

Update from the Headteacher

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope that you and your family had a good half-term and found time to relax and recharge. I am aware that, for some, it may feel much longer than just a week ago - probably because of the raft of announcements and news we have all had to digest and consider.

In education, we have had three significant announcements this week:

- The release of guidance on the return to school from week beginning 8 March
- Additional funds being made available to schools for 'catch up'
- More detail regarding how GCSEs, A levels and Vocational Qualifications will be assessed, following the outcome of the OFQUAL consultation

Clearly, the one that affects everyone is the 'Return to School' plan. You should have received a number of communications regarding this, including a letter outlining the schedule of return and a request to complete the consent form for the Lateral Flow Testing. Over the next week, we will be updating key safety information and I'd be grateful if you would review this with your son/daughter. You may also be interested to read the [open letter from the Secretary of State for Education to parents](#) about the decision to lift restrictions on education from Monday 8 March. This letter also provides information on the asymptomatic testing programme and safety measures for schools. Updated DfE guidance for parents and carers can also be found in the document [What parents and carers need to know](#).

Yesterday's announcement regarding GCSEs, A levels and Vocational qualifications was widely covered by the media. Students affected by the change in assessment arrangements should see the summary guidance further on in the bulletin and they will also receive more detailed information in the coming weeks, but I am confident our students will be able to achieve the grades they deserve.

The other major announcement regarding 'catch up funding' is welcome news. However, it is really important we do not diminish the work, progress or achievements of our young people over this period. Of course, students will need some additional support and guidance, and we will provide every opportunity to help everyone improve and build confidence as we move through the year. Nevertheless, we should also take the opportunity to celebrate their achievements - their resilience and work ethic. The success of Lola C at the National Moving Image Awards is just one example of the kind of success our students have had during the pandemic. As we move forward,

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.

Upcoming Dates

- Thursday 4th March: Y9 PTC
- Friday 5th March: Y9 Options forms due
- Thursday 18th March: Y7 PTC

Letters this week

- [Update Letter from Headteacher](#)
- [Return to School letter](#)
- [Lateral Flow Testing](#)
- [Y9 Duke of Edinburgh](#)
- [Y11 Duke of Edinburgh](#)

Lateral Flow Testing

Please complete the relevant online form below (one per student), indicating whether or not you would like your child to be tested, by **Sunday 28 February at 6pm**. [A video outlining the process in school is available here](#). If your child is aged 16 or over, they will need to complete this form themselves, having discussed this with you. We appreciate this is a short window for completion, but this will enable us to plan our testing site effectively. A form must be completed in order for a student to be tested.

and hopefully back to more normality, I am confident our children will show us we have every reason to be optimistic.

We will, inevitably, be sending a significant number of communications over the coming days and weeks, including information on our updated Risk Assessment and the specific timings for your child's return to school. I would be grateful if you could talk to your child about these and would like to highlight the "10 Things" advice sheet produced by Dr Kathy Weston (found in the Student Wellbeing section below.)

Wishing you all a very good weekend,

James Shapland

Update on the arrangements for the award of GCSE, A level grades and Vocational Qualifications in summer 2021

Please click on the [link here](#) for further information

Remote Learning

Students continue to show impressive engagement with remote learning, with nearly two thousand merits awarded last week, for a range of reasons including outstanding effort with remote learning, excellent contribution to class discussion using the microphone or chat functions, and outstanding classwork. Thank you to parents for your continued support with remote learning, and a reminder that it is really helpful if you are able to check Insight daily for any F1s that may indicate any outstanding work or tasks.

House Competition: Lockdown Challenge II

Please note that the deadline for submitting entries to the [House Lockdown Challenge II](#) has been extended to the end of Sunday 7th March, so your child has a week and a half to get their entries in. There have already been some fantastic entries! Remember, there will be 10 house points for every entry and an £8 Amazon voucher for the best entry in each category! There is no limit to how many of the challenges your child completes.

Student Wellbeing

Kathy Weston

So, 'perseverance' pays off and we can now listen to audio from planet Mars over a cup of tea! But that isn't the only exciting news occupying the minds of families everywhere. At Tooled Up, we know that the news that schools will reopen their doors to all children in less than two weeks' time may give us a few butterflies. This is understandable and we are here to help. Use our suite of ['Wobble' resources](#) to identify and work through any worries with your child. This week's [Wednesday Wisdom](#) will also give you lots of ideas for how to pepper conversations about school return with a sense of optimism.

We strongly advise that you take a look at our list of the top [10 things that all families need to talk about ahead of school return](#), which will help you to renew expectations that our children work hard and always try their best.

Click [here](#) if your child is between 11 and 15 years of age (on 8 March 2021)
Click [here](#) if your child is 16 or over (on 8 March 2021)

Music Tuition

If your child is interested in taking music lessons, Hertfordshire Music Service offer tuition in a range of different instruments. For further information please go to; <http://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/music-lessons/>

If you wish to withdraw or change music lessons for September 2021, please email SchoolsDirectInvoicing@hertfordshire.gov.uk by Monday 17th May.

All other queries regarding music tuition, please email musictuition@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk.

Preparing for return - new school shoes?

There are many retailers offering online assistance and measuring guides: click [here](#) for a summary of local and online shoe retailers, together with a reminder of which shoes are appropriate for school.

House Points

Current house points			
Bourne	Coram	Handel	Raven
22827	23240	22418	22579
2 nd	1 st	4 th	3 rd

26/02/2021

Bedrock Learning

This week's focus for Bedrock is one of celebration! Our students have worked so hard over the past half term that Ashlyns has been awarded a certificate for "ranking in the top 10 secondary schools for student engagement on Bedrock in the UK". What a fantastic achievement KS3 - well done!

All transitions in and out of any settings should be well managed. Schools do a fantastic job of overseeing change for our children, but there is also much that we can do at home. Positive chat about change is key. Being organised so we aren't leaving 'school-readiness' until the last minute and keeping a strong focus on children's self-esteem will really help. When children feel good about themselves, the chances are that they will cope better with change. Ten key points that parents should think about when it comes to children and young people's self-esteem can be found in our [brand new resource](#), which features advice from some of the very latest research, whilst [What Makes You 'You'?](#) is an activity which will help children of all ages to reflect positively on the wonderful things that make them who they are. There are also huge numbers of books and resources available to help guide young people towards better mental health and wellbeing. To make it easier for you and your children to choose, we've compiled a [list of the best](#). Enjoy!

To ease the transition back to school, I will again be hosting 'Parenting Through a Pandemic' live Q and A clinics for Tooled Up parents and staff, this coming Sunday (28 Feb). Register for either, or both, of the sessions, each lasting 40 minutes: [7pm for parents of teens](#) and [8pm for parents of primary age children](#)

National Careers Week

National Careers Week runs from Monday 1-6 March and this year's Virtual Careers Fair brings together young people and employers to share information and resources about the world of work and the options available at 16+. There are five virtual floors featuring employers and Higher Education providers with a chance to explore key sectors, download resources, watch videos and access hints and tips. No pre-registration is required; to access visit the link [here](#).

The Parents Guide to National Careers Week is a resource you may find useful in helping your child start to think about their future. The Guide covers further education routes after GCSEs, apprenticeships and vocational study along with virtual work experience opportunities; it can be found [here](#).

SEND

Year 7 Hints & Tips

Thank you to all Year 7 Inclusion parents who have returned their hints and tips.

Year 9 Options

Thank you to all the Year 9 Inclusion parents who took the opportunity to discuss option choices with us. Just a reminder forms are due in on the 5th March.

Please click [here](#) for the latest Parent Communication from DSPL8

Safeguarding

[On My Mind - Resources for Young People \(Anna Freud Centre\)](#)

Mental Health organisation, Anna Freud, have curated a set of resources to

A huge congratulations is needed for a specific student, who has also been awarded by Bedrock for his efforts and 'tenacity to keep learning over lockdown'! Well done Eren G (7-C1)!

Bedrock are currently running a competition for the chance to win prizes for engagement until Thursday 1st April. Any student who gains 120 points will automatically be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win either the top prize of a Chromebook or the smaller prize of a £10 Amazon voucher! We are encouraging our students to take part in this challenge for the opportunity to be winners, just like Eren!

ASA News

Floral kits for Mothering Sunday and Easter: £30 each

Appleblossom Flowers (an ex Ashlyns student) has created some fabulous floral kits to help celebrate Mothers' Day and Easter, helping to raise money for the ASA. Everything you need to create some beautiful arrangements.

Mothers' Day - [click here](#) to order by Friday 5th March with collection Friday 12th March

Easter kits - [click here for basket kit](#), [click here for wreath kit](#) - order by Friday 12th March (collection details TBA)

BAG 2 SCHOOL

You supported this fundraiser with gusto! Approx. 500 bags were collected - thank you!

Wine Tasting Event - special order code: ASHFUND10

Thank you to everyone who took part, and for your lovely feedback - we had a great turnout and a fun evening. Use the above code to help raise even more for the ASA whilst supporting a local business.

'empower young people to make informed choices about their mental health and wellbeing'. This area of their website has been co-produced with young people themselves.

The 'On My Mind' section includes a Youth Wellbeing Directory, to help locate local services; 90+ strategies to help when feeling low or anxious, especially when self-isolating; and what to do to help a friend or relative.

The DfE's updated guidance on keeping children safe online can be [found here](#)



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.

Moving Image Awards Winner

We are delighted to announce that Lola C in Y12 has won the Best Under 16 category for her short musical film "The Interview". The Moving Image Awards recognise the UK's most talented students. Every year, students undertaking qualifications in Film and Media Studies are invited to submit their work for consideration by a panel of judges. In the nail-biting awards ceremony last week, which featured guest presenters such as actor Michael Sheen and director Edgar Wright, Lola also narrowly missed out on the Overall Winner award, pipped to the post by a university student. Roll on the BAFTAs in a few years!

Raising Confident Children: course for Lone Parents

This course will run on Thursday evenings from Thursday 4 March. It will be delivered online by trained and accredited facilitators via MS Teams to a maximum of 10 parents.

[Referral/application form is here](#)