



20 July 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope you managed to find some relief from the heat. On this note, I wanted to say how pleased I have been by the sensible and mature approach shown by the students this week. In last year's 'end of term' letter, I commented that 'their resilience in the face of a variety of new challenges had been impressive'. This has been equally true this year, with students navigating a world of legacy pandemic restrictions, a return to external exams and rising temperatures with the necessary last minute changes to planned activities.

Claiming back the 'normal' - particularly with the experiential elements of school life - has been a key focus for us. The summer term has seen a welcome return of so many events which have not been possible for the last few years. The orchestra, choir and individual performers gave us a spectacular Summer Concert earlier this month. Watching these young musicians benefit from performing to a live audience was inspiring. It was also fantastic to see so many students taking part in their practice and then qualifying expeditions for Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh and we are enjoying updates from the World Challenge team who are currently trekking in Ecuador.

Working in teams and building memories was the order of the day for our Year 7 students as their (delayed) Peak District trip was finally able to take place earlier this month. Judging by the students' evident enthusiasm, it was worth the wait. Of course, for next year, we hope all our normal schedules will resume and the trip will become part of the introduction to Year 7 in the Autumn term.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it has been to value the power of connectedness. Last week, we were able to welcome our entire September Year 7 cohort and their parents to our Transition Evening and also local Senior Citizens to our annual Tea and Concert hosted by students. We have missed these sorts of events and are so pleased to be able to welcome visitors back to our school to build a strong community.

For students in the older years we have seen the return to external exams - and proms. Both demanded hard work and preparation on their part, but I am sure they perhaps enjoyed one more than the other! We look forward to celebrating their achievements on results days, where I am sure their stamina and application will be rewarded.

I am, as always, grateful to our exceptional staff who show dedication every day, to ensure our students have the best experiences possible in a caring and supportive environment.

We are very fortunate to have the support of such committed volunteers at Ashlyns. Our Governors have continued to provide strategic direction to ensure the school continues to go from strength to strength. As always, the ASA has provided significant support to the school, a highlight of which was the Comedy Night last week, where so many parents enjoyed the summer evening with drinks and dinner around the Chapel.

I'd also like to thank you for your support and patience over the past year. We do not underestimate the challenges for parents of changing plans and keeping on top of the latest guidance.

As always, as we approach the end of any school year we have mixed emotions, as friends and colleagues move on to new challenges and opportunities. This year we say farewell to Mrs Adams (Teaching Assistant for 22 years), Miss Arnold (Maternity Cover - Science), Miss Burnell (Teaching Assistant), Ms Clements (Art), Mr Clark (Second in Maths), Mrs Formston Jones (Teaching Assistant), Mrs Mahadevan (English), Miss O'Callaghan (English), Mrs O'Brien (English), Mrs Swift (MFL), Mrs Stiles (English) and Mrs Wilson (English). We wish them all well in their next ventures.

September may seem a long way ahead, but please make a note of the arrangements for the beginning of the Autumn term as Thursday 01 September is an Inset day.

As thoughts turn to the holidays and summer break, I hope you will be able to spend some time doing the things you enjoy most with your children.

The American writer Robert Brault reminds us 'to enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realise they were the big things'.

Wishing you all a safe and restful summer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Shapland'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'J' and 'S'.

James Shapland
Headteacher