



05 September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome back to a new school year from all of us at Ashlyns. I hope that you had a good summer and that your children are looking forward to the year ahead. I would particularly like to extend a warm welcome to our new Year 7 students and those joining us in the Sixth Form for the first time; we wish them a very happy and successful time at Ashlyns and look forward to getting to know them all.

At the beginning of a new year, we also have new staff joining us and I know you will join me in welcoming them to our community; the staff list for 2023/24 will be linked in Friday's e-Bulletin. I would also like to update you on the changes to our Head of Year team. Miss Hannan is Head of Year 7 and oversaw her new year group's transition events last term. Miss Gould is the new Head of Year 8 and Mr McDonald will take over from Miss Bjornsgaard as Head of Year 11. Miss Shilliday and Mrs Gee will remain with their existing year groups. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Miss Bjornsgaard for the excellent support and guidance provided to the students in her care over many years.

You may have seen recent media coverage regarding the concerns about Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) - a lightweight form of concrete - and its use in schools after the 1950s. I'm sure you will all be reassured to learn that Ashlyns has not been affected by this and we are able to continue to function as normal.

As ever, the summer has been a busy time at Ashlyns, and I would like to provide a brief update on various developments as well as some key reminders for the new year:

## **Examination Results**

A key milestone during the summer break is, of course, the examination results at A level and GCSE, which note the achievements of our students who sat public examinations. You may have seen media reports of a drop in top grades with the return to 2019 grading; however, I am pleased to report that our ex-Year 11 and 13 students achieved a fantastic set of results this summer and it was a pleasure to celebrate their achievements with them. We are very proud of them all and hope that those students moving on will stay in touch and let us know of their future successes as part of our Ashlyns alumni. Thank you once again to all those parents, staff and governors who worked so hard to help our students do so well. We hope the accomplishments of these two year groups inspire and provide encouragement to all our current students, and especially those in Years 11 and 13.

## **Summer Club**

We were also pleased to welcome over 100 new Year 7 students taking part in a week of team building activities and taster lessons. My thanks go to Miss Gould, staff members and Sixth Form 'buddies' for delivering this rich programme of events.

## **Premises**

Work on the Boiler House development is nearing completion and we look forward to unveiling our new Drama space later this term. I would like to thank our Premises Team for their hard work in refreshing key areas of the school and for their dedication to keeping our beautiful buildings and grounds looking their best.

## **Communications and Parent Portal**

We know that regular communication is important to make sure that everyone is aware of news and key information. Please do take time to read our weekly e-Bulletin which will provide you with updates and outline key events for the term. (Please remember to update us with any future changes to your

contact details to ensure you receive these regular communications.) As communicated last term, updates to our new Management Information System (Arbor) were completed over the summer break; a separate email will be sent to you today with login details for the Parent Portal which will also be added to the school website and this week's e-Bulletin.

### **Extra curricular offer**

Over the year, the e-Bulletin will continue to detail the highlights from our extra-curricular activities, competitions and trips. We hope all students will be able to choose something from our extra-curricular programme, which is expansive and exciting. We are fortunate to be able to offer such a range of activities and we know participation in these clubs and events has a positive impact on students' learning and happiness at school.

### **Contacting the school**

To complement our regular communications, there will also be a range of opportunities for parents and carers to engage with school through a mix of online and in-person events and activities. However, please don't wait until a scheduled event should you have things you wish to discuss or changes in circumstances you wish us to be aware of. We are committed to ensuring our students receive the very best care and guidance and our staff are always here to deal with concerns. 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](#).

### **Safeguarding**

Mr Beattie is our Designated Safeguarding Lead. Full details of the Safeguarding Team can be found on the school website [here](#). Regular safeguarding updates are given in the weekly e-Bulletin.

### **School Values and Behaviour Expectations**

In each of the assemblies I have delivered today I have reminded students of our school values of integrity, inclusivity and independence - and the importance of demonstrating these through their high standards of behaviour. Alongside our expectations with regard to punctuality and uniform, we want students to be respectful towards others, kind and self-disciplined. We hope you will support us in reinforcing these expectations, as a strong partnership between home and school will help continue to encourage positive behaviour.

### **Transport and Drop Off**

As always, we would like to urge all parents/carers to encourage their child to walk to and from 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 8.35am. As such, we expect all students to be on site for 8.30am to ensure they are not late for registration. The school gates are closed from 8.35am, through the school day, until 3.20pm. Should you need to access the school site during school hours, please use the buzzer to the right of the gates. 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.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to a positive and productive term.

Yours sincerely



**James Shapland**  
Headteacher