



21 December 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

The novelist Hilary Mantel once commented, 'The past changes a little every time we retell it.' She wasn't referring to embellishment and exaggeration, but the things we choose to remember and focus on, when we stop to reflect and review.

So, as the end of the Autumn term draws to a close, it seems particularly fitting to thank the whole Ashlyns community for helping to reintroduce a whole range of opportunities that had previously been key 'fixtures' of school life in the Autumn term - and which we have missed so much over the past two years.

The return of the Autumn Chill and Carol Concert allowed us to enjoy stunning performances by the orchestra and choir. The music department has done an amazing job to rebuild these groups and usher in new musical talent at the same time. It once again began the countdown to Christmas. The Christmas Drama event on Monday was an equally impressive showcase of our students' performance skills and excellent entertainment. Well done to everyone involved in these fantastic events.

In terms of other 'key moments', although it seems a long time ago, the return of the Peak District Trip for Year 7 was another reminder of how important these experiential elements of school life are.

There have been many 'outward looking' successes during this busy term; our sports teams and clubs have excelled, and the Learning Ambassadors have prepared lessons and honed leadership skills to deliver classes to our local primary school children. There is so much more to look forward to in 2023 with a new Duke of Edinburgh cohort and a whole array of trips and events.

We would also like to commend our Charity Leaders who have so ably organised the Christmas food bank donation drive. They are fantastic role models for our whole community. On this note, you'll be aware that we have refreshed and refocused our school values: integrity, inclusivity and independence and it has been especially pleasing to see students embracing and exemplifying these in their everyday school lives. As a school, rewarding positive behaviour and attitudes is important to us, and the recent Rewards Assemblies were a fitting celebration of the everyday achievements of our students. In addition, already, over 100 students have completed their first Character Standards Cards and received a 'values postcard' home. We look forward to issuing even more of these postcards as our students continue to demonstrate these values and show that 'they choose to do the right thing even when no one is looking.'

Before we head into the Christmas break, I would like to thank our wonderful staff for their hard work and commitment to providing the best opportunities for students, as well as our dedicated Governors for their support and guidance.

I am also very grateful to the ASA who have organised events for students and the community this term, raising funds through the Halloween Disco, Craft Fair, Christmas Raffle and Festival of Light Tombola. Thank you very much for supporting these events. Whilst they raise vital funds for the school, they also add so much to the school's feeling of community. The ASA would like to remind parents that, as we reach the end of term and thoughts may turn to new uniform, second hand stock is available and can be delivered during the Christmas break; please contact ASA@ashlyns.herts.sch.uk.

Of course, the end of term is always tinged with sadness as we bid farewell to members of staff, this term to Mrs Maleham, Science Technician, and to Mrs Shepherd who has been a Learning Mentor and key member of our pastoral team for 13 years. We thank them for the difference they have made to our students and wish them every happiness in the future.

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](#).

In his 'pause for thought' at our Carol Concert, Rev Stuart Owen spoke of the need to stop, reflect and recognise what is important to us. In my end of term assemblies, we've reflected more generally on the key events and people we've been talking about in 2022. Although this year has been one of significant change and upheaval, the hope and positivity which our students exemplify seem appropriate for the season and should fill us with optimism for the future.

The spring term starts on Thursday 05 January but, for now, on behalf of all of us at Ashlyns, I would like to thank you for your continued support and wish you a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Yours sincerely

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

James Shapland
Headteacher