welcome students back, we will be well placed to conduct any voluntary testing programme we are expected to deliver.

I wish you a safe and happy weekend

James Shapland

Hub Provision

If you are a key worker or have a vulnerable child and would like a place for them at school in our Hub please contact

admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk.

All spaces must be pre-booked to ensure we have adequate, safe levels of provision.

Free School Meals

If you believe your child may qualify for free school meals, and have not notified us, please contact Mrs Hallahan (whallahan@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk) who will be able to provide further advice and assistance.

Year 9 Options Evening

This will be held online on Thurs 11th February - further information to follow

Year 11 'Session 6'

'Session 6' for Year 11 will now run as a Google Meet, where students can drop in if they need any advice or support, or if they want to let us know what they want to achieve in their study over that hour for some added accountability! The Google Meet link will be posted on the Year 11 Google Classroom; please encourage your child to drop in if they would like support or a chat about next steps.

Remote Learning

Our students' engagement with remote learning this week continues to be excellent; the general attitude to learning and focus in live lessons is fantastic. An impressive 2470 merits have been awarded, which include many hundreds of merits each in Remote Learning categories recognising students' resilience, independence and contributions to the live lessons. Across the school students have taken part in more than three thousand live lessons over the past nine days.

In order to help parents understand when students have not completed work set in lessons, and therefore to give them any necessary support, we will be giving F1 behaviour points to students who do not complete lesson tasks from next week. These F1s will appear on Insight in the usual way, and we would ask you daily to discuss with your child if they receive an F1 to ensure the task is then completed. Also from next week, we will be running a small trial of students taking part in some sixth form lessons with cameras on. We would therefore appreciate it if parents of sixth form students could ensure that students have seen the amended [student Virtual Code of Conduct here](#)

LRC News

A reminder that all students have access to our new Ashlyns eLibrary with over 1200 popular fiction titles available to read. The link to the eLibrary can be found on the LRC tile on RM Unify. Access is very easy; the Username section should be completed using the students name as it appears on their lunch card and the Password is Reading1. There are lots of great titles in the catalogue to choose from to keep the reading momentum going during lockdown: <https://ashlyns.eplatform.co/>

If students would like book recommendations and suggestions whilst at home, please email rlambert@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk with your favourite titles/genres and in return the LRC will send you some ideas for books you may want to try next.

And finally, students may also like to try out the LRC Harry Potter themed Digital Escape Room challenge on Google Classroom for Years 7/8/9 to win points for your House!

For Parents/Carers of Students in Years 10 and 11

['Motivation Reframed' \(link here\): webinar on Thursday 28 January at 7.00pm](#)

The highly regarded Dr Martijn Van der Spoel will deliver a live presentation designed to re-energise student motivation in these challenging times.

Does your child ...

- struggle with motivating themselves to study?
- find it difficult to develop effective study habits?
- find it hard to engage with the curriculum recovery programme?

Parents/carers will leave this session with practical ways to instil, encourage and embed positive study behaviours at home. The session includes extra optional materials that parents can download to help them assist in conversations with their children.

In order to attend this session please sign up at the following link before 27 January and Zoom joining instructions will be sent out to you before the event: [Motivation Reframed Booking Form](#)

House Point Update

Current house points

Bourne	Coram	Handel	Raven
18829	18733	18221	18162
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

15/01/2021

Letters this week

- Y11 Trial Exam Results
- Y13 Trial Results and Forecast

ASA News

BAG 2 SCHOOL

If you're having a clear out, and as charity shops are currently closed, please consider collecting your unwanted items for this new fundraising scheme.

[See flyer here for details of accepted items:](#) drop-off from 18th January until 25th Feb. Bags can be dropped off in front of the garage at the following address:

30 Oakwood (off Shootersway), Berkhamsted, HP4 3NQ

PAINT OFFER from Dacorum Decorating Supplies (Berkhamsted)

Proceeds from tins of mis-tint mixed paints will kindly go to the ASA, so if you're thinking of redecorating, why not pop along to the shop (317 High Street, Berkhamsted- they're still open as an essential service, one person in shop at a time) Please contact the shop for more details..

Suggested donation: 1L, 2.5L @£5/pot
5L, 7.5L, 10L @£10/pot

Wine Tasting Evening
Save the Date
Friday 19th February
More details to follow,
(non-alcoholic options)

Student Wellbeing

Resources for Ashlyns Parents: A reminder that Dr Kathy Weston has created a resource to support all of our families through this particularly challenging lockdown period (the link is below). We recommend taking a few minutes to read this resource as it is of particular topical interest and relevance to us all as we sit here at the start of what may feel like a long haul lockdown.

If you already registered your account at www.tooledupeducation.com just click on this link: [20 Tooled Up Tips for Parenting in a Pandemic](#)

If you are yet to register your account, then simply create your account [here](#) by adding your name, email address and, enter our school PIN which is **4989**.

Parenting Webinars: With thanks to Swing Gate Primary School, please find attached flyers and booking details for webinars from acclaimed speaker Steve Biddulph: [Raising Boys](#) and [Raising Girls](#). The webinars are relevant to children of all ages.

Protecting your eyes: It is important when working remotely to pay attention to your health and wellbeing. With this in mind, here are some top tips on how to avoid tired, dry eyes as well as discomfort from concentrating on computers for extended periods of time:

- **The 20-20-20 rule.** The best way to protect your eyes against eye strain from digital devices is to take regular breaks using the "20-20-20" rule: Every 20 minutes, shift your eyes to look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. Even closing your eyes for a few seconds can help re-moisten your eyes and help relieve some eye strain.
- **Move your computer monitor.** Blinking is the natural way our eyes are moistened. When we use computers or digital devices, we stare and don't blink as much as we normally do. By moving the computer to just below eye level, we tend to blink more and stare a little less.
- **Reduce glare.** Place your laptop or desktop in a place relatively clear of sunlight, and away from light sources immediately above your screen. Adjust your monitor's brightness and contrast settings and try keeping it at half-brightness. If the above is not enough, use an anti-glare matte screen filter or glasses.
- **Adjust your screen's lighting settings.** Consider changing your screen's brightness settings to a level that is more comfortable for you.
- **Get outside.** Weather permitting, in between lessons, at break or lunch, get some fresh air. It will allow your eyes to interact with a distant visual space, which is a less stressful visual demand than a near-point task.

SEND

SEND Parental Survey

If you are a parent/carer of a child with SEND, we would appreciate you taking the time to complete this short survey about your experience. Please complete the form [here](#).

Making use of G-suite to support Learning:

- Students can turn on captions during a Google Meet to help with their accessibility. Many students find that this helps them to focus during a live lesson. [Please see the instructions here to help with this.](#)
- Students can use the Chat function on Google Meets to ask questions, or message teachers through Google Classroom. Questions and messages should only be schoolwork-related.
- Students can make use of Voice Typing in Google Docs if their typing skills don't match their ability to complete tasks. Please click on the link below to see how to access voice typing: [Voice Typing](#)
- Students can use 'select to speak' to enable their Chromebook to read information on the screen to them. This can help with understanding and with the odd word. Please click [here](#) to see a video explaining how it works.
- Students may also like to add the Grammarly app to support their written outcomes. It can be useful to some pupils. [Grammarly for Chrome](#)

Useful SEND Websites:

Useful advice on homeschool SEND pupils is available from [Parents' Toolkit: SEND](#)

Useful resources list [SEND 111 – Corona Virus Distance education resources for children and young people with SEND](#)

Safeguarding: Online Support

There are some useful websites that provide information and support to young people and families. Please click on the links below to find out more:

- [Healthy Young Minds in Herts](#): if your child is struggling with anxiety, please click here to visit the YoungMinds website which has information on ways you can support them and places you can get help.
- [CAMHSResources](#) – this will take you to a collection of really useful websites.
- Getting help if you're worried: there are lots of ways young people can get advice and support if they are worried about something – click [here to visit the Childline website](#) for information.
- Tackling online hate. [Please click here](#) for a useful guide on how to tackle hate online and online trolls, and how to support your child.
- Please visit www.internetmatters.org for more information on how to keep your son/daughter safe online.