

Update from the Headteacher

Dear Parent/Carer

As this half-term draws to a close, the snow and icy weather seems to have reminded us that, in the midst of the pandemic some things don't change. There's joy to be had watching the snow fall - and worrying to be done about the state of the roads and paths. A while ago I mentioned worrying about the Beast from the East seemed a lifetime ago. Clearly I spoke too soon as this year's 'Beast' - teaming up with Storm Darcy - provided a few challenges for those at home as well as those in school.

So, as we slide into half-term break, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on all that has been achieved over the past six weeks by your children and their teachers with your support. The move to remote learning - following the normal timetable, live lessons, tutor time, assemblies and assessments - has been nothing short of remarkable. This week, there has been much talk about 'catch up' and whilst it is undoubtedly true that schools will need to ensure students do get the support they need after Lockdown, and indeed some students in some areas have been more affected than others, we do need to recognise and celebrate that many, many children have worked incredibly hard and have made significant progress in their learning. I would like to say well done to all of them; they should be proud of their efforts and engagement. We will continue to make sure that areas that need extra support are identified and addressed, but I would not want to diminish the work they have done so far this term.

Many of you have written in to tell us how positive the 'no screen' day was for your children and the wider family. There are some excellent examples of the challenges undertaken further on in the bulletin and I hope this might set the tone for half term.

The week after half-term promises to be one of announcements. We know that the 22nd is earmarked for a decision on the timetable for the wider reopening of schools. We are also hoping to hear from Ofqual regarding the alternative arrangements for GCSEs, vocational qualifications and A levels. As ever, we will ensure we keep you informed of next steps as soon as we can.

In the meantime, we know we will have at least two weeks of remote learning when we return, so it is important all our students take a break, ensuring they are refreshed and ready for whatever the next term holds.

Wishing you a safe, warm and relaxing half term,

Best wishes

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.

Should any students who have been on the school site test positive for COVID-19 during half term, please contact covid@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk

Play Your Part

Thank you for playing your part and helping to keep our school safe by following current Government guidelines during the national lockdown.

It is so important that we don't become complacent during half-term so we can all enjoy the break and hopefully come back to either remote, or face to face learning (for children considered vulnerable or children of critical workers) safely.

Hertfordshire County Council have asked us to share [this leaflet](#) with you as a reminder of what we all can and cannot do during the lockdown restrictions. Please do take the time to read it and remind your children that for now, we all have to play our part to protect ourselves, our families and our friends.

Letters this week

- [Y12 UCAS and Careers](#)

ParentPay Update

Further to the communication sent earlier this week regarding our new online school payment service ParentPay, we are delighted to confirm you will receive account activation details, FAQs and other information towards the end of half-term. From today you will no longer be able to make payments via Wisepay but all balances have been transferred as previously advised. Your existing balances are secure and will be moved over onto the new system. In the meantime, if you have any queries, please contact finance@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk or visit www.parentpay.com

Year 10 and Year 9 Virtual Parent Teacher Consultation Evenings

A reminder that these are coming up straight after half term - letters have been sent home with information about how to book and access the online system. Teachers who have appointments on those days will be setting work that is not 'live' for periods 4 and 5, that students can complete independently.

Remote Learning

No-Screen Extended Learning Day

We challenged students to spend the day without screens and to find at least one activity that challenged them in a different way - and they really rose to that challenge! It's been fantastic to see the vast range of activities students chose, both from the menu provided and their own ideas: students have baked, cooked, run, walked, cycled, painted, made fantastic podcasts, taken part in HIT workouts, played board games and completed jigsaws, created elaborate Lego constructions, read a very wide range of books, looked after family pets, learned to knit and sew, and even undertaken some housework! Students identified that, along with these activities, they learned a lot about challenge and new skills, as well as how to follow instructions! Many of them said they were also happy to learn that they could spend an entire day without screens and really enjoy it. Thank you to parents for your support with this no-screen day.

We are sending merit certificates home to students for merits received during the Autumn term. Well done to all of those students - it is a tremendous number of certificates!

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Total
Bronze	247	231	217	205	108	1008
Silver	195	127	74	110	61	567
Gold	52	29	6	34	21	142
Diamond	8	4	1	7	4	24

House Competition: Lockdown Challenge II

As we stand almost half way through the academic year, the House Competition couldn't be closer, with fewer than 1000 points separating all four Houses.

House Points

 Current house points 

Bourne	Coram	Handel	Raven
22282	22723	21835	22002
2 nd	1 st	4 th	3 rd

  12/02/2021

Bedrock Learning

Another great week for all years on Bedrock, with an outstanding amount of points achieved and lessons completed! Well done to the following classes for their achievements:

Points achieved

7R2 with a total of 948 points
8H1 with a total of 1,016 points
9xEn1 with a total of 707 points

Lessons completed:

7B2 with a total of 35 lessons completed
8R2 with a total of 42 lessons completed!
9xEn2a with a total of 61 lessons completed!

Since starting the Bedrock programme at the beginning of January, Year 9 have clocked up the most time spent on the programme with over 15 days, 8 hours between them. They have shown an impressive improvement of 25% from pre- to post-test scores.

Wellbeing Half Term Webinar

JustTalk: Young People's COVID-19 webinar

Following the success of the young people's COVID-19 webinar last year, Hertfordshire County Council and Public Health Hertfordshire have arranged another follow up session. Please follow this [link](#) for details of the Webinar for young people who are feeling concerned or overwhelmed by COVID-19. The webinar is Free for 11-19 year olds and will take place on Wednesday 17 February between 11.30am and 12.30pm.



Bourne and Coram have been leapfrogging one another for the top spot, but Handel and Raven are close behind.

We are pleased to announce a great opportunity for students to earn House points throughout the rest of February with the [House Lockdown Challenge II \(link here\)](#).

There is a list of 16 fun activities with something for everyone, from ridiculous re-enactments to chain reaction models, cake baking to wand building. Students simply upload a photo evidencing what they have done onto the Google form for that activity. All entrants will win 10 House Points and there will be an £8 Amazon voucher prize for the best entry in each category!

Oak National Academy

It was announced this week that mobile providers would now make the Oak National Academy site data free, so that students can access it even if out of data. Oak National Academy provides a vast range of recorded lessons across the curriculum and can be used in any year group and any subject. Year 11 have found it particularly useful to help with their independent study.

Ashlyns Futures Careers Programme

Thank you to all the parents who volunteered for our careers interview programme. We have been delighted by the response and have been building a resource of recorded interviews that students will be able to access for professional advice and insight. If you would like to be involved in this ongoing project, please contact rlambert@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk.

After half-term Years 7-9 will have two dedicated PSHE lessons where students will be researching the careers that they may want to pursue in the future. Discussions at home can be very formative in helping students think about the variety of careers opportunities available to them. The Careers Guidance section on our website has lots of [resources](#) that you may find useful. In addition, [here is a link to](#) a company called [InvestIN](#) who create free industry specific events for parents.

Student Wellbeing - Safer Internet Day

It was Safer Internet Day on the 9th of February. At the moment, children are necessarily spending more time online than ever. It is important that we all help them to navigate the online world safely, whilst helping them to use and enjoy the amazing resources that it offers, including video games. Last week, Dr Kathy Weston interviewed family digital technology and gaming journalist, Andy Robertson, author of *Taming Gaming* and expert on games of all kinds. This fascinating [podcast is live](#) in the Tooled Up library now, and we urge you to listen and check out the accompanying notes. Games offer a huge number of potential benefits for young people, including the development of critical thinking, empathy and better communication skills. Andy shows how we need to get involved in this aspect of their lives, rather than think of it as something negative or separate to the rest of family life.

The same goes for other aspects of their digital world. Safer Internet Day research has found that 48% of 8-17 year olds see misleading content online at least once a day. Helping your children develop the ability to question what they see or read is crucial. Happily, we have some great resources which do

Lone Parenting Course

Run by Family Lives, this online programme, Raising Confident Children for Lone Parents affected by the impact of Covid, starts in the w/c 22 Feb and aims to help lone parents learn how to communicate positively with their children, value their own needs and recognise the importance of their children's feelings. [Further information can be found here.](#)



Please click [here](#) for details of a free webinar on 'boundaries and routines' - there are a few spaces still available.

ASA News

Wine Tasting Event

[Deadline to place orders \(here\) today 8pm](#)

Bag 2 School - deadline is

Thursday 25th Feb - [see attached flyer](#). Use the half-term to have a good clear out and donate to this cause AND help raise money for our school - bags are available if you need them (email request via the ASA) and drop off at: 30 Oakwood (off Shootersway), Berkhamsted, HP4 3NQ (in front of the garage)

Congratulations to the winners of the January ASA 100 draw:

1st prize - N Shukla
2nd prize - S Wiggs
3rd prize - M Armitage

Thank you to all the new supporters who have signed up. As we still cannot run our usual events the ASA 100 draw is a valuable source of regular funds. The more members we have, the more we raise. Sign up today!

ASA100CLUB@gmail.com

just this. [50 Questions to Ask Your Teen about Their Digital Diet](#) encourages regular chats which will cultivate critical thinking. Working out your family's digital values is important, and our [template](#) for these discussions will give you inspiration for where to start. The Tooled Up library contains numerous resources about behaving safely online - simply search our digital life category to see them all.

With half-term upon us and lockdown set to continue, you might feel in need of some inspiration for things to do with your child. If you want to stay active, our list of [50 Fun Ideas](#) to get moving during lockdown will definitely keep you occupied. [100 Ideas to Try when You Feel Bored](#) is full of interesting and varied things to do.

SEND

Well done to all the SEND pupils who have engaged so well with their remote learning this half term. It has been great to see so many making use of the accessibility functions on their Chrome books. More details about Chrome accessibility features is available [here](#).

Thank you to all our SEND parents who completed the questionnaire.

Safeguarding

Supporting Parents Helpfinder: from *Young Minds*

Times are tough for many people right now. Parents find themselves pulled in many different directions and children may be struggling being in the house for much longer than usual. A mixture of concern about Covid, work from home and children at home, along with a possible financial impact, makes for a stressful household.

Young Minds have created a useful 'Supporting Parents Helpfinder'. By answering six questions, parents can find out how to support their child's mental health during the pandemic (and beyond).

Find the help finder here: <https://youngminds.org.uk/supporting-parents-helpfinder/>



Online Safety Advice for Parents



With many of our children currently off school and staying home due to COVID 19, the potential for online exploitation will be at its highest.

Although rare, there is a risk that with increased online activity, feelings of stress and isolation may be exploited. An understanding of digital safety will help parents and carers safeguard loved ones from a range of harms, whether that's child sexual exploitation, fraud, or extremist influences seeking to radicalise vulnerable people.

Extremists may also use the current situation to promote hateful views, for example through conspiracy theories or through spreading misinformation.