



21 December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

To (mis) quote Yogi Berra, for the festive period 'It's beginning to look a lot like deja vu all over again'. I think we might all agree that the uncertainty about any further restrictions might be unsettling; however, one of the things that I have been immensely proud of is the way in which our whole school community has responded to whatever challenges have come our way in the past 20 months. I am confident that we will be well placed to adapt should there be any further updates to the guidance for schools over Christmas or in the new year.

The key to this adaptability has been your children and the resilience and optimism they have demonstrated across the term. September saw a relatively 'normal' start to term and the students showed they were ready to seize all opportunities. Even against the backdrop of increased safety measures following the half-term break, staff and students alike have helped keep school life as normal as possible and there have been so many highlights.

Our Duke of Edinburgh expeditions earlier this term saw students work together as teams, enjoying the challenges and benefits of the award; we are delighted that there have been 130 applications for the new Year 9 cohort, who will start preparing for expeditions in the new year.

Despite the additional restrictions, we were able to obtain special dispensation from the Public Health team later in the term to ensure that both our U13 and U15 girls' football teams could participate in their national cup competitions and each progress to the last 32 in the country.

This year we have also seen a record number of UCAS applications for a wide range of universities and courses, spanning medicine, mathematics, law, artificial intelligence, languages and many more. I am confident these young people will be key contributors in shaping the future in their fields.

Keeping with the theme of aspiration and role modelling, we were delighted to receive so many applications for our student leadership programme, from Year 7 up to Sixth Form. Our successful applicants will take up a wide range of leadership opportunities in the new year, ranging from the Student Leadership Team to learning ambassadors and extra-curricular leaders.

Echoing our school's history of looking after those in need in society, the response to our food bank collection has been exceptional, along with the fantastic support for a range of local charities provided through the First Give programme involving Year 9.

Of course, the end of term is always tinged with sadness as we bid farewell to members of staff as they move onto new opportunities. Most visitors to Ashlyns comment on the impressive site and the impeccable grounds, which have been the result of the hard work of Mr Kovalic, our groundskeeper. We wish him all the best in his future ventures.

Sadly, we also have to say goodbye and good luck to Mr Peters as he prepares to take up the Headship at The Misbourne School in Great Missenden. Mr Peters joined Ashlyns in 2012 and has played a key role as a senior leader in its transformation to the school it is today. He has assumed responsibility for many aspects of the school and has been a key point of contact for so many parents, carers and students, especially during the pandemic. Quite simply, he has been a

phenomenal teacher and leader, providing inspiration, strength and support for the whole community. We will all miss him but we know his new school deserves the great leadership he can offer. I am sure you will all join me in wishing him the very best as he takes on this new challenge as well as reminding him he will always remain an important member of the extended Ashlyns family.

As we turn our thoughts to whatever next term may bring, please make sure you have read the [letter on the arrangements for the January start of term](#) to allow for onsite testing. Please also take time to review the advice in Last Friday's e-bulletin from HCC which includes [a link to booking Covid vaccinations](#). Of course, should there be any changes to these arrangements as a result of updated guidance issued by the government or the Health Protection Team during the holidays, we will inform you as soon as we are able to.

As always, should your child exhibit any symptoms, please do not send them to school but arrange for a PCR test in the usual way.

Over the Christmas period, should students need any wellbeing support, they can access a range of resources and links via the wellbeing tile on RMUnify; these include links to [Kooth](#) and [ChatHealth](#), which provide confidential online advice and contact. Parents and students can also access a range of [resources and Child Protection information on our website here](#).

Before we all head into the Christmas break, I would like to thank the incredible staff for their hard work and commitment in the face of ongoing challenges. My thanks also to the Governors and ASA; as always, I am humbled by the generosity of these volunteers that help support and guide the school.

As I reflect on the term, I am reminded that last year I referred to a line by Tennyson: *'Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, 'It will be happier''*.

I really do hope so - for each and every one of our school community.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support. On behalf of all of us at Ashlyns, I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Yours sincerely

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

James Shapland
Headteacher