



20 December 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

As we near the end of the Autumn term and take time to review some highlights for the term, I am reminded that, in his diary entry for one day in 1973, Elton John recorded what he had achieved:

Woke up.

Watched Grandstand.

Wrote Candle in the Wind.

Went to London, bought a Rolls Royce.

Ringo Starr came for dinner.

Whilst our achievements and highlights might not include global superstars or iconic anthems (just yet), there is much we can be proud of and celebrate - particularly in light of this week's Award Assemblies, which have provided an excellent finale to the term.

Many of the term's memorable moments link to our rich programme of extra curricular activities. These have included: a sun-drenched Peak District trip for Year 7 back in September; museum visits to the Victoria and Albert and Natural History for Year 8 as part of their Extended Learning Day and exceptionally strong Year 9 recruitment to this year's Duke of Edinburgh cohort. We have also appointed 58 new Year 10 prefects and senior prefects this term, who will take a lead role in mentoring, developing the school environment and our character programme.

The recent careers interviews for Year 10 showed the strength of support from our school community. We received offers from three times the number of interviewers we could accommodate on the day - so thank you to everyone who volunteered. The feedback about the students from the interviews was exceptional and our students gained so much from this experience. We look forward to this becoming a staple offer each year.

The strength of volunteers is evident in the work of our excellent ASA. We know that strong facilities support the range of activities we can offer and I'd like to, once again, thank the ASA for their time and commitment to fund raising, enriching and enhancing students' educational experience. During the course of 2023, they have raised over £20,000 which is spent directly on improvements to benefit our students. Alongside investment in our 'state of the art' drama project in the old boiler house, this year funding has also been used to support the purchase of 32 VR headsets, mixing equipment, 3D Printers and Computers as well as supporting a dance focused Extended Learning Day for Year 7. Our ASA is always looking for new recruits, so please do consider signing up to help.

It was lovely to recognise the successes of past and present students at our Presentation Evening earlier in the term. Our keynote speaker was Shaun Wallace - The Dark Destroyer from The Chase - who gave us an insight into breaking down the barriers to success, the importance of tenacity and believing in yourself.

Recognising our students' achievements is an important strand of our work, ensuring that they know their work is important and valued. Alongside our termly Awards Assemblies, I'd like to congratulate our Year 11 and 13 students who have been working hard for their trial exams. They will receive their results in the new year to support their final preparations for the real exams in May and June.

For many of us, the countdown to Christmas starts with the school Carol Concert. Once again we were treated to stunning performances by the orchestra and choir. My thanks, as ever, go to our music department for developing and nurturing such amazing talent. In his 'pause for thought' at our Carol Concert, Rev Stuart Owen spoke of the need for kindness, tolerance and understanding, which chimes so well with our school values of integrity, inclusivity and independence - and something we see exemplified every day by our students.

Please remember that should students need any wellbeing support over the Christmas period, they can access a range of resources and links via the Health and wellbeing tile on RМУnify; these include links to ChatHealth, YoungMinds, Services for Young People and Samaritans which provide confidential online advice and contact. There is also information here about online safety, local food banks and supporting mental health. This is in addition to the tiles already found on students' chromebooks, including Sandbox and CEOPS. Parents and students can also access a range of [resources and Child Protection information on our website here](#).

Of course, the end of term is always tinged with sadness as we bid farewell to members of staff, this term to Mrs Boyd (Technology), Ms Sutton (English) and Miss Thoma (Drama). We wish them every happiness in the future. We wish Ms Hannan all the best as she goes on maternity leave; Miss Bjornsgaard will assume the role of Head of Year 7 from January.

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

The spring term starts on Thursday 04 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