



07 September 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome back from all of us at Ashlyns and in particular to our new Year 7s, who make up the largest year group we have ever had: a full 9 forms of entry! We'd like to also extend a warm welcome to our new Sixth Formers, including those joining us from other schools. I know our school community will as always ensure that everyone settles in quickly.

I hope that you had a good summer and have been looking forward to resuming school life with fewer restrictions in place. It feels refreshing to be writing a more 'normal' start of term letter and there is much to celebrate and look forward to. We all appreciate the virus has not gone away but we are all hoping for a more 'typical' school year. Included below is a reminder of the revised expectations and, of course, should there be any changes following revised government guidelines, we will let you know.

Over the summer, we welcomed over 100 Year 6 students to our summer school, which was a fantastic opportunity for some of our new students to meet their peers, take part in team-building activities and support their literacy and numeracy. My thanks go to all staff involved in the planning and running of this - and particularly Mrs Mahadevan - as well as a number of our Sixth Form students who were exceptional.

At the other end of our school, this year's GCSE and A level results (as you will have seen from the media) were much more settled than last year and reflected the hard work and commitment of our students and their teachers. It was a pleasure to celebrate the fantastic achievements of our young people this summer. Their determination to adapt to a different system of assessment, and their drive to demonstrate all that they had learned at Ashlyns, led to excellent results - their successes show just how resilient they have been over the two years of their courses, which have been disrupted by the pandemic. We are so pleased that they can now move onto their next steps in education or employment, whether this is our sixth form, university or other destinations. We wish them all well and hope they will keep in touch to let us know of their achievements.

The increase in the number of students joining us in Year 7 has meant the school has benefitted from nearly half a million pounds of further investment and this has supported a range of site developments. The summer has seen a number of classroom refurbishments - including specialist areas such as science and photography - additional paths, and the completion of an initial phase of works scheduled for the conversion of the boiler house to provide additional school accommodation.

The end of last week saw the initial round of lateral flow testing for a number of year groups, which has progressed extremely smoothly. I'd like to thank all those involved in the set-up and delivery as well as stress the importance of home testing every 3-4 days following the initial two tests taken in school. This is a key measure in keeping our school community safe and we are grateful to you for your support in this.

You may have seen the news surrounding the monitoring of ventilation/carbon dioxide levels in schools. We had already purchased our own monitors in advance of the government announcement and these are currently in use; however, we are awaiting further government information about the planned wider implementation. For once, having an old - and sometimes draughty - listed building will have some benefits.

When I wrote to parents towards the end of the summer term, I outlined some of the changes to the operational guidance for schools set out by the government. Despite the relaxation of restrictions in society, we have retained certain measures to help keep children and staff safe.

These are outlined on the appendix to this letter. An updated risk assessment can be found on the [school website](#), which will of course be kept under continuous review, as we respond to both national and local guidance.

As in any new year, we have some new teachers and members of support staff joining us and I am sure you will join me in welcoming them to our school; their details will be included in this week's e-Bulletin. I know they will be very happy at Ashlyns and look forward to working with them all. I am particularly pleased to announce that from the beginning of this academic year, Mrs Kingston and Mrs T Kirk will take up promoted positions as Deputy Headteachers alongside Mr Peters. As established members of staff, they have already brought such a lot to the school and I'm sure you will all join me in wishing them every success in their new roles.

On a practical level, we'd like to urge all parents to encourage their child to walk to school, if possible, and to ensure they take care on the journey. However, if you are dropping your children off at the front of the school please remember that the only drop off point is at the top of the school driveway by the school gates. Punctuality to school is important and registration will start promptly at 08.35. As such we expect all students to be on site for 08.30 to ensure they are not late for registration. Please also remember that parking in the turning circle at the end of the school day is reserved for school authorised taxis and buses until 15.35.

Of course, some things do not change with a new school year – and this is particularly the case with our high expectations of students. As we begin the term, I would like to remind students about our high expectations of courtesy, punctuality and uniform. We hope you will support us in reinforcing these as a strong partnership between home and school will help encourage positive behaviour: a strong work ethic becomes a habit and is something that remains with students long after they leave school.

We are committed to ensuring our students receive the very best care and guidance and our staff are always here to deal with concerns. However, if you do have a query, please remember the first point of contact should be either your child's form tutor or subject teacher, or alternatively email in to [admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk), which will help us address and resolve questions when staff are teaching and unavailable. Our guidance on school communication can be found [here](#).

Finally, as we plan for the term ahead (with some unknowns), we know that regular communication will be more important than ever. Please do take time to read our weekly e-Bulletin which will provide you with updates and outline key events for the term. (Please update us with any changes to your contact details to ensure you receive these regular communications.) It is likely that we will be adopting a hybrid approach to parental events over the year with a mix of online and in-person activities and we will keep you informed of any changes necessary. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and adaptability, and look forward to a positive and productive term for us all.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Shapland', written in a cursive style.

**James Shapland**  
**Headteacher**

### **Appendix 1: Measures to help keep staff and students safe**

All the measures outlined below are kept under review and may change as a result of updated guidance/changes to local conditions

#### **Cleaning and sanitation**

Enhanced cleaning practices remain in place through our contractors. Students are also expected to continue to wash and sanitise their hands frequently.

#### **One-way system**

We will continue to employ the use of a one-way system, though this has been modified over the summer to support the flow of staff and students around the school. Your child's Head of Year will outline the updated system to them on return to school.

#### **Dining rooms and playground areas**

These will continue to operate on a year-group basis, but this will be kept under review throughout the term.

#### **Face coverings**

The government guidance states that face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas. However, whilst the government has removed

the requirement to wear face coverings in law, they expect and recommend that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where individuals may come into contact with people they don't normally meet (*i.e. situations outside of their school setting*). This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school or college. Staff and students are encouraged to wear face coverings when appropriate and any wishing to do so will be supported.

### **Self-isolation**

From Monday 16 August, unvaccinated young people up to the age of 18 years and 6 months along with fully vaccinated adults, are no longer required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

### **PCR tests**

Those identified as a close contact will be informed by NHS Test and Trace that they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We strongly encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. There is no requirement to self-isolate while awaiting PCR test results and so individuals can attend their setting as usual (unless they are symptomatic). Of course, there may be circumstances where you might wish to seek further advice and if you are unsure please contact us through the usual channels.

### **Covid related absence**

If your child tests positive for COVID-19 please contact the attendance officer, Mrs North, in the [usual way](mailto:attendance@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk) ([attendance@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk)). If your child is symptomatic the focus should be on recuperation. However, we recognise that some students will be feeling better before the end of the 10 day isolation and others may be asymptomatic. Teachers will make work available via Google Classroom for students to complete when they are well enough.